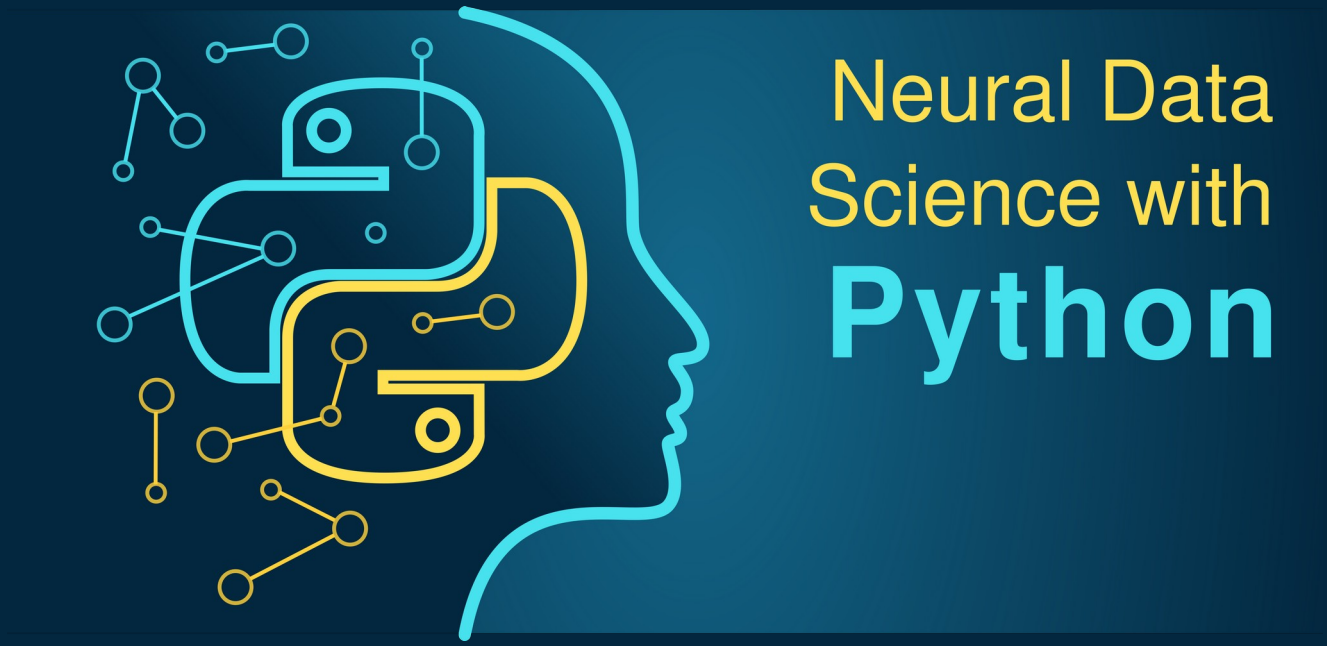


L3 : Wrangling Spike Trains

Michael Graupner

SPPIN – Saint-Pères Institute for the Neurosciences

Université de Paris, CNRS

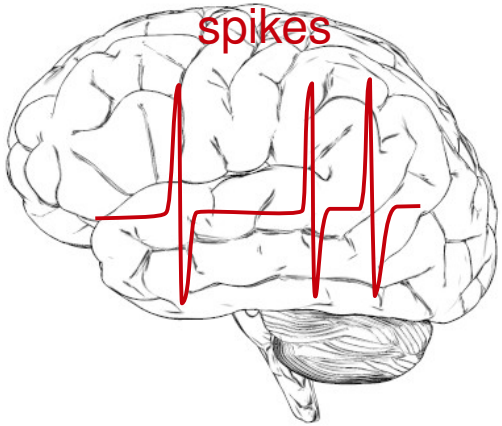
Cognitive processing

stimulus

response

The quest for the Neural Code

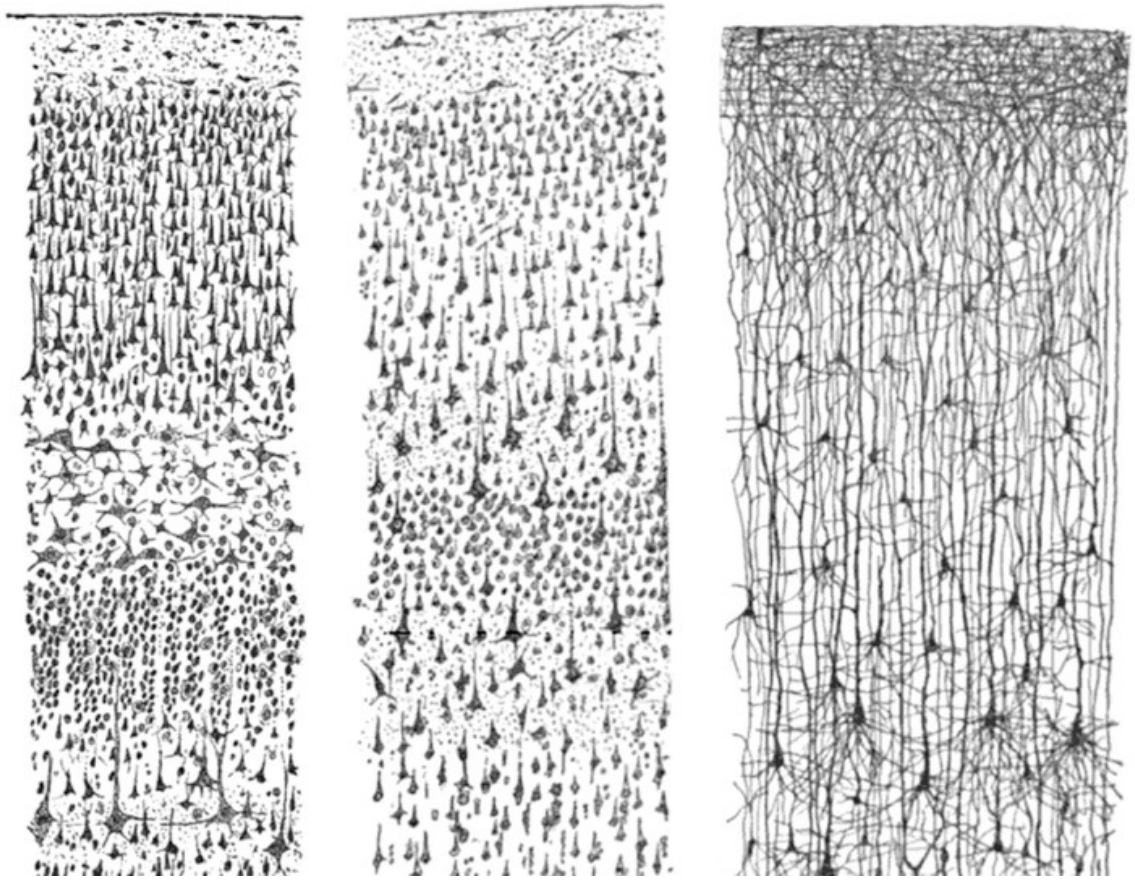
stimulus



response

- How is information represented in the brain ?
  Is the information carried by the timing of spikes, or in the firing rate
- How much information does the neural population contain ?
  Population codes are complicated, neurons might carry redundant information
- On what time scales is information represented ?
  Over which time scale is information integrated

What is the brain made of ?



Ramon y Cajal (Nobel Prize 1906)

