

CONSCIOUSNESS

016 **DECODING CONSCIOUSNESS**

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Geraint Rees

Geraint Rees is a Professor of Cognitive Neurology at University College London, where he directs the Institute of Cognitive

Neuroscience. His research interests focus on understanding the neural basis of human consciousness in health and disease, using functional neuroimaging techniques in combination with other methodologies. Recently he has pioneered new approaches to analysing functional brain images to individuate the contents of consciousness, and has written and spoken on the potential moral and ethical implications of such techniques. His work has been internationally recognised by award of the Young Investigator Medal of the Organisation for Human Brain Mapping, the Experimental Psychology Prize; and he has given the Francis Crick lecture at the Royal Society and the Goulstonian lecture at the Royal College of Physicians. In 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences. In addition to his research interests, Geraint has a track record of personal and professional commitment to improving clinical academic training both at UCL Partners and throughout the UK. He oversees the NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow and Clinical Lecturer programmes across UCL Partners and is the lead for postgraduate education & training within the UCL/UCLH Comprehensive Biomedical Research Centre and the UCL Faculty of Biomedical Sciences. Nationally, he is a member of the Medical Programme Board for England, Deputy Chair of the BMA's Medical Academic Staff Committee, and a member of the MRC Neurosciences & Mental Health Board. He actively contributes to development of national policy on clinical academic training.

Abstract Consciousness is central to the human condition, furnishing us with phenomenal awareness of the external world and the ability to reflect upon our own thoughts and experiences. Almost half our communication concerns the contents of our thoughts and experiences. The shared language we use to do this obscures the recent realization that there is substantial variability in how different people experience the same physical environment. Moreover, key aspects of this variability in conscious experience are heritable, suggesting a conscious phenotype with adaptive significance. In this talk I will explore the nature of individual differences in conscious perception and their neural basis, focusing on both structure and function of the human brain.