

Navigating Psychopathology

IATL

Interdisciplinary module

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2018-19 Week Two



Hallucinations

“Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch
thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but

A dagger of the mind, a false creation,

Proceeding from the heat-oppresséd brain?”

From Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1

The plan for today

1. Perception: the 'common sense' view, CBS and hallucinations.
2. Short break (5 mins).
3. Group feedback from reading.
4. Documentary: 'There is a Fault in Reality'.
5. Group discussion.

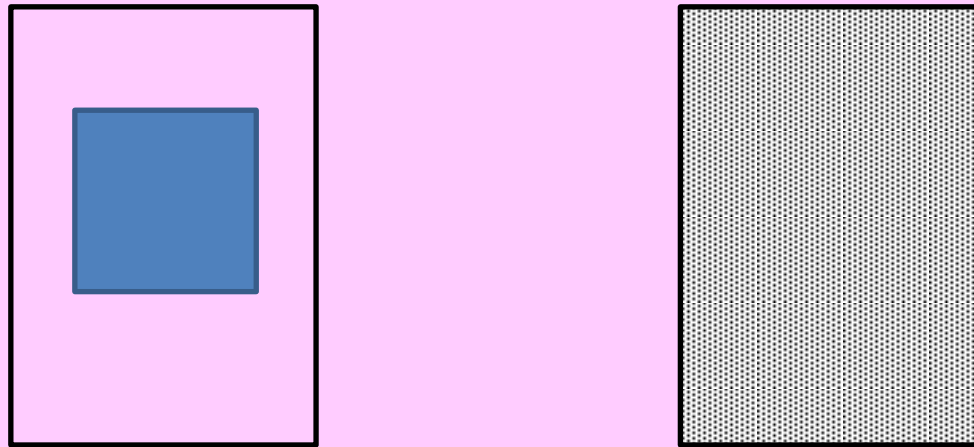
Perception: Some Distinctions

Conscious and Unconscious:

- Psychologists (and many philosophers) distinguish between *conscious* and *unconscious* perception.
- In certain conditions (e.g. visual masking, or blindsight) people can respond to visual stimuli without awareness: when asked “Did you see anything?”, they answer “No”. In these cases, perception is *unconscious*.

Visual Masking

When asked if they've seen a blue square, subjects respond that they haven't, but a task can reveal that they must have *unconsciously* perceived it.



Short time interval e.g. 50ms.

Perception: Some Distinctions

Different sense modalities:

- Allow us to encounter the world in different ways (e.g. colours are exclusively visual);
- Sight and touch provide *direct* contact with objects (we sense which spaces are occupied);
- Hearing and smell provide *indirect* evidence of objects;
- Many other differences: touch is constrained by reach but we can see objects in space, etc.

The 'Common Sense' View

1. Conscious visual perception has the structure of a *relation*, between the *perceiving subject* and the *perceived object*.
2. You are part of what you see - your point of view (location) determines the objects, properties and events you see.
3. The objects (things) and properties (of objects, like colours and shapes) that you see *really are* the way they appear to you.