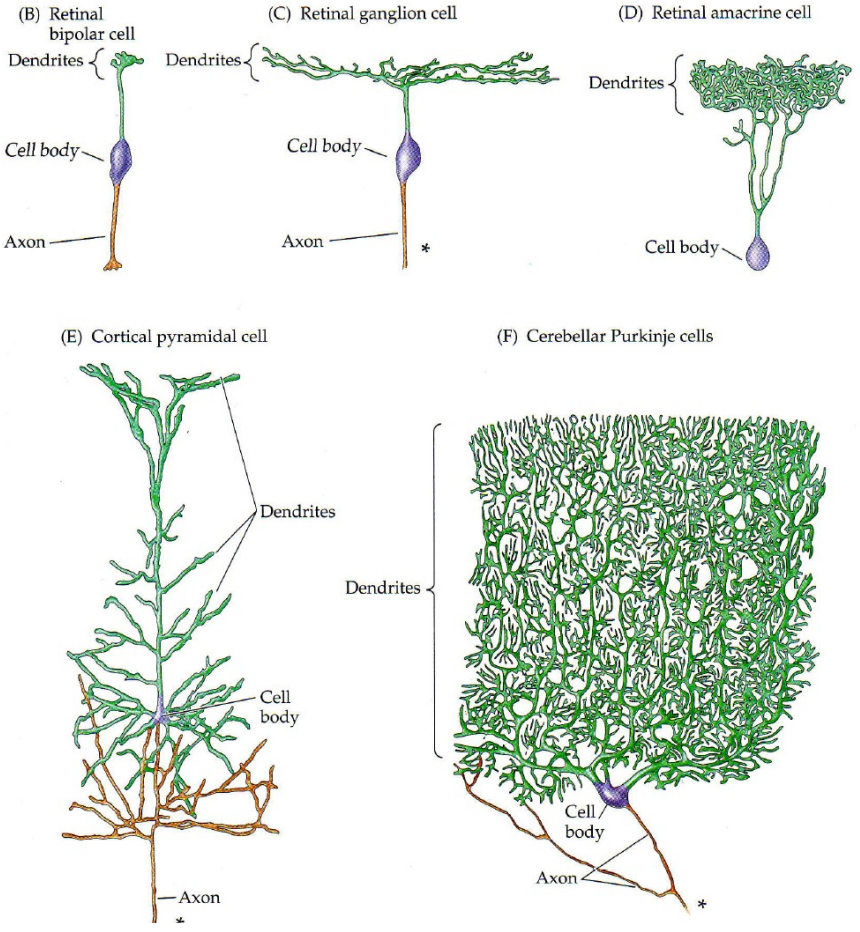
→ neuron doctrine

vs

Joseph von Gerlach (1871), Camillo Golgi

→ ~~Reticular theory~~

Neurons = principal computation units



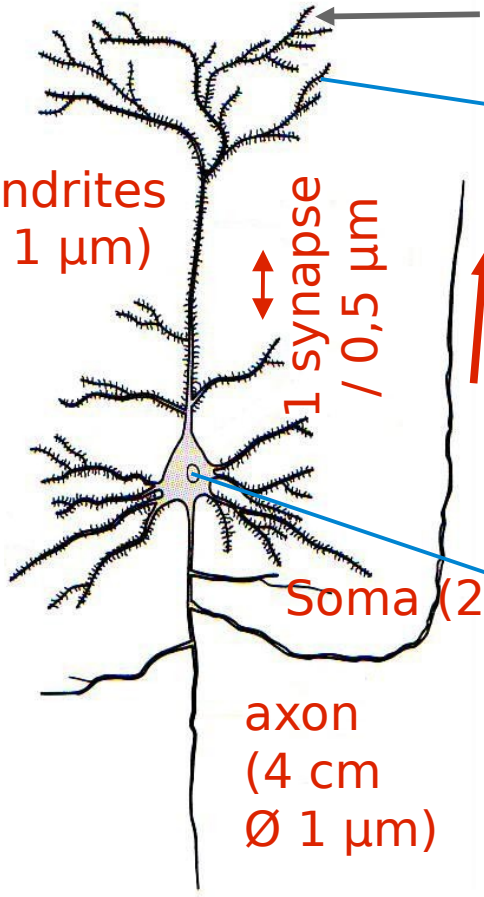
dendrites

soma

axon

flow of information

Typical cortical neuron



synapses
(~ 10,000)

dendrites
(Ø 1 µm)

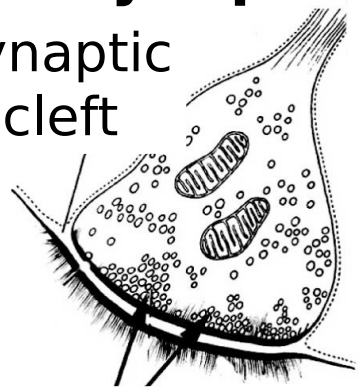
1 synapse
/ 0,5 µm

to
other
neurons

Soma (20 µm)

axon
(4 cm
Ø 1 µm)

