

Seeing the Void – Supplementary Materials 1: Study Script

Study Title: An Investigation of the First-Person Perspective

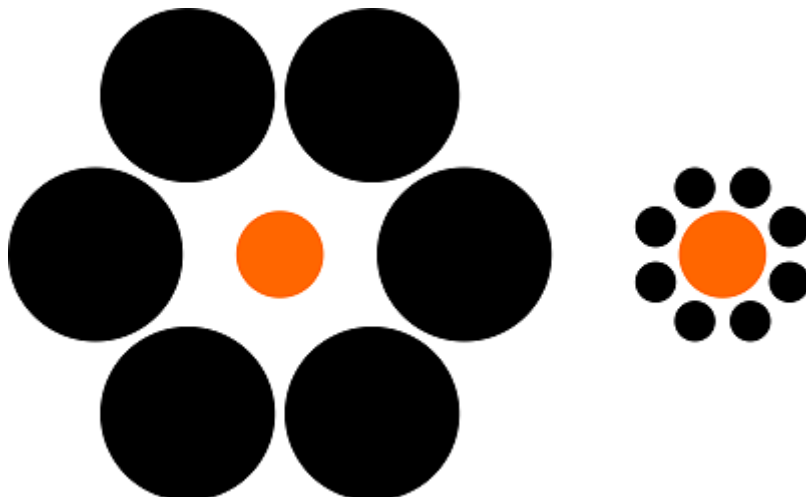
Guidelines for doing the awareness exercises

- The study is a guided exploration of your current first-person experience.
- You will be guided in the exploration with exercises, and also questions about your current experience.
- Take your time in exploring and describing your experience.
- Some of the experiences may be unusual and hard to describe, so just do your best to put it into words. It's ok if you can't. You may not have words for it right away.
- Everyone's experience of doing the exercises is different, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Guidelines Sheet

Aims	Things to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Set aside common-sense beliefs about yourself and the world- Be open to and curious about your experience- Describe your current sensory experience, particularly how it seems to you	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Intellectualising- Reporting your beliefs, thoughts or feelings- Reporting what you remember or imagine (images will still come up of course, which is fine, but we will be focussed on sensory experience)

Example:



Do the orange circles seem the same size or different?

Script: As an example, you can see that the orange circle on the right looks larger than the circle on the left. But this is a visual illusion, they are actually the same size. So, reporting how things seem to you, your subjective experience, is what we're interested in for this experiment, rather than for instance your belief that the circles are actually the same size.

Initial Instructions

What we are going to explore in the series of exercises is investigate your visual experience. I'm particularly interested in the fact that you can't see your head from your perspective. The first exercise is looking down at your body. Please remember to go by what you visually experience, rather than what you imagine or believe to be the case. The first two exercises are warm up exercises to get you used to the method. After that you will be asked to describe your experience.

1. Looking Down at Your Body

Please look down at your body. Notice that you can see your legs, torso and arms. Notice however that you can't see your head. The goal of the exercises that we'll be doing is to bring your attention to this spot. You might be able to see your nose. We'll explore this next.

One thing to keep in mind, is that this is about your first-person experience. Its not the claim that [name] doesn't have a head. I can see your head from where I am, but the question is what is it like to be you in your first-person experience.

Do you have any questions?

2. Looking at Your Nose

If you move your gaze around you can probably see your nose. What is this actually like in your first-person experience? Remember that we are suspending common sense beliefs and just going with how things seem. Is what you see like the nose that you see in the middle of someone's face or is it a large translucent blur? For me it stretches from the top to the bottom of the visual field. Is the same true for you? Does the blur always stay in the same location or do you find that this blur switches from side to side as you open and close each eye? Does the blur disappear altogether when you look straight ahead or is it a vague ghostly blur? However, we describe these blurs, what you visually experience behind the nose blurs that we are interested in here.

Do you have any questions?

3. Bringing Your Hands Back

You know what its like to see someone put their hands past their head. We'll be doing this but noticing what its like from your perspective. Hold up your hands in front of you as if you were holding a basketball. Look at the gap between them. You can move them around and put different things in the gap. Now very slowly bring your hands back towards you. Repeat this a few times.

What was your experience of doing this exercise?

Questions:

1. For others it looks like you put your hands past your head. Did it look like that to you?
2. Do you see your hands the whole time or did they seem to disappear?
3. If so, where did they seem to go?

4. Tracing Out the Edges of the Visual Field

This exercise explores the boundaries of your visual experience. First, we will look at the boundaries of an object in the room. Use your finger to trace out the boundary of a chair or some other object. Notice that it is in a surrounding environment such as a room. Does your visual field have a boundary? Is it in anything? To test this put your arms out and trace out the edges of your visual field. Without moving your head or eyes is there anything visually outside of this field? Put your hands right out and notice them disappear from your visual field. Notice again what do you seem to be looking out of. Now take notice of how many eyes do you seem to be looking out of in your visual experience. Do you seem to be looking out of two eyes? What do you seem to be looking out of in your visual experience?

What was your experience of doing this exercise?

Questions:

1. Is your visual field in anything such as a surrounding environment like objects in the room are? Do there seem to be things visually outside of it?
2. How many eyes do you seem to be looking out of in your first-person visual experience?
3. What do you seem to be looking out of?

