

Sub- and supraliminal priming of action

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Choice reaction times to visual stimuli (targets) may be influenced by preceding subliminal stimuli (primes) even if the primes are made invisible by backward masking. Using this method, we made recently several interesting observations which shed some light on the role of consciousness in cognition. It is commonly accepted that the cognitive operations emerge from the competition between two types of processes. Controlled processes reflect a person's current attentional set, intentions, and task requirements. In contrast, automatic processes are thought to be independent of attention and intention. A controlled process can be transformed into an automatic one only after an extensive practice. We showed, however, that an intentional control over processing of subliminal stimuli is possible. Moreover, it has been argued that there are qualitative differences between conscious and unconscious processing in priming. Our recent results show that these differences are due to unmatched stimulation under the both conditions rather than due to fundamental differences between them.