The synapse

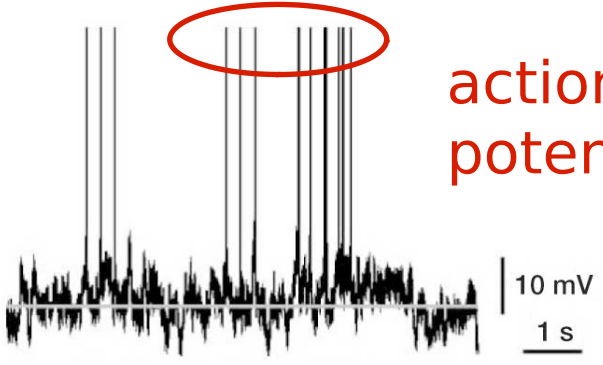


synaptic
cleft

presynaptic
neuron

vesicles

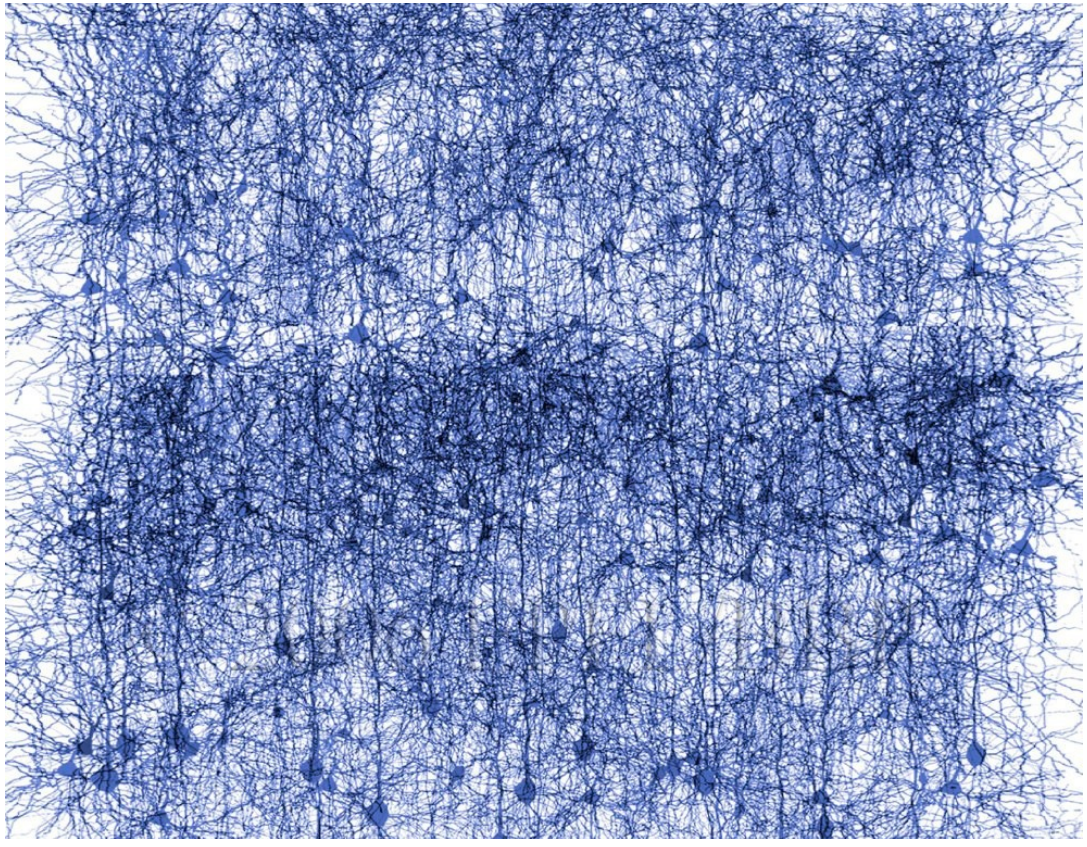
postsynaptic
neuron



membrane
potential

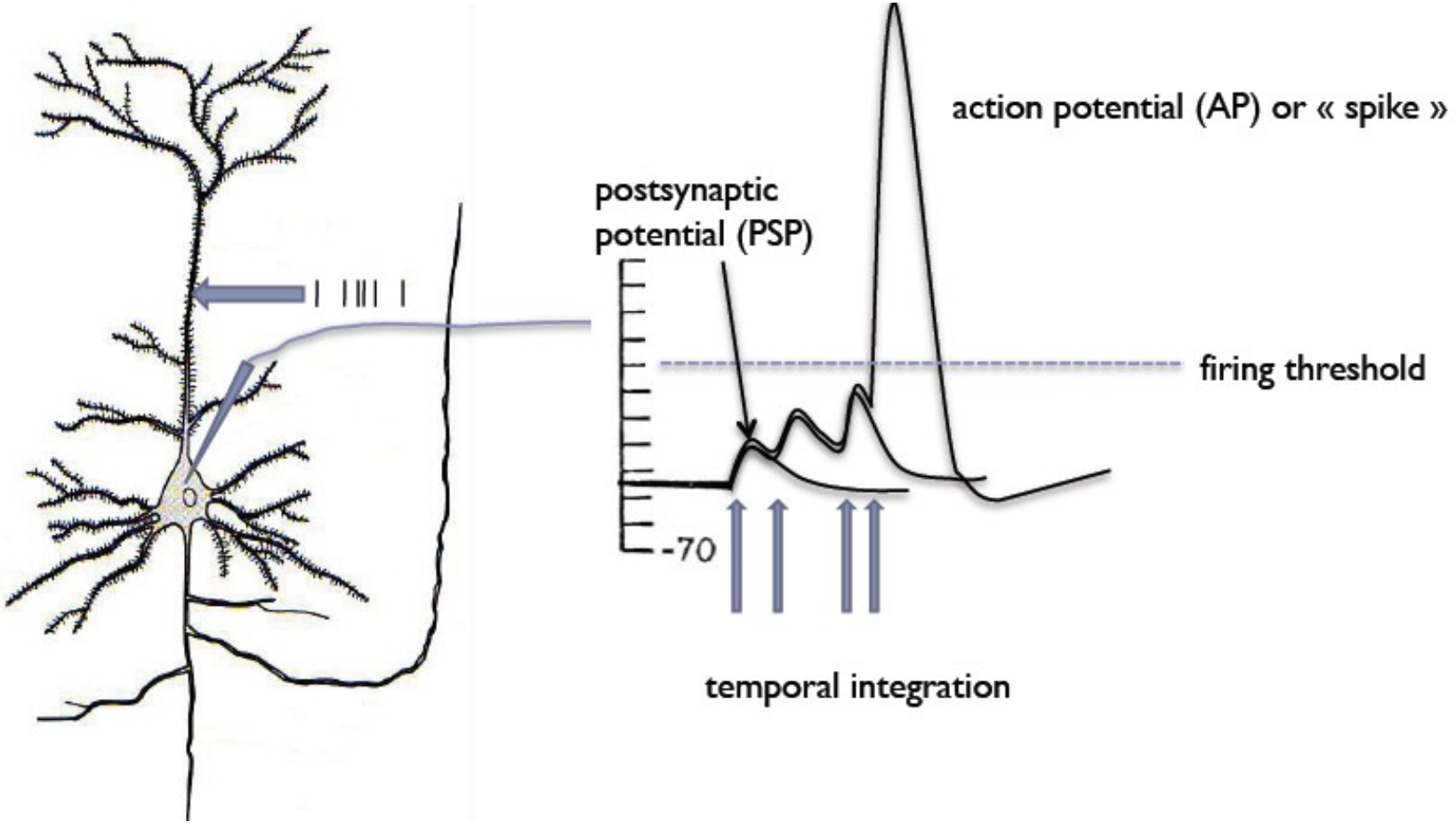
