

**1<sup>st</sup> Symposium - March 29 to 30, 1996** | Eugénia Cunha, José R. Delgado, Adolf Dittrich, Peter Fenwick, Stanley Krippner, Deolinda Lima, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Robert Morris, René Peoc'h, Pedro Polónio, Carlos Fernandes da Silva, Carlos Henrique Silva

**2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium - April 2 to 4, 1998** | António Damásio, Hanna Damásio, Maria de Sousa, Patrick Dondelinger, Fernando Gil, Nuno Grande, Francesca Happé, Jerome Kagan, Edwin May, Robert Morris, Dean Radin, Emílio Salgueiro, Fiona Steinkamp

**3<sup>rd</sup> Symposium - April 6 to 8, 2000 – Exceptional Experiences** | Martina Belz-Merk, Richard Bentall, Richard Broughton, Deborah Delaney, Hoyt Edge, Peter Fenwick, John Gruzelier, Erlendur Haraldsson, Dietrich Lehmann, Fernando Lopes da Silva, David Marks, António Martins da Silva, Edwin May, Robert Morris, Teresa Paiva, Luís Sobrinho, Richard Wiseman

**4<sup>th</sup> Symposium - April 4 to 6, 2002 – Exceptional Interpersonal Relationships** | Michael Argyle, Daryl Bem, Richard Broughton, James Carpenter, Alexandre Castro-Caldas, António Coimbra, Suzanne Crater, Kathy Dalton, David Fontana, John Gruzelier, Jerome Kagan, Stanley Krippner, Mitchell Krucoff, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Robert Morris, Rui Mota Cardoso, Rodrigo Saraiva, Isabel Soares, Ian Stevenson, Colwyn Trevarthen, Harald Walach, Caroline Watt

**5<sup>th</sup> Symposium - March 31 to April 3, 2004 – Consciousness and Brain** | Thomas Benke, Dick Bierman, Olaf Blanke, Adrian Burgess, Etzel Cardeña, Miguel Castelo-Branco, Alexandre Castro-Caldas, Patricia Churchland, Stanislas Dehaene, Sergio Della Sala, Dominic Fytche, Nuno Grande, Stephen Kosslyn, Victor Lamme, Dietrich Lehmann, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Pierre Maquet, Robert Morris, Rui Mota Cardoso, Geraint Rees, Mário Simões, Pim Van Lommel, Jiri Wackermann

**6<sup>th</sup> Symposium - March 29 to April 1, 2006 – Memory** | John Aggleton, Stephen Braude, Richard Broughton, Alexandre Castro-Caldas, Patrick Chauvel, Howard Eichenbaum, Mitchell Eisen, Guillén Fernández, Christopher French, Nuno Grande, Lia Kvavilashvili, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Rui Mota Cardoso, John Palmer, Alcino Silva, Mário Simões, Rex Stanford, Caroline Watt, Menno Witter

**7<sup>th</sup> Symposium - March 26 to 29, 2008 – Emotions** | Ralph Adolphs, Daryl Bem, Dick Bierman, Etzel Cardeña, Alexandre Castro-Caldas, Ray Dolan, Paul Ekman, Sophia Frangou, Nico Frijda, Christian Keysers, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Marta Molit, Rui Mota Cardoso, Roger Nelson, Dean Radin, Stefan Schmidt, Mário Simões, Tania Singer, Caroline Watt

**8<sup>th</sup> Symposium - April 7 to 10, 2010 – Intuition and Decision-making** | Dick Bierman, Richard Broughton, Alexandre Castro-Caldas, Axel Cleeremans, Nuno Crato, Seymour Epstein, Thomas Goschke, John-Dylan Haynes, Hauke Heekeren, Eva Lobach, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Rui Mota Cardoso, David Myers, Eugene Sadler-Smith, Marilyn Schlitz, Mário Simões, Caroline Watt, Cilia Witteman

**9<sup>th</sup> Symposium - March 28 to 31, 2012 – Sleep and Dreams** | Carlos Alvarado, Dick Bierman, Miguel Castelo-Branco, Alexandre Castro-Caldas, Axel Cleeremans, Sally Rhine Feather, Péter Halász, Allan Hobson, Stephen LaBerge, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Teresa Paiva, Christopher A. Roe, Michael Schredl, Sophie Schwartz, Mário Simões, Kai Spiegelhalter, Robert Stickgold, Eus van Someren, Caroline Watt