5. Pointing

In this exercise you will use a pointing finger to assist you in directing your attention to the spot where you can't see your head. Point at a distant thing such as a wall. Notice its shape and colour. It is a thing that is extended in space. Notice that it is opaque. You cannot see through it. Now point to the floor. Again, notice the coloured expanse and its textures. Now point to your foot. Again, it is a shaped and coloured thing. Point to your

chest and notice its colours and shape, perhaps there is movement from your breathing. Now by contrast point to where you are looking from. Remember to attend to what you are pointing at rather than the finger itself. In your present experience are there any colours here? Any shape? Any texture? Any movement? Are there any eyes, cheeks or mouth here?

What did you seem to be pointing at in your visual experience? (feel free to point again if you like)

Probe Questions:

1. Did you seem to be pointing at any shapes, colours?
2. Did you seem to be pointing at any eyes, mouth or cheeks?
3. Did you seem to be pointing at a face?
4. Can you come up with your own words to describe it?

6. The Card Experiment

Hold out the card and look in the mirror. You can see your face. Notice that your face is in the mirror. It's over there about a foot away. It is also quite small and facing the wrong way. Is there a face where you are looking from in your visual experience? Notice the differences between the face and the gap in the frame. Notice that the face is opaque while the gap in it is perfectly transparent. Also notice that the face excludes other things while the gap in the card doesn't – it includes anything in it. Now move the frame around. Notice how it contains anything in the room: parts of the walls and table. Is where you are looking from like this gap? To test this, slowly bring the frame back (towards where others see your face. Keep attending to the gap as it gets closer and bring your attention all the way back to where you are. Notice how the gap gets larger and encompasses more of the room. Bring the frame all the way back.

What was your experience of doing this exercise?

Questions:

1. Is what you are looking out of face-like or more like the gap? (you can use your own words to describe it.)
2. Did you seem to be more like the face or the gap?
3. Does anything visually get in the way of, or come between, you and what you are seeing?

7. The Closed Eyes Experiment

Phase 1

Please close your eyes. Your visual field is now dark. Attend to the darkness. Is it dark in all directions? Try attending inwards again, this time behind where you feel your head. Is it also dark there outside of your visual field? How would you describe it?

You can open your eyes.

Phase 2

I'll ask you to close your eyes again and I'll ask you some more questions, but this time just let them guide your investigation of your experience rather than answering them.

Please your eyes again. Now attend to your bodily sensations. What shape is your body? How large is your body? How many toes do you have on present evidence? Attend to your left ear. Notice the sensation. What shape does it feel like? Circle? Square? Can you feel a shape? What shape is your face in your present experience? Do you have precisely shaped face? Would you know what a face was if you had never seen or touched one?

Q: Can you describe your experience of doing this exercise?

1. Did you feel 10 toes? Did you feel ears.
2. Was your body precisely shaped? What was it like to feel it?
3. Was your face precisely shaped? What was it like to feel it?

Phase 3.

Please close your eyes again and listen to sounds. Some are near and some are far. Some are loud and some are soft. They arise and then are gone again. Try touching your face and head. Notice that you feel distinct shapes where ever you are touching – such as a nose, cheek, ears, hair. Do you feel the shape of your face all at once? Or do you have to imagine its overall shape? Are you in these sensations or are they in your awareness? Widen your attention so that you are aware of sounds, thoughts and bodily sensations. Do these occur in separate fields of experience, or are they occurring in a single field of experience? Setting aside beliefs, imagination and feelings, are you person-like in your present sensory experience?

Questions:

1. Were your thoughts separated oof from the sounds? (i.e., in a head). Where did your thoughts seem to be?
2. Were you in your bodily sensations or were they in your awareness? Did you seem to be in a body?
3. Were you person-like in your experience?

8. Pointing off to the Side vs at the Looker

Phase 1

Again, we will be pointing. This time we will be contrasting the spot that you are looking from with another spot where you can't see anything – off the edge of your visual field to notice if there are any differences. First, put your left hand out to one side and watch as it disappears from your visual field. Now point off to the side and attend to that spot. It is important that you don't move your eyes in this direction, just keep your eyes focused

straight ahead and then attend off the edge of your visual field. Do you experience any things, shapes or colours in this location from your first-person perspective? Now by contrast point to where others see your face. Is there a difference in the experience between these two locations? If so, what is the difference?

Q: Can you describe your experience of doing this exercise? Does there seem to be a difference between the two locations? If so, can you describe it?

Probe question: Do you seem to be pointing at yourself? What is it like to be you?

9. The Tube Experiment

Phase 1

Participants look through a cardboard tube at their face in a mirror. Questions:

1. Going by what's given now (not by what you remember or imagine) how many faces are there in the tube?
2. Are you currently face-to-face?
3. Notice that the face over there blocks up the end of the tube. By contrast is the near end closed, or open?
4. Notice the shapes, colours and textures of the face. Notice its movement. Is there any shape at your end? Any colour? Any texture? Any movement?
5. Notice the complexity of the face. Is the near end complex or is it simple? Is it opaque like that face or is it transparent?

Q: Can you describe your experience of doing this exercise?

Probe questions:

1. Were you face-to-face?
2. Was the near end closed or open? Was it blocked up?
3. Were there colours at the near end? Did it seem complex or simple? Was it opaque or transparent?

Phase 2

Now we will go into the tube again to investigate the experience further. Please place your face in the tube again.

1. Again notice whether you are face-to-face in the tube. Again, contrast the face with your end of the tube. Are there are shapes or colours at your end? Is the near end opaque or transparent? Is it closed or open? Now contrast the face with where you are looking from. Does either end seem more awake or aware in some sense than the other?