action
potentials

Neurons form networks

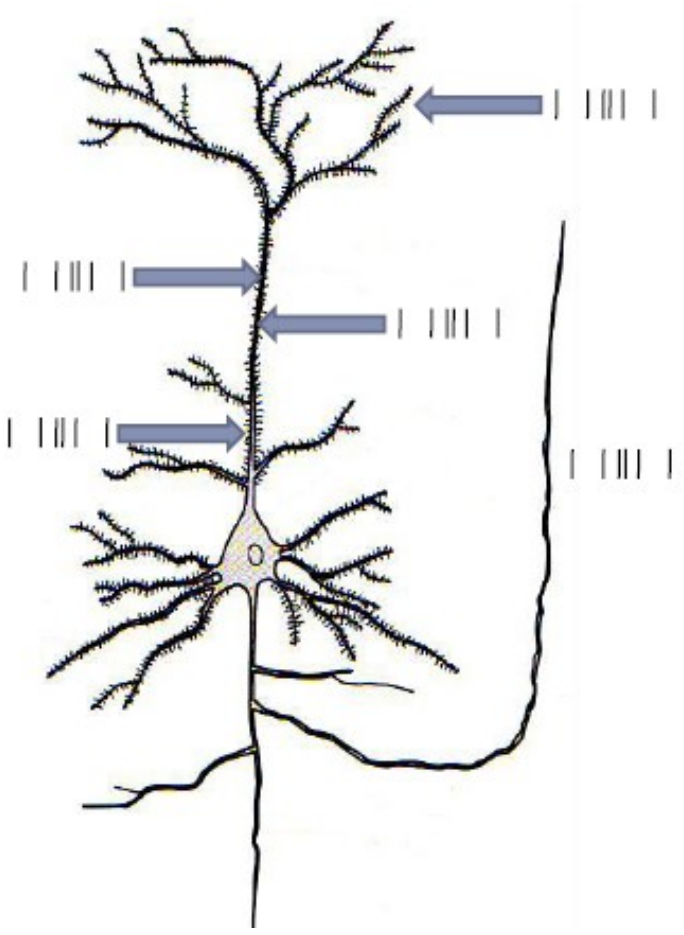


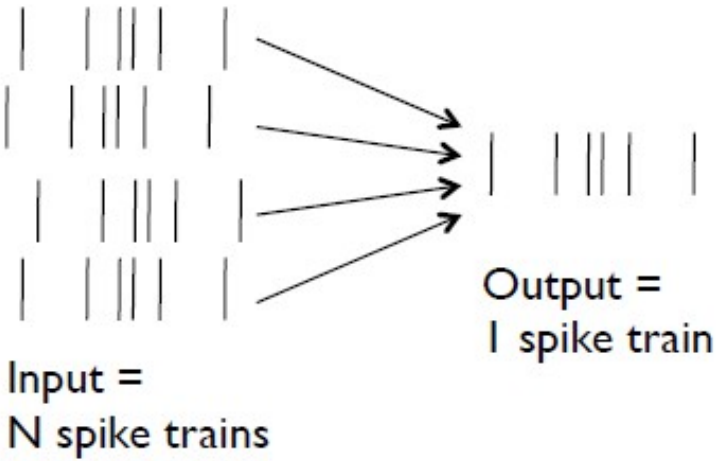
The brain: A network of 86 billion (10^{11}) neurones connected by 10^{15} synapses

