

The covert recognition and unconscious emotional effect of faces

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Experimental studies of the phenomenon of covert recognition (identification) of faces in patients with prosopagnosia and in normal subjects are analyzed together with studies of unconscious emotional effects of faces. These studies are discussed in terms of the hypotheses of proto-vision (“pervovideniye”, E.Y. Artemyeva, 1980) and affective primacy (R. Zajonc, 1980), according to which, in perceptual microgenesis, conscious recognition of an object (the meaning) is preceded by its primary emotional evaluation (the sense). Existing experimental evidence in favor of covert face recognition in normal subjects is not entirely convincing and unambiguous. There is much more convincing evidence in favor of multifactorial unconscious emotional effects of faces.

Key words and phrases: affective primacy hypothesis, affective priming, covert face recognition, visual perception of faces, face attractiveness, meaning and sense (significance), skin conductance response (SCR), unconscious emotions.

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