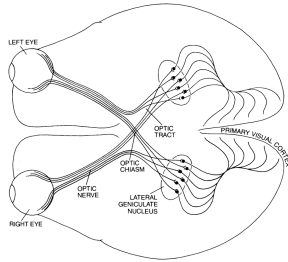


THE NEUROSCIENCE OF VISION I



Basic Operation of i>Clicker



- Turn on the clicker by pressing the bottom “On/Off” button.
- Text will appear in the window at the top of the remote.
- Set frequency to AA
- While clicker is off, hold power button until flashing text appears
- then press the two letter code
- When I ask a question in class (and start the timer), select A, B, C, D, or E as your answer.

How do you know your answer was received?



- In the window next to the answer you submitted a check mark will appear
- You can vote early and often, but only your last answer will be scored
- As long as the timer is going, you can change your answer by simply voting again

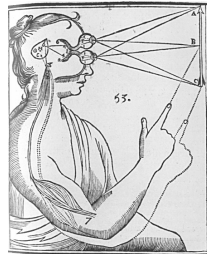
Registering your i>clicker

- In order to earn points for your i>clicker responses, you must register your i>clicker online (but don't worry, you will still get the points from before registration).
- Go to www.iclicker.com/registration
- Fill in:
 - your name
 - your PID (student ID) number
 - your clicker ID (located on the back of your clicker, below the scan code)
- click ENTER



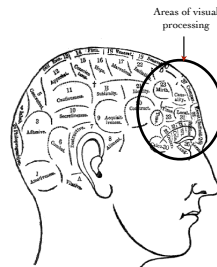
THE CHALLENGE

- ⊗ Descartes understood that visual information entered through the eyes (he thought it was conveyed by particles) and is sent from the retina through fibers until, at the pineal gland, it affects action
- ⊗ But it is a big jump from sensory input to recognizing objects so as to be able to respond appropriately to them
- ⊗ How to explain the ability to see and recognize objects?
 - ⊗ The mechanist gambit: different parts of the brain perform different tasks, some of them together realizing the ability to see
 - ⊗ The holist gambit: seeing is an ability of the whole—it is not divisible into the activities of the parts of the brain



GALL AND PHRENOLOGY

- ⊗ A master anatomist, Franz Joseph Gall at the beginning of the 19th century advanced a view of how the brain supported mental activities
 - ⊗ Different mental faculties are located in different parts of cortex and are responsible for the behavior associated with them
- ⊗ Gall supported this hypothesis by correlating the strengths of individuals on different psychological abilities with with protrusions on their skulls
 - ⊗ On the assumption that skull protrusions reflected the size of underlying brain areas
 - ⊗ Correlations based on selected examples, not statistics



HOLISM VS. LOCALIZATION

- ⊛ Not everyone agreed that processing specific information would be local
- ⊛ Pierre Florens, a vigorous critic of Gall, lesioned parts of the brains of rabbits and pigeons
- ⊛ Lesions to the cerebellum produced loss of equilibrium and of motor control
- ⊛ Removal of the cortex eliminated perception and judgment
- ⊛ But destruction of parts of cortex seemed to have no specific effects—only a general loss of ability
- ⊛ Defended an early version of the principle of mass action
- ⊛ The backlash to phrenology Florens reflected resulted in a general skepticism to localization of cognitive abilities in the brain that lasted several decades



Clicker Question

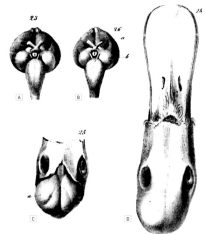
Which type of evidence did not figure in the attempts to determine the locus of vision in the brain in the 19th century?

- Electrical stimulation of the brain region
- Recording signals from the brain while organisms performed visual tasks
- Tracing neural pathways from the eyes to the brain
- Showing where lesions to brain regions affected the ability to see

8

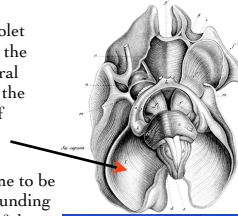
THE FIRST EXPERIMENTAL LOCALIZATION OF VISION

- ⊛ Bartolomeo Panizza sought to follow visual processing from the eyes to the brain
- ⊛ Working in various species of fish, birds, and mammals, he employed two experimental procedures:
 - ⊛ Tracing effects of destruction of the eyes
 - ⊛ Destruction of brain regions and identifying corresponding deficits
- ⊛ Also examined human patients with visual pathologies to find locus of damage
- ⊛ In a paper in 1855 he identified the posterior of the brain as the locus of vision
- ⊛ Panizza's studies, though, were largely ignored



FOLLOWING THE OPTIC TRACT

⊗ At nearly the same time, Pierre Gratiolet traced the optic tract in monkeys and the brains of human fetuses from the lateral geniculate nucleus of the thalamus to the rear of the cortex via the radiations of Gratiolet



⊗ Theodor Meynert identified what came to be called Meynert cells in the area surrounding the calcarine fissure as the terminus of these fibers