Neural integration



Neural integration

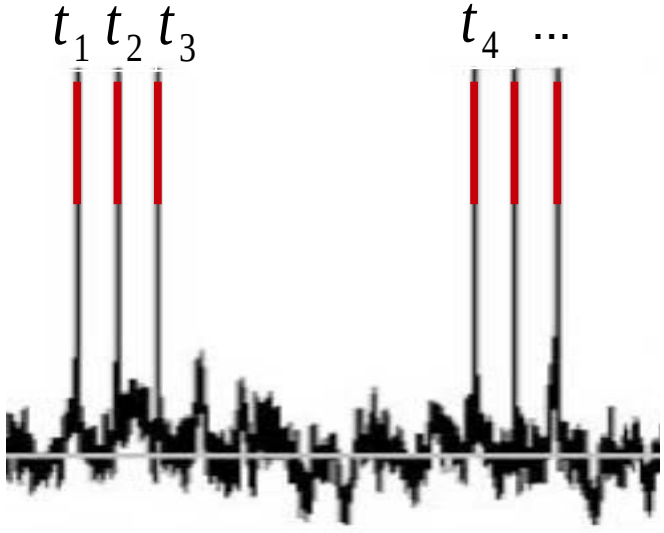




spike train ... all action potentials (spikes) emitted by a neuron over a given period of time

Statistics of trains of action potentials

- Spike train (also: discharges, action potentials):
  → a sequence of spike times t^k
  → only the action potential is considered

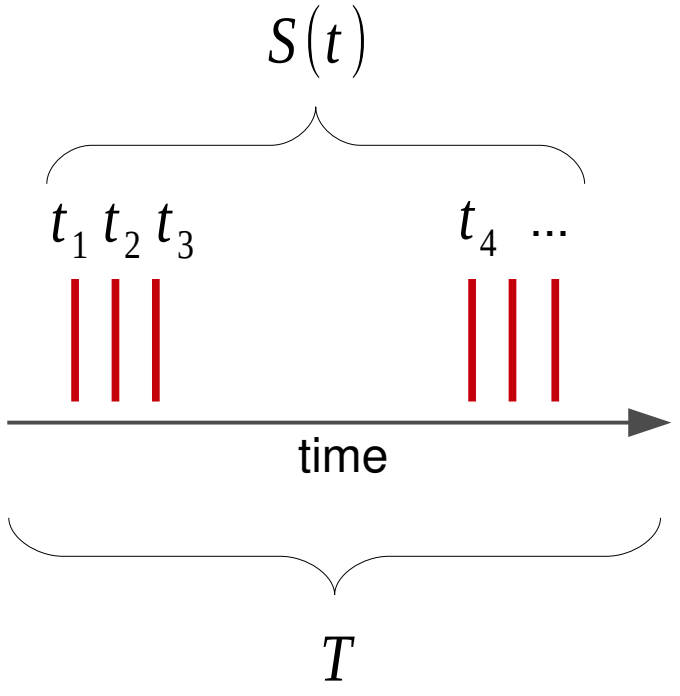


Statistics of spike-trains: firing rate

- Spike train (also: discharges, action potentials):
  → a sequence of spike times t^k
  → only the action potential is considered
  → a signal $S(t)$

- Firing rate r or ν :
  → number of spikes/time

$$r = \frac{N_{spikes}}{T}$$



Statistics of spike trains: inter-spike interval

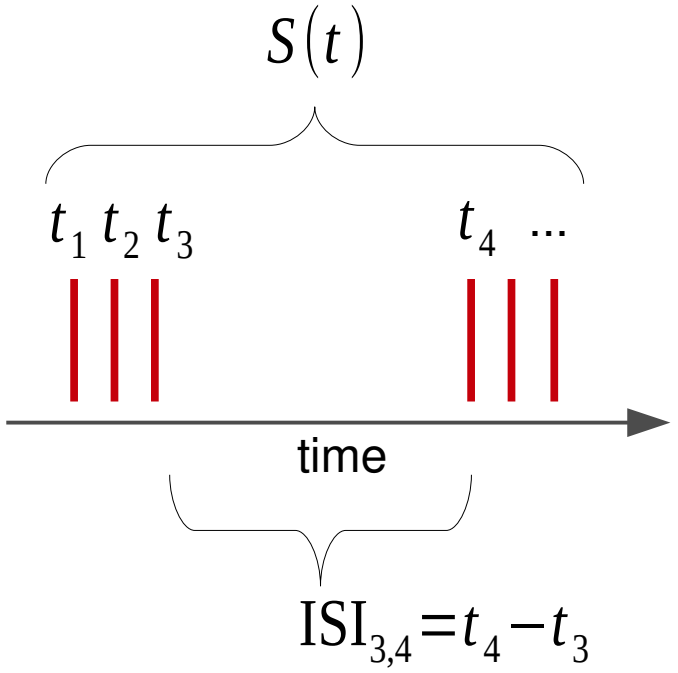
- Spike train (also: discharges, action potentials):
  → a sequence of spike times t^k
  → only the action potential is considered
  → a signal $S(t)$