**10<sup>th</sup> Symposium - March 26 to 29, 2014 – Mind-Matter Interactions** | Peter Bancel, Dick Bierman, Miguel Castelo-Branco, Alexandre Castro-Caldas, Vanessa Charland-Verville, Axel Cleeremans, Rui Costa, Eberhard Fetz, Rainer Goebel, Patrick Haggard, Stuart Hameroff, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Rui Mota Cardoso, Dean Radin, Ander Ramos-Murguialday, Nick Ramsey, Mário Simões, Adolf Tobeña, Harald Walach, Caroline Watt

**11<sup>th</sup> Symposium - March 30 to April 2, 2016 – Placebo Effects, Healing and Meditation** | Fabrizio Benedetti, Dick Bierman, Miguel Castelo-Branco, Axel Cleeremans, Larry Dossey, Paul Enck, Damien Finniss, Rainer Goebel, Antonio Guerici, Ted Kaptchuk, Irving Kirsch, Fernando Lopes da Silva, Amir Raz, Tania Re, Manfred Schedlowski, Stefan Schmidt, Mário Simões, Jessica Utts, Tor Wager, Caroline Watt, Jon-Kar Zubietta

**12<sup>th</sup> Symposium - April 4 to 7, 2018 – Enhancing the Mind** | Mattia Bergomi, Etzel Cardeña, Jose Carmena, Miguel Castelo-Branco, Christopher Chabris, Anjan Chatterjee, Axel Cleeremans, Lorenza Colzato, Rui Costa, Gonzalo de Polavieja, Rainer Goebel, Torkel Klingberg, Antoine Lutz, Jean-Noël Missa, Rui Oliveira, Tania Re, Jordi Riba, Alexander Sack, Olga Silva, Mário Simões, Nuno Sousa, Yulia Ustinova, Caroline Watt

**13<sup>th</sup> Symposium - April 6 to 9, 2022 – The mystery of time** | Orfeu Bertolami, Michael Brecht, Dean Buonomano, Jimena Canales, Etzel Cardeña, Bernard Carr, Miguel Castelo-Branco, Axel Cleeremans, Rui Costa, Jennifer Coull, Patricia Cyrus, Teresa Firmino, Rainer Goebel, Julia Mossbridge, Chris Roe, Stefan Schmidt, Anil Seth, Daniel Sheehan, Mário Simões, Wolf Singer, Joseph S. Takahashi, Caroline Watt, Marc Wittmann

**14<sup>th</sup> Symposium - April 3 to 6, 2024 – Creativity** | Anna Abraham, Pedro Abrunhosa, Mark Baldwin, Frederick Barrett, Etzel Cardeña, Miguel Castelo-Branco, Nicola Clayton, Axel Cleeremans, Rui Costa, Amory Danek, Marcus Du Sautoy, Rainer Goebel, Michael Hanchett Hanson, Edward Kelly, Morten Kringelbach, Todd Lubart, Penousal Machado, Tiago Martins, Lucia Melloni, Sergio Neuenschwander, Marilyn Schlitz, Stefan Schmidt, Christine Simmonds-Moore, Mário Simões, Nuno Sousa, Caroline Watt

## 15<sup>th</sup> SYMPOSIUM OF BIAL FOUNDATION

# BEHIND AND BEYOND THE BRAIN

Aquém e Além do Cérebro

End-of-life experiences

The Bial Foundation was established in May 1994 by the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities and the Bial pharmaceutical company, with the patronage of the President of the Portuguese Republic. It aims at encouraging the scientific study of the human being from both the physical and spiritual perspectives.

Among its activities, the Bial Foundation manages awards in the field of health sciences, namely the Prémio Bial de Medicina Clínica, established in 1984, the Bial Award in Biomedicine, first awarded in 2019, and the Maria de Sousa Award, created in 2020 in partnership with the Portuguese Medical Association.

