

# “Predictive Processing and the Study of Esoteric Practices”

Organised by:  
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In recent years, foundational assumptions within the cognitive science of religion have been challenged by the rapid development of new models of the mind emerging from the cognitive sciences. One such shift involves moving away from the modular mind perspective, which envisions the mind as a set of specialized mental tools designed to process domain-specific information—a view often rooted in evolutionary psychology. In its place, the predictive processing framework has emerged as a major contender, offering a more integrated understanding of mental activity. This framework emphasises the mind’s continuous and dynamic construction of world models and the enactment of these models within cultural contexts, positioning prediction error minimisation as a unifying principle for navigating and engaging with the environment.

In the study of esoteric practices, applications of the predictive processing framework have often focused on the representational aspects of predictive coding, emphasizing how prior expectations may shape sensory experiences. However, the broader logic underpinning this framework—namely, the reduction of uncertainty through the maximisation of expected model evidence—offers significant potential for more expansive applications. This workshop aims to engage with ongoing debates concerning embodied and enactive formulations within predictive processing and active inference. It seeks to highlight the transition from the representational aspects of sensory ‘real-making’ to the broader, participatory processes of ‘world-making’ that characterise esoteric practices. By shifting the focus to how embodied agents ‘self-evidence’ their world in both perception and action, we explore how practitioners enact, embody, and co-create their worlds through predictive engagement with esoteric practices.



## Schedule:

9-10:30 Kolloquium

10:30-11 Coffee Break

11-13 Guest Presentations

13-14:30 Lunch Break

14:30-16 Plenary Discussion

## January 21, 2026

Big Seminar Room

Hartmannstr. 14, Building D1, Erlangen