- Firing rate r or ν :
  → number of spikes/time

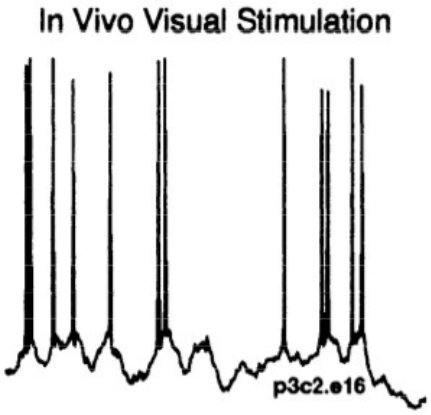
$$r = \frac{N_{spikes}}{T}$$

- Inter-spike interval (ISI) :

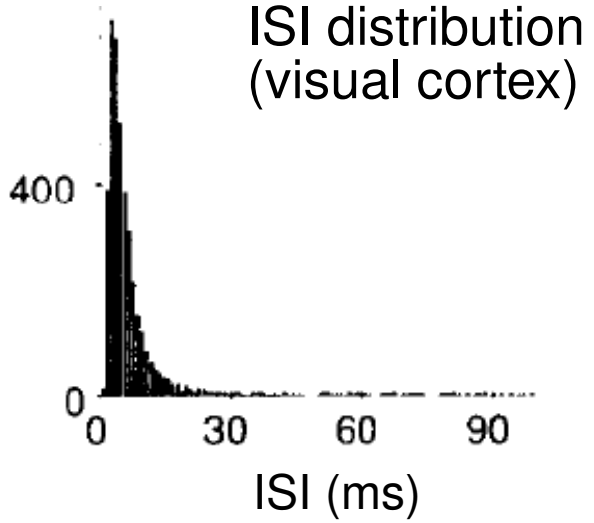
$$\mathrm{ISI} = t^{n+1} - t^n$$



Statistics of spike-trains : inter-spike interval

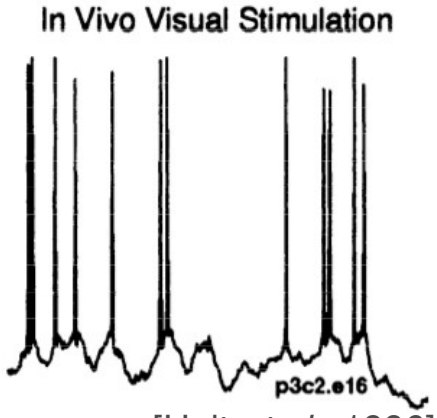


[Holt *et al.,* 1996]

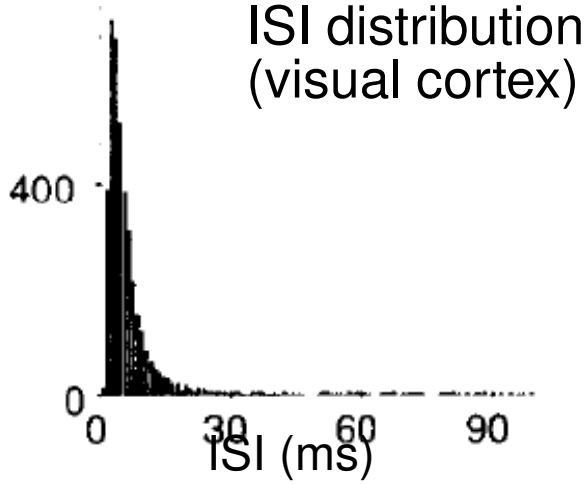


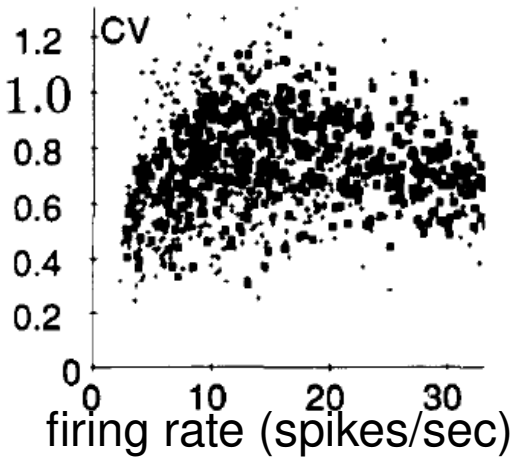
- ISIs of cortical neurons are highly variable
- ISI distribution is highly skewed with a few outliers

Statistics of spike-trains : coefficient of variation



[Holt *et al.*, 1996]