LOGIC OF EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

⊗ Tracing pathways

⊗ If a portion of a system is responsible for processing inputs of a given type, then there should be connections from the responsible sense organs to it

⊗ But the converse is not necessarily true

⊗ Something could receive inputs from a sense and not be responsible for processing information from it

⊗ Lesion experiments

⊗ If a portion of a system is responsible for a given phenomenon, then destroying it ought to eliminate the phenomenon

⊗ But the converse is not necessarily true

⊗ Something could cause the elimination of a phenomenon without itself being responsible for it

COMPETING LOCALIZATIONS OF VISION

⊗ In the 1870s and 1880s several investigators reported visual deficits in patients with damage to the rear of their brains

⊗ Hermann Munk developed techniques for removing small regions of animal brains and identified the occipital lobe as the one responsible for vision

⊗ David Ferrier, perhaps the leading neurologist of the period, claimed that the angular gyrus was the locus since lesions there seemed to generate blindness

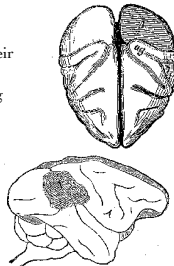
⊗ And his lesions to the occipital lobe did not generate blindness

⊗ Vast majority of findings supported Munk

⊗ In retrospect, Ferrier probably cut deeply into conduction pathways in lesioning the angular gyrus

⊗ And left much of the occipital lobe in his lesions there

⊗ But such assessments can only come later once researchers settled on Munk's view



Discussion Question

Once researchers settled on the occipital lobe as the locus of vision, what further questions called out for answers?

How did this area of the brain perform the task of vision?

What other parts of the brain might be involved?

Are there specialized regions with the occipital cortex that perform different tasks?

Why is visual processing done in the rear of the brain?

13

BUT HOW DOES STRIATE CORTEX WORK?

❖ The area of the occipital cortex Munk and others identified was distinguished anatomically by its striation pattern and came to be known as *striate cortex*

❖ The next question researchers turned to was what goes on in striate cortex?

❖ Does it have parts that do different things?

❖ Salomen Henschen followed pathways from the retina to striate cortex and concluded that parts of the retina projected to specific regions of the striate cortex (which he termed the *cortical retina*), yielding a topological map

❖ He was right about a map, but got the orientation totally reversed



Clicker Question

How did wars (the Russo-Japanese War and World War I) contributed to the development of the neuroscience of vision?

The wars led to increased funding for researchers who investigated vision

Armies had a high interest in improving the visual abilities of soldiers and experimented on ways to alter the visual system

Armies had a high interest in improving the visual abilities of soldiers and developed much better optical systems that, for example, aided night vision

The wars produced casualties who had suffered damage to particular parts of their brains and partial blindness, enabling researchers to link specific brain areas with specific areas of blindness

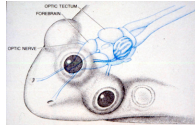
15

LESION VS. RECORDING STUDIES

- ⊛ Lesion studies show what ability is lost when a particular component of the mechanism is destroyed
 - ⊛ But cannot show that the component is itself responsible for the ability
- ⊛ Recording studies (single-cell recording, PET/fMRI) show what areas of the brain are active during a task
 - ⊛ If a brain area is involved in a task, it should be active when the task is performed
 - ⊛ But again, the converse is not necessarily true
- ⊛ Neither type of evidence is alone conclusive, but for both types to be found by chance seems increasingly less plausible
 - ⊛ Hence, enhancing the probative power of the evidence

FROGS LEAD THE WAY TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT VISUAL NERONS DO

- ⊛ In the 1930s Haldan Hartline differentiated cells in the frog's optic nerve that responded to light in their receptive fields
 - ⊛ *on cells* responded when a light was on
 - ⊛ *on-off cells* responded when a light switched from on to off or vice versa
 - ⊛ *off-only cells* responded only when a light was off and correlated responses with intensity of light
- ⊛ Following up, Horace Barlow demonstrated that with *on-off cells*, the response was less if the stimulus exceeded the receptive field
 - ⊛ Stimuli around the periphery of a cell's receptive field reduces response
 - ⊛ Conclusion: neurons are tuned to spots of light



Discussion Question

Pretend you are a frog equipped with the ability to detect small moving spots across your visual field. How could this be useful to you?

It provides a way to detect potential mates when they are moving near you

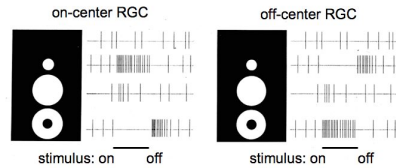
It provides a way of detecting insects that might make a nice meal

It provides a way for investigators to figure out how your vision system works

It provides a way to detect potentially dangerous projectiles so that you can duck to avoid them

CENTER-SURROUND CELLS IN RETINA

- Turning to retinal ganglion cells in cats, Steven Kuffler found that in when the cat was in darkness or diffuse light the neurons fired at a basal rate (1-20 Hz)
- Some cells exhibited an increased firing rate when a light spot was surrounded by darkness (*on-center*)
- Others exhibited an increased firing rate when a dark spot was surrounded by light (*off-center*)



Discussion Question

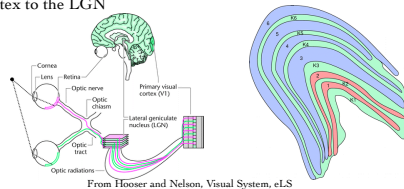
Center-surround cells register the difference in light levels, not the actual amount of light. What functional significance could this have?