The Foundation also promotes two research funding programmes. Since 1994, a Grants Programme for Scientific Research, focusing on Psychophysiology and Parapsychology as research areas. To date, the Bial Foundation has approved 946 projects involving nearly 1,900 researchers from 31 countries, resulting in the publication of 2,232 articles in indexed journals (Scopus or Web of Science). Of these, 1,948 were published in journals with an average impact factor of 4.1, and 394 in journals with an impact factor equal to or greater than 5. By September 2025, the total number of citations had reached 59,997, with 758 publications cited more than 20 times. Since 2022, and in collaboration with ICBAS, the Foundation also manages the Nuno Grande Doctoral Scholarships, which support research in Fundamental Health Sciences carried out by medical PhD students at Portuguese universities.

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## 15<sup>th</sup> SYMPOSIUM OF BIAL FOUNDATION

# BEHIND AND BEYOND THE BRAIN

Aquém e Além do Cérebro

End-of-life experiences

Casa do Médico - Porto

April 8 to 11, 2026



**Bial**  
FOUNDATION

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

BEHIND AND  
BEYOND THE BRAIN

Aquém e Além do Cérebro

## End-of-life experiences

Humans, perhaps uniquely amongst animals, understand that their life will inevitably come to an end. Death is probably the only experience that is universal. It is also singular, for it is an experience that marks an irreversible transition. Near-death experiences, however, leave a profound mark on the people who lived it. Such experiences raise many questions: Should we think of death as an instant, or as a process? How can we - or how should we - prepare for death? What do we know about the biological processes that lead to and that occur during dying? How do different cultures approach death? And should our experience of death change the way in which we think about reality? Such questions, despite the universal character of death, have thus far largely remained outside the scope of scientific enquiry - an omission that the 15<sup>th</sup> "Behind and Beyond the Brain" Symposium of the Bial Foundation will aim to address by gathering prominent neuroscientists, psychologists, and philosophers to engage them in a profoundly interdisciplinary dialogue over the course of a rich program extending over three days.

The Symposium will open on April 8<sup>th</sup> with an **evening lecture** by the eminent neuroscientist Christof Koch (Seattle, US), who will appeal to extraordinary experiences such as near-death experiences to question physicalism - the perspective that consciousness can be fully reduced to material particles and their interactions. Contra such views, Koch defends idealism and panpsychism, both of which he describes as compatible with naturalism and the scientific method.

The **first session**, dedicated to "**End-of-life processes**", will take place on the morning of April 9<sup>th</sup>. Moderated by Helané Wahbeh (Novato, US), it is dedicated to approaching the many processes that take place as death nears, and will feature lectures by Michael Rera (Paris, FR), and Marjorie Woollacott (Eugene, US). Rera will focus on the biology of dying. Woollacott's lecture will be dedicated to the striking phenomenon of terminal lucidity. The session will close with a keynote lecture by Michael Nahm (Freiburg, DE), who will overview the unusual phenomena associated with end-of-life experiences.

The **second session**, titled "**End-of-life moments**", taking place on the morning of April 10<sup>th</sup>, is focused on near-death experiences (NDEs). Moderated by Etzel Cardeña (Lund, SE), it will open with a lecture by Janice Holden (Denton, US) who will focus on how to approach the anomalous experiences reported by NDE experiencers. Charlotte Martial (Liège, BE) will follow up by offering a neuroscientific perspective on NDEs. Bárbara Gomes (Coimbra, PT) will ask what matters most to people in their last moments of life.

Finally, the keynote lecture by Jim Tucker (Charlottesville, US) will examine intriguing reports of past-life memories by children and ask how we should think about them.

The **third session**, taking place on the morning of April 11<sup>th</sup>, is focused on "**End-of-life beliefs and impacts**" and will be moderated by Veena Kumari (London, UK). It aims to document how the cultural context in which death takes place shapes its experience. Mira Menzfeld (Zurich, CH) will develop an ethnographic approach to the perception and experience of death across cultures. Allan Kellehear (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK) will show how an anthropological approach to the experience of death can help understand the conditions in which dying can be sufficiently meaningful. Marieta Pehlivanova (Charlottesville, US) will overview what features most near-death experiences share. The morning will close with a keynote lecture by Fanny Charasse (Brussels, BE), who will focus on the shamanic and psychological accounts of the near-death experiences reported by people undergoing Ayahuasca rituals.

