

# Lecture 04: Central Themes

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## 1. Operationalising Visual Awareness

'the claim that blindsight involves unconscious perception is largely based on a dissociation between responding in a biased task and performance in an unbiased forced-choice task' (Phillips 2016, p. 435)

'He was insistently instructed, and frequently reminded, that he was to signal unaware only when he had absolutely no sensation or feeling or experience of the visual event, and he repeatedly confirmed his conformance with this instruction' (Weiskrantz et al. 1995, p. 6122)

*Objective Criteria* for lack of awareness: 'According to 'objective' criteria, unaware perception occurs when a subject's performance in a forced-choice task is at chance' (Pessoa 2005, p. 190)

BUT: 'Above-chance performance on a forced-choice task involving the masked stimulus need not necessarily be due to conscious knowledge' (Timmermans & Cleeremans 2015, p. 27)

'The challenge of measuring awareness based on behavioral measures, despite the substantial progress achieved over the years, remains essentially intact' (Timmermans & Cleeremans 2015, p. 40)

## 2. Dretske's Criteria for Perception and Awareness

'(1) the information in these states should be available for the control and guidance of action (if the experience is unconscious, of course, the actor need not be aware of this influence); and (2) the information should be extracted from stimulation (as it is with conscious experiences) by accredited receptor systems.'

'Tp: S perceives x = S has a perceptual experience (in our special inclusive sense) that provides (in a direct way) information about x'

'rTa: S is aware of X = S perceives X, and information about X is available to S as a reason (justification) for doing what she wants (chooses, decides) to do'

Dretske's proposal does not fit much research, but it does fit some; for example Debner & Jacoby (1994)'s process dissociation approach to perception without awareness.

## 3. Blindsight: Further Issues

'The emphasis on residual visual functioning in the absence of acknowledged awareness (type-1 blindsight) often led people to overlook the fact that certain stimuli can elicit awareness in a subject's blind field. This residual visual awareness has become known as 'type-2 blindsight' (Weiskrantz, Barbur, & Sahraie, 1995), and has been interpreted in many different ways. It

is still common to make the error of thinking that there are 'type-1 (standard) blindsight subjects', and another subset of people, also with damage to V1, who are 'type-2 blindsight subjects'. However, the proper distinction is not between different subjects, but rather between different conditions of stimulus presentation. Most subjects with blindsight, whose lesions do not extend to the extrastriate cortex, have 'type-1 blindsight' under some stimulus conditions and have 'type-2 blindsight' under others' (Foley & Kentridge 2015).

'It is not at all clear that blindsight subjects' residual experiences are visual in nature' (Foley & Kentridge 2015).

## 4. A Mere Motley

'... the Mere Motley model of conscious perceptual experience. According to this model the phrase 'conscious visual experience' is just a rough and ready label for a typically integrated, but potentially highly dissociable, complex of capacities' (Clark 2009, p. 1467).

'Conscious visual experience [...] consists instead in a motley swathe of surprisingly dissociable elements and effects, relative to which pressing the simple binary question ("is conscious visual experience occurring or not?") is just a recipe for trouble and confusion' (Clark 2009, p. 1467).

## References

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