

Types of Attention: Intelligence and Phenomenality

Carlos Montemayor
San Francisco State University

In this talk, I argue that attention suffices to perform all the epistemic roles associated with normatively relevant cognitive achievements, such as justification and knowledge. Coupled with the view that attention is largely dissociated from phenomenal consciousness, this claim suggests that the purpose of phenomenal consciousness, if any, is not essentially epistemic. After considering several approaches to this issue, two options are proposed as the most significant ones. If phenomenal consciousness plays an essential epistemic role, such a role must be explained in terms of information processing. This will require a careful examination of information theory in relation to consciousness research. Alternatively, if phenomenal consciousness does not play an essential epistemic role, some role must be proposed as the main function of phenomenal consciousness. Merely saying that it is an illusion is too uninformative. This second option leads to either non-epistemic approaches to phenomenal consciousness or to eliminativism.