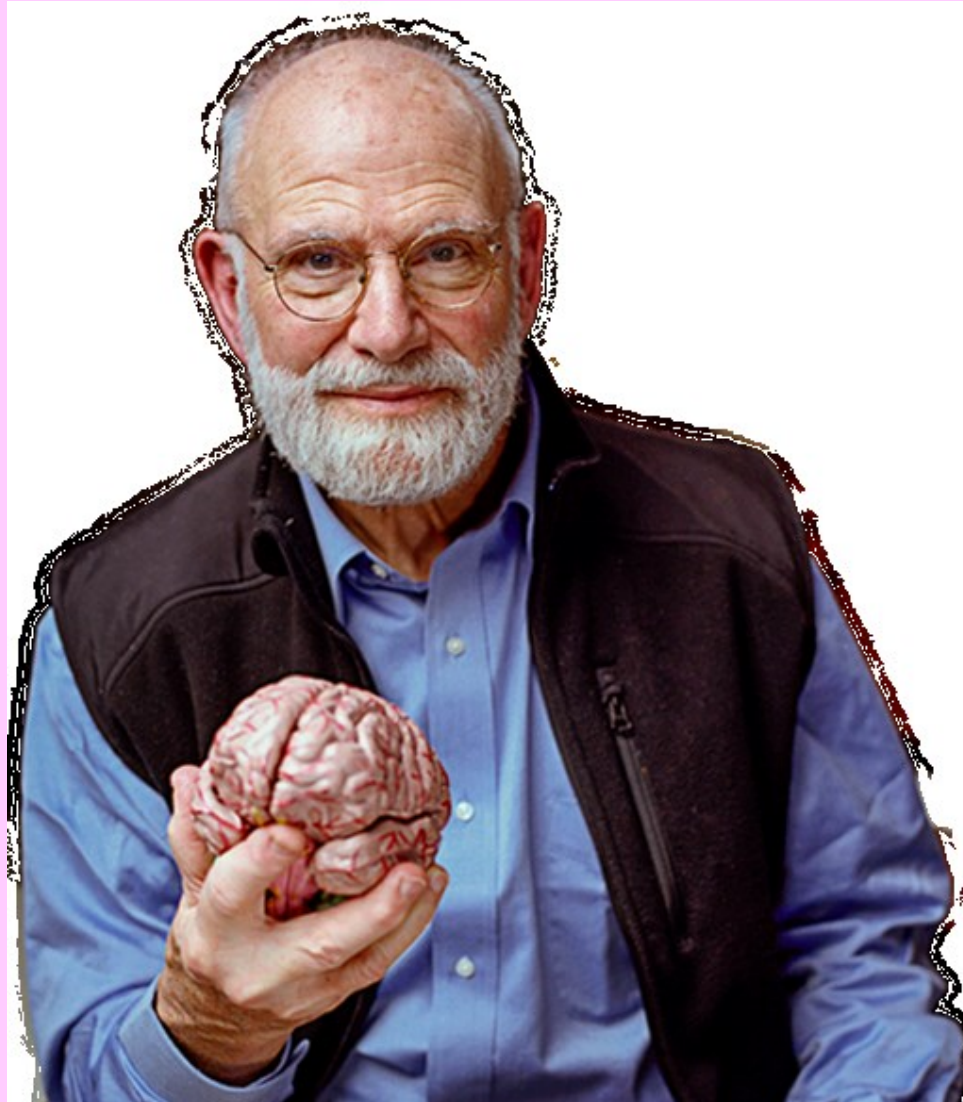
Charles Bonnet Syndrome

- CBS “typically begins in the days and weeks following a significant decrease in vision”.
- The visual hallucinations “last seconds or minutes”, are “visually rich and often bizarre”, “silent”, “appear externally in the world”, “are not under volitional control”, and “may be so compelling patients are often left uncertain of whether a given object is real or not.” (Dominic ffytche, *The Hallucinating Brain*, in Macpherson and Platchias, p.50)

Charles Bonnet Syndrome

- Using functional brain imaging, ffytche and colleagues observed that the same areas used for normal (unimpaired) vision were active when patients were undergoing CBS hallucinations: “if activity increased in colour-specialized cortex, the patient hallucinated colours; if in object-specialized cortex, the patient hallucinated objects; and if in face-specialized cortex, the patient hallucinated faces” (ibid. p.54)

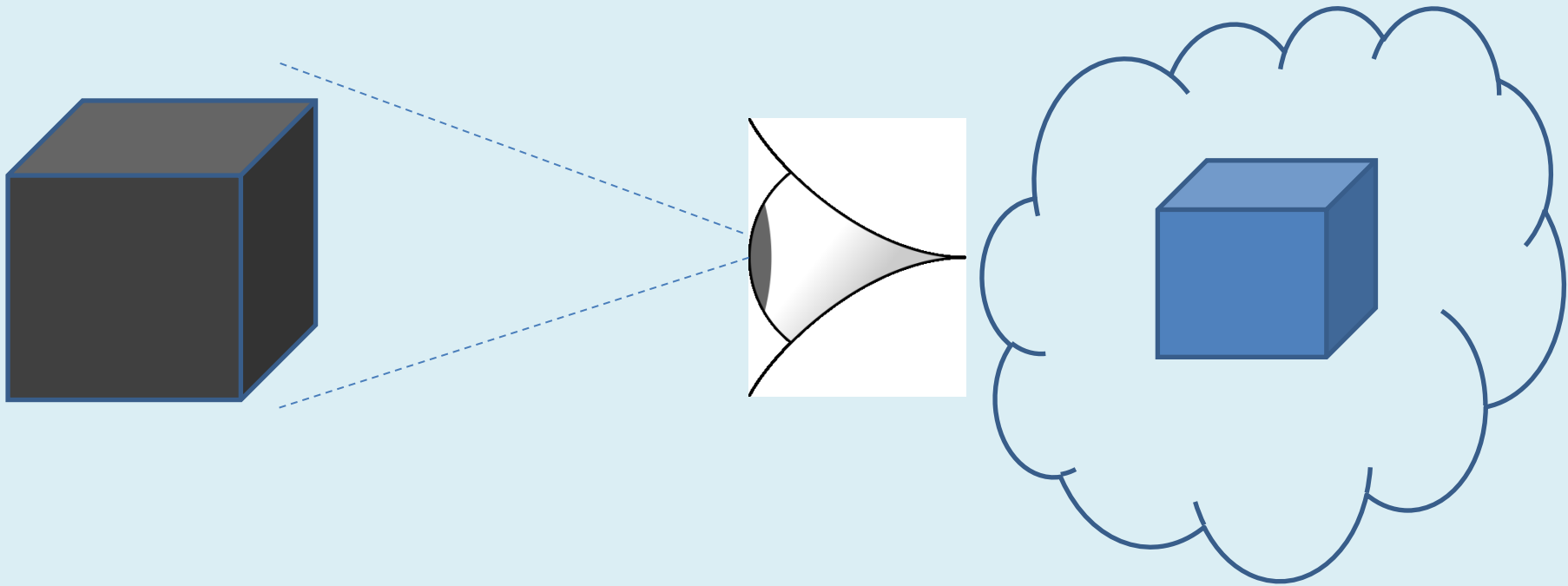
Oliver Sacks on CBS



A Question About Perception

- If, according to the Common Sense View, what we consciously perceive are external objects, and CBS hallucinations “appear externally in the world” and can be “so compelling” as to make the people experiencing them think they are real, *what objects are the CBS patients seeing?*
- Are they ‘internal objects’ (whatever they are)?
- If the brain activity is the same with hallucinations and normal vision, are we in fact *always* seeing ‘internal objects’?

Short Intermission (5 mins)



Feedback on Reading

- Starting with the two groups that looked at the chapter on hallucinations, please summarise the reading, and your reactions to it.
 - Did any of you have any questions about the reading?
 - What were the main points, themes or arguments in what you read?
 - What struck you individually or as a group as particularly significant, and why?

There is a Fault in Reality

- A 2010 documentary film directed by Tom Cotton, about half an hour long.
- The personal accounts of Jon, Peter and Jacqui, who have all been diagnosed with schizophrenia.
- Includes some descriptions of sexual abuse, and strong language... if for any reason you don't want to watch, or continue to watch the film, there's no problem with you leaving the session.

There is a Fault in Reality

- Thoughts? Responses?