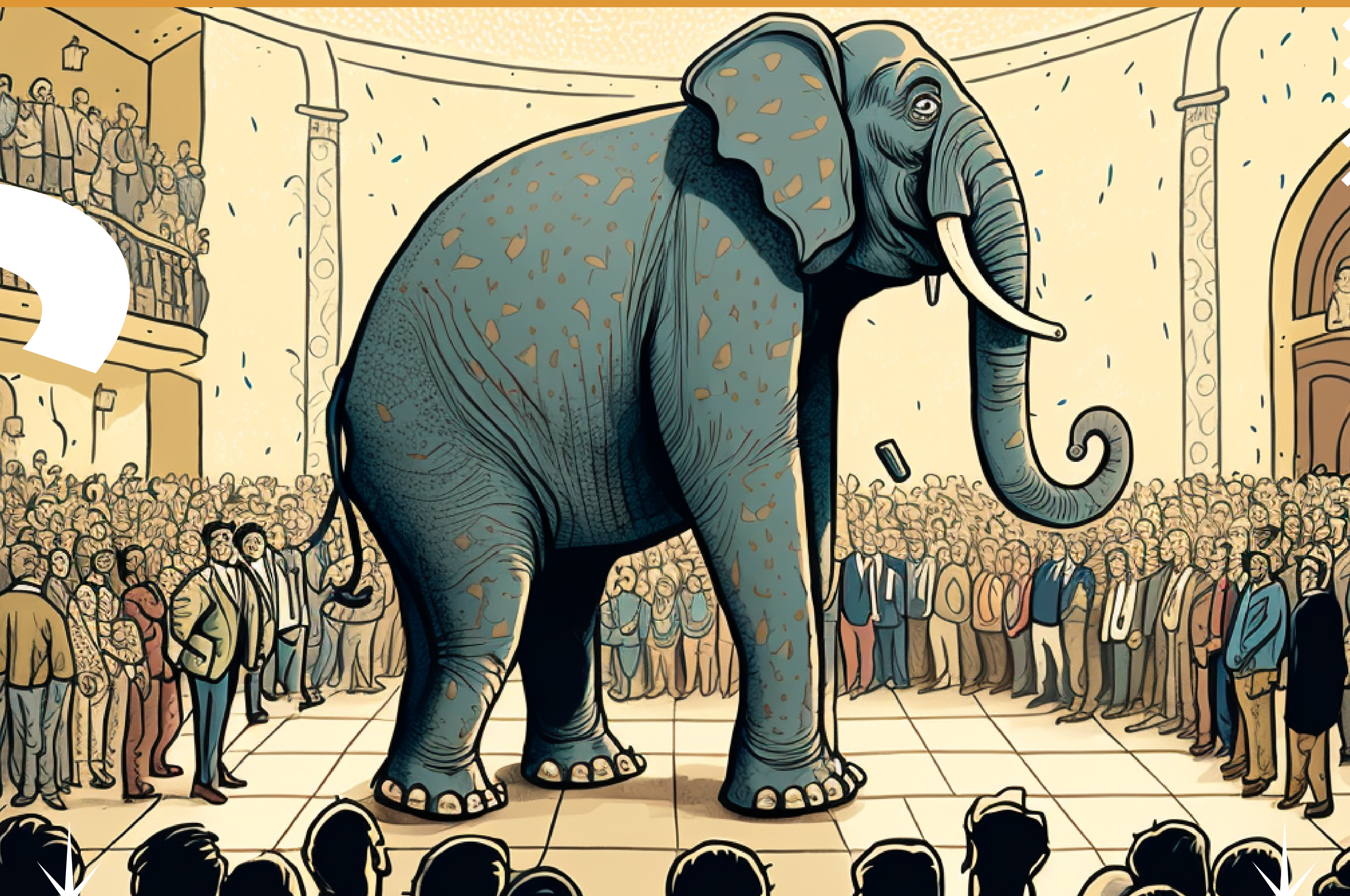


INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 21-23, 2024 - UNIVERSITY OF PADOVA



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

INVESTIGATING
• **CONSCIOUSNESS** •
BEYOND REDUCTIONISM



Presentation

The conference is the fruit of a joint effort between the University of Padova, the University of Ottawa, the India Foundation, the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union and the Mind and Life Europe. It is organized within the framework of the Postgraduate Program in Contemplative Studies delivered by the University of Padova and is also intended to be a natural extension of the discussions that began at the *Exploring Consciousness: Non-Duality to Non-Locality* conference held in September 2022 in Bangalore, India.

The conference is scheduled for February 21-23, 2024, at the University of Padova, Italy. It will feature sixteen speakers from various fields and will span over three days: two days dedicated to keynote speakers and one day reserved for debates, panel discussions, and research proposals, with a focus on fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

The event is aimed at scholars in the field of consciousness studies, as well as research institutions, philanthropic organizations, and anyone passionate about the subject. It aims to gather the most promising perspectives on investigating the nature of consciousness from a non-reductionist point of view, bridging science, philosophy, and contemplative inquiry to contribute to interdisciplinary research in this field.

Consciousness is a fundamental but elusive phenomenon that has long puzzled scholars across a range of disciplines. Despite significant developments in various related fields, a complete understanding of this subject is still lacking and the nature of consciousness represents a major blind spot in the landscape of our contemporary knowledge; it is “The Elephant in the Room” of our Enlightenment culture.

Rapid advancements in various scientific and technological fields, including artificial intelligence and biotechnology, are raising crucial philosophical questions about the conditions for consciousness to emerge in organisms and whether it could manifest through an artificial medium—questions that cannot be adequately addressed without a sound theoretical framework. The ethical implications raised by these questions will not be addressed directly in the conference but rather serve to frame the inquiry into consciousness during the challenging times we are moving into, highlighting its urgency.

The primary objective of the conference is to convene leading experts in consciousness research from diverse fields of knowledge, including physics, neuroscience, philosophy of mind, and contemplative research, under the idea that the nature of consciousness is a fundamental question that cannot be dismissed as a matter of personal beliefs. Rather, it demands a rigorous and collaborative scientific and philosophical inquiry whose aim is to shed increasing light on this mystery over time.

Building on these premises, each talk delivered at the conference is expected to answer the central question "what is consciousness?" by presenting evidence and arguments that support a specific perspective and outline the necessary steps to advance further research. Moreover, the conference will provide a conducive environment for interdisciplinary discussions, as participants are encouraged to share hypotheses and research proposals.