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Change Blindness in Higher-Order Thought

Misrepresentation or Good Enough?

Abstract: *To evaluate the explanation of change blindness in terms of misrepresentation and determine its role for Rosenthal's higher-order thought theory of consciousness, we present an alternative account of change blindness that affords an independent outlook and provides a viable alternative. First we describe Rosenthal's actualism and the notion of misrepresentation, then introduce change blindness and the explanation of it by misrepresentation. Rosenthal asserts that, in change blindness, the first-order state tracks the post-change stimulus, but the higher-order state misrepresents it. We propose the alternative that both post-change and pre-change content can be tracked by the first-order state, and that in change blindness the higher-order thought represents the pre-change state, resulting in a good-enough representation: true but not veridical. We compare the two explanations with respect to available data and analyse the principal theoretical claims. Discussing the rationale of the alternative account, we conclude that there is good reason to conceive of the mind as satisfying, geared towards reliability instead of truth-tracking, and guided by representations that are good enough as opposed to complete or corresponding to the facts. We end with some methodological remarks concerning the risk of cognitive biases in interdisciplinary research that brings together empirical and philosophical claims.*

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