- It allows organisms to detect boundaries between objects
- It allows the visual system to work at varying light levels
- It reflects the fact that our senses aren't there to paint a picture of the world, but to detect what is important in it
- Probably none. It is a crazy way to set up a visual system

23

LATERAL GENICULATE NUCLEUS OF THE THALAMUS

- The LGN is often portrayed as simply a way-station on the way to visual cortex, where the serious processing is claimed to occur
- The LGN segregates inputs by eye (layers 2, 3, 5 receive inputs from the ipsilateral eye) and type of retinal input cell (layers 1-2 receive inputs from midget cells in retina responding to detail and color)
- The true importance of the LGN, like the rest of the thalamus, is probably underestimated
 - Of likely significance are extensive feedback projections from cortex to the LGN



Discussion Question

Hubel and Wiesel several times emphasize that the processing in the occipital lobe is local. What does this mean?

Each neuron only responds to stimuli in particular parts of the visual field

Individual neurons receive information from specific source and determine their responses from that

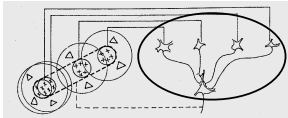
Information sent into cortex is sent to specific regions, not disseminated everywhere

Processing is piecemeal. A cell only processes a restricted amount of information

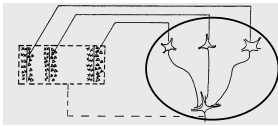
28

HOW DO SIMPLE AND COMPLEX CELLS DO IT?

- Hubel and Wiesel proposed simple model wiring diagrams to show how simple and complex cells could perform their different tasks



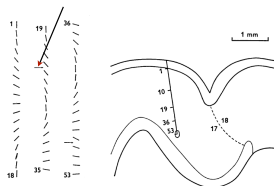
Simple cells: Fire if enough LGN cells with centers on the bar are active



Complex cells: Fire if one or another simple cell detecting a bar is active (or if several become active in sequence)

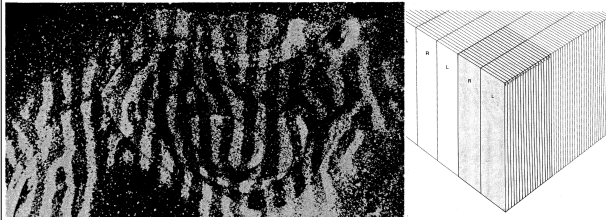
MICRO-ORGANIZATION OF STRIATE CORTEX

- When recording from electrodes inserted directly down through striate cortex
 - All cells responded to the same stimulus
- When recording from electrodes inserted obliquely to the surface
 - Successive cells responded to gradually rotated bars
 - With some reversals



OCULAR DOMINANCE COLUMNS

- Radioactively labeled 2-deoxyglucose is taken up by neurons when they are active
 - Allows staining those neurons that respond to vertical stripes
 - Black versus white bands represent different eyes
- Two dimensional arrangement of columns in visual cortex



CODING VISUAL INPUTS IN STRIATE CORTEX

- Hubel and Wiesel's speculation (hypothesis)
 - "Why evolution has gone to the trouble of designing such an elaborate architecture is a question that continues to fascinate us. Perhaps the most plausible notion is that the column systems are a solution to the problem of portraying more than two dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. The cortex is dealing with at least four sets of values: two for the x and y position variables in the visual field, one for orientation and one for the different degrees of eye preference. The two surface coordinates are used up in designating field position; the other two variables are accommodated by dicing up the cortex with subdivisions so fine that one can run through a complete set of orientations or eye preferences and meanwhile have a shift in visual field position that is small with respect to the resolution in that part of the visual world."

STRIATE CORTEX (V1) IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR SEEING

- Hubel and Wiesel's results were impressive
 - Won them the 1981 Nobel Prize
- But they raised more questions than they answered:
 - "Specialized as the cells of 17 are, compared with rods and cones, they must, nevertheless, still represent a very elementary stage in the handling of complex forms, occupied as they are with a relatively simple region-by-region analysis of retinal contours. How this information is used at later stages in the visual path is far from clear, and represents one of the most tantalizing problems for the future." (Hubel and Wiesel, 1968, p. 242)
- The recognition of the need for other areas led to the labeling of striate cortex as Visual Area 1 (V1) — other areas could then be designated V2, V3, etc.

THE ACCOUNT SO FAR

- ❖ Overall, there is a processing pathway from the eyes to Striate Cortex (aka Primary Visual Cortex or V1) that involves retinal ganglion cells, LGN, and Simple and Complex Cells in V1
- ❖ But in fact the mechanism is highly interactive, involving feedback, lateral, and feedforward projections whose significance is only beginning to be understood

