PROGRAM GVO_PP September 20th 2025	
Session I: 11:00-1:30	
What is a symbol? How are symbols to be distinguished from information in the Gibsonian sense? How are the two concepts related? Is it wrong to say that a "neutral" object, person, event can become information through a perceiver's experience? As with the education of attention to variables that specify objects and events in the world by virtue of natural law, attention can be educated to variables that specify objects and events in the world by virtue of convention. For example, are the droppings in a termite nest symbols that convey where to deposit more droppings, or information about where to deposit. In short, do we need or want the concept of symbol in the ecological/dynamical systems approach? Relatedly, dynamical systems can precipitate out rate-independent structures that can influence rate-dependent dynamics when they return to the neighborhood. Termites precipitate out rate-independent droppings, which will influence other termites when they are in the neighborhood. For symbols, it is customary to assume that meaning is assigned by the perceiver (exactly like how patterns on a retina are viewed by traditionalists: ambiguous entities that must me elaborated by cognitive and memorial processes.) Neither the symbol nor the information need be elaborated; one needs only to discover their meaning. To belabor the termite metaphor, one might imagine that a conversation is analogous to a termite nest: a large, coherent structure created by interacting members of a community.	Claire Michaels
What is a constraint? I like the constraint/law complementarity that Pattee sets up. I also like the acknowledgement that constraints at one scale of space/time could be the consequent of lawful processes on other scales. I am curious whether constraints are simply in the eye of the beholder or whether they are simply all enumerable, indicatable things with objective reality to them. I think they have to have a reality that extends beyond the observer's attention/goals. Meanwhile, Pattee says that laws describe flows. I was just at Niagara Falls, staring up through the mist, realizing that all of the individual molecules and rock crags and gusts of wind were constraining, even if it all seemed to be flowing. So, the laws and constraints were inhabiting the same space and time. So where does this leave the complementarity: are constraints the segregable ingredients? And are the laws the subspace of possible interplays among them? And then, worse yet, are the symbolic/mathematical statements encoding the laws themselves constraints on our use/communication of laws? In some sense, I wonder if law/constraint complementarity reflects the relationship between process and substance ontologies?	Damian Kelty-Stephen
How are symbols dependent on form replication? The idea that symbolic structures are replicable constraints on interactive/coordination dynamics seem to provide a welcome perspective on multiple problems in cognition and language. It seems that the framework requires two different processes, which are refined in evolution: replication and control. How to understand the process of replication without proposing "propensities for mimesis" and the like?	Joanna Rączaszek-Leonardi
When do thermodynamic systems make errors? thermodynamic approaches of the mind are an important game changer. What concept(s) are needed to explain the circumstances in which the mind gets stuck in mistaken beliefs?	Heidi Kloos
What ***can we learn from failures to utilize symbolic constraints on dynamics?*** In education, coaching, and cultural transmission in general we typical use symbol-like things to guide behavior and cognition. Sometimes, it seems like people can get stuck/fixated on the symbol-like description without restructuring their behavior/cognition. I'll share a few examples from learning music, and from teaching students. What can we learn about the relation between constraints and dynamics from these errors?	Ben De Bari
BREAK	
How can ecological accounts of perception and cognition be meaningfully integrated with cognitive neuroscience, which often relies on representational mapping? What would this imply for ontology and method? **Ontology:** Do repeated brain–behavior correspondences (e.g., regional activations during tasks) reveal real mental entities, or are they scientific constructs—an arbitrary ontology of tasks and functions? Can neuroscience be ontology-agnostic? **Method:** Cognitive neuroscience presupposes entities like "faces" or "words" in its tasks and mapping strategies. An ecological approach instead emphasizes dynamics, affordances, and organism - environment coupling. How might methods shift to capture this? Can existing findings be reformulated ecologically, or do they dissolve as artifacts of representational assumptions?	Maria Zimmermann
Mental representations 1. From an eco perspective, how does one account for experiences that seem representational, like using imagery to determine how many windows are in my house while I'm not there? 2. Are personal-level representations less problematic than sub-personal ones (or vice versa)? If so, why? (I'm happy to only discuss one of these if this is too much.)	Nathan Lautz
LUNCH & WALKS 1:30-3:30	
Session II: 3:30-5:30	
How do religious/spiritual experiences happen? It is still unclear to me, from an ecological perspective, what exactly people attune to in order to experience spirituality, or which dynamical interactions give rise to such experiences.	Mohammad Saraei
Insight, flow, and unitive experience Many definitions of so-called 'religious experience' have been offered since James brought the topic into psychology. But how are we to understand experiences people deem 'spiritual' or 'religious' from the ecological view? It is my intuition that ecological psychology, particularly the topic of resonance, is the way to explain these experiences. People feel 'possessed' by music and 'possessed' by god. They feel that they and the environment blend into each other in flow, and in unitive experience. They feel they connect more deeply with the nature of the world in insight, and perhaps this is a route to epiphany in both secular and religious senses. Is there anything to this environmental, or even 'oscillatory' approach to religious experience? Can religious experience be seen as continuous with insight or flow? How do we properly frame and investigate this topic?	Zach Buck
1. Symbols and errors. 2. What is a tool? Are there pitfalls of tool-mindset? *1a. (Closely related to Joanna's, Claire's, Ben's, and possibly Damian's questions): I wonder if it's important that symbols are rarely isolated---they are generally part of systems which have other elements involved besides the symbols (e.g., a tape, a processor) and there is rarely (never?) only a single symbol; moreover, in real cases, the system as a whole _functions_. Even if Ecological Psychology decides (wisely, perhaps) to eschew symbols in their classical form, surely it does not want to eschew functional systems. 1b. (Closely related to Heidi's and Hyosun's questions as well as 1a): Well-formed symbol systems never err or (truly) innovate. I think this means we (as theorists) need to identify something different from symbols in the classical sense to handle what humans do in the symbolic line. What could this different thing be? 2. I'm interested in the expression "This is just a tool". I became interested in this expression upon noticing that mathematics is often perceived by scientists as "just a tool". But in some cases, after spending some time in a particular mathematical arena, I begin to have the feeling that the mathematics is not merely a tool for thinking about or clarify some other thing, but that it itself is the thing I need to study---it itself starts to feel like it's the phenomenal essence. This then leads me to wonder if the slightly pejorative tone of "just a tool" might, in general, reflect a misconception.*	Whit Tabor
Innateness of Divergence Do human beings possess an inherent propensity to diverge? If so, how does the desire to diverge interact with the world to shape the trajectory of innovation?	Hyosun Lee
BREAK	
Capturing "natural" interactions What makes an interaction "natural/neutral/normal"? (without philosophical debate on how we define these terms, in a colloquial sense) How can we study everyday interactions without disturbing them too much? What are the different perspectives and experiences of such "naturalness"? Are there any systematic patterns and factors that can predict how individuals will perceive such "studied" interactions? How does it change the behavior and thus data gathered?	Konrad Zieliński
What is the environment? In eco/eco-social perception-action we've taken a dynamical approach to temporality of behavior (e.g., studying intrapersonal and interpersonal coordination of movement), what would an approach that studies **geographical** (rather than temporal) dynamics look like?	Kerry Marsh
What is resonance in ecological psychology?	Frédérick Deschênes
Can ecological psychology be more than a resistance movement? Ecological psychology is at a transition. Can we broaden the topics we address and the methdologies we practice?	Bert Hodges