In addition to organizing its biannual symposium, the Bial Foundation also supports fundamental research relevant to the study of the mind. On the afternoon of April 9<sup>th</sup>, the recipients of Bial Foundation grants will have an opportunity to present their work in a **blitz oral session** during which they will give a 2-minute overview of their research poster, exhibited throughout the symposium. This exciting session will be moderated by Mário Simões (Lisbon, PT).

The symposium will further be greatly enhanced by an outstanding set of four **participatory workshops** taking place in parallel on the afternoon of April 10<sup>th</sup>. In **Workshop 1**, Rainer Goebel (Maastricht, NL) and Stefan Schmidt (Freiburg, DE) will interact with guest Yesche Regel (Bonn, DE) around how the Buddhist tradition conceives of death and how its practices help people prepare for it. **Workshop 2**, moderated by Chris Roe (Northampton, UK) will feature Etzel Cardeña and Marieta Pehlivanova, who will offer an in depth-exploration of near-death experiences. **Workshop 3**, steered by Rui Costa (Seattle, US) and featuring Julia Verne (London, UK), will be dedicated to the personal and societal dimensions of palliative care. Finally, **Workshop 4**, moderated by Miguel Castelo-Branco (Coimbra, PT), will see Bárbara Gomes offer an intimate, interactive session during which participants will be able to (anonymously) share what they value most of the end of life and compare their choices with those of other cultures. The workshops will be followed by an informal cheese-and-wine gathering so that participants can share their respective experiences as the day closes.

The symposium will conclude on the afternoon of April 11<sup>th</sup> with a **final roundtable** moderated by Axel Cleeremans (Brussels, BE) and featuring Etzel Cardeña, Janice Holden, Christof Koch, Charlotte Martial, and Marieta Pehlivanova. This final event will be an opportunity to further reflect upon and share the core findings from the symposium, and to offer a final opportunity for the audience to interact with representative speakers.

With its 15<sup>th</sup> Symposium, the Bial Foundation hopes to engage speakers and the audience around a deep, interdisciplinary reflection about what is undoubtedly one of the core experiences of human life: the realization that it will end.

## Organizing Committee:

President  
AXEL CLEEREMANS (Brussels)

ETZEL CARDEÑA (Lund)  
MIGUEL CASTELO-BRANCO (Coimbra)  
RUI COSTA (Seattle, WA)  
RAINER GOEBEL (Maastricht)  
VEENA KUMARI (London)  
CHRIS ROE (Northampton)  
STEFAN SCHMIDT (Freiburg)  
HELANÉ WAHBEH (Novato, CA)

## Participants:

ETZEL CARDEÑA (Lund)  
MIGUEL CASTELO-BRANCO (Coimbra)  
FANNY CHARASSE (Brussels)  
AXEL CLEEREMANS (Brussels)  
RUI COSTA (Seattle, WA)  
RAINER GOEBEL (Maastricht)  
BÁRBARA GOMES (Coimbra)  
JANICE HOLDEN (Denton, TX)  
ALLAN KELLEHEAR (Newcastle upon Tyne)  
CHRISTOF KOCH (Seattle, WA)  
VEENA KUMARI (London)  
CHARLOTTE MARTIAL (Liège)  
MIRA MENZFELD (Zurich)  
MICHAEL NAHM (Freiburg)  
MARIETA PEHLIVANOVA (Charlottesville, VA)  
YESCHE REGEL (Bonn)  
MICHAEL RERA (Paris)  
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STEFAN SCHMIDT (Freiburg)  
MÁRIO SIMÕES (Lisbon)  
JIM TUCKER (Charlottesville, VA)  
JULIA VERNE (London)  
HELANÉ WAHBEH (Novato, CA)  
MARJORIE WOOLLACOTT (Eugene, OR)

## Registration Fee

The 15<sup>th</sup> Symposium will be organized only for in-person audience. Registrations will open in January 2026.

€200

€80 - for university students under the age of 25 and PhD students (please enclose copy of your student card and/or university/supervisor declaration).

These amounts include access to all Symposium sessions, coffee breaks and certificate of attendance. It does not include meals. Limited number of registrations.

## Hotels

Ipanema Porto\*\*\*\*

Fénix Porto\*\*\*\*

## Single/Double

Rate: 10% discount  
guarantee

## Location

Boavista  
15 min. by taxi

Make your reservation directly with the Hotel (do refer Bial Foundation and the Symposium)

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