

Abstract: On visual categorisation and recognition

Based on the 'low-level' visible features of the objects we see (e.g. their colours, shapes, sizes, orientation), we can sort them into various categories and subsequently recognise them under these categorical descriptions. Intuitively, there is a difference in what it is like for you to see a hibiscus before and after learning to recognise hibiscuses. Some philosophers argue that the best explanation of the phenomenal difference is that gaining visual recognitional abilities changes how things look to you. That is, certain things will now appear to have 'high-level' features in addition to their low-level ones: e.g. once you learn how to recognise hibiscuses, those flowers will now appear *hibiscus-like* to you, over and above appearing to have certain colours, shapes, etc. In this talk I argue in favour of an alternative account of visual recognition that does not introduce high-level features. This account, I think, fares better because it has empirical support and can easily accommodate two features of visual recognition: recognitional abilities can be refined, sometimes to a very high degree (e.g. being able to tell apart individual people), and the speed of recognition depends on how similar the object looks to a "prototype" of the category.