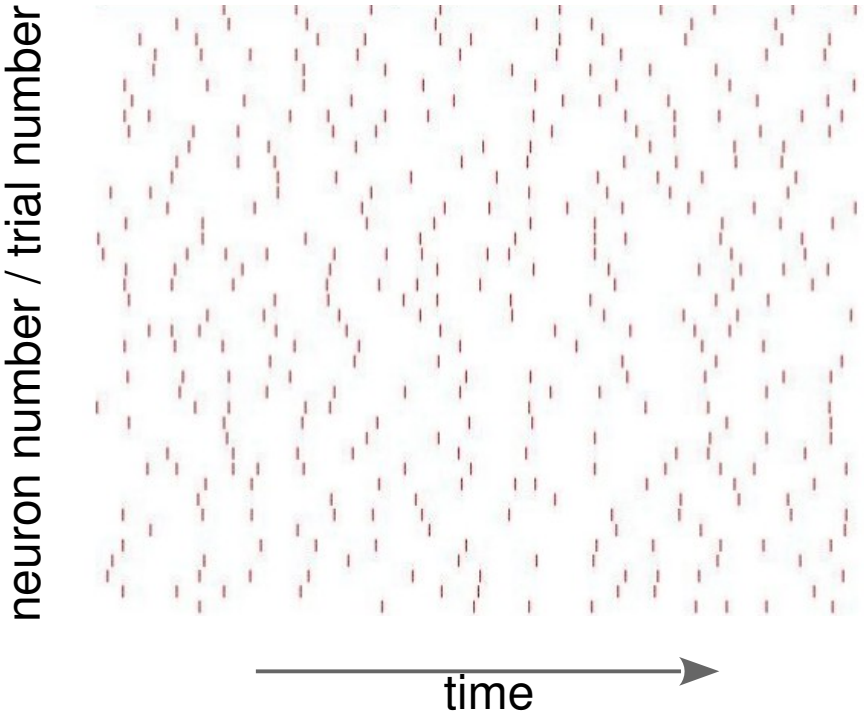




- Coefficient of Variation (CV) :
  - → ratio between standard-deviation and mean of the inter-spike interval
  - → measures the irregularity of spike trains
  - → spike are often irregular (CV~1) and vary from one trial to another

$$\mathrm{CV} = \frac{ISI_{\text{standard deviation}}}{ISI_{\text{mean}}}$$

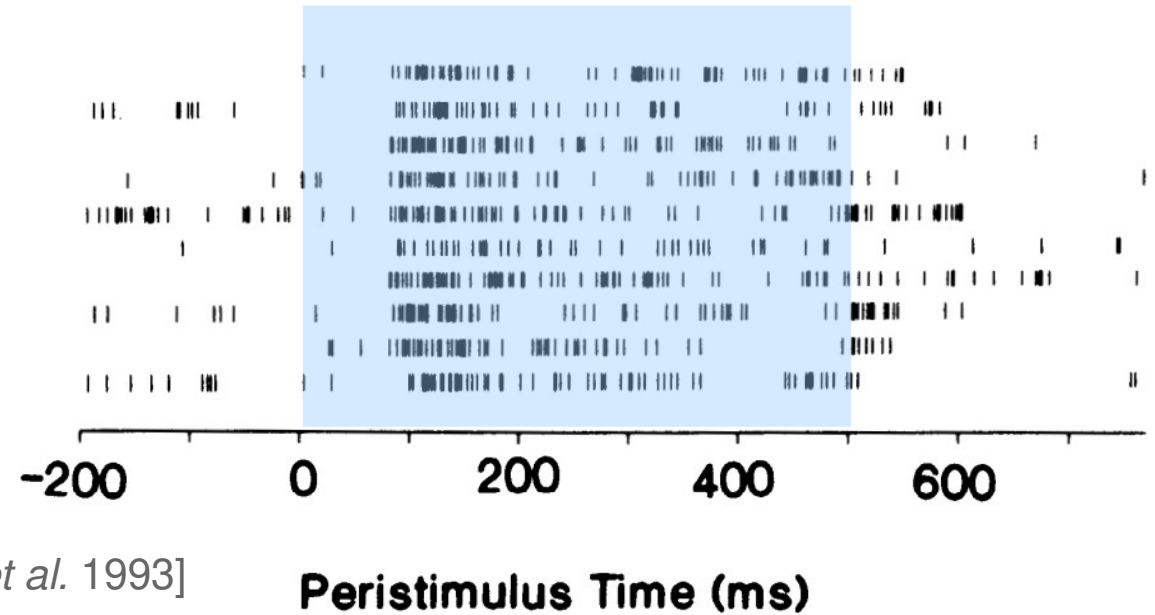
Visualization of spike-trains : raster plot



- provides raw view of spike-times
- each individual line represents an action potential at a specific time of a given neuron, or at a given repetition
- also called **rastergram**

Visualization of spike-trains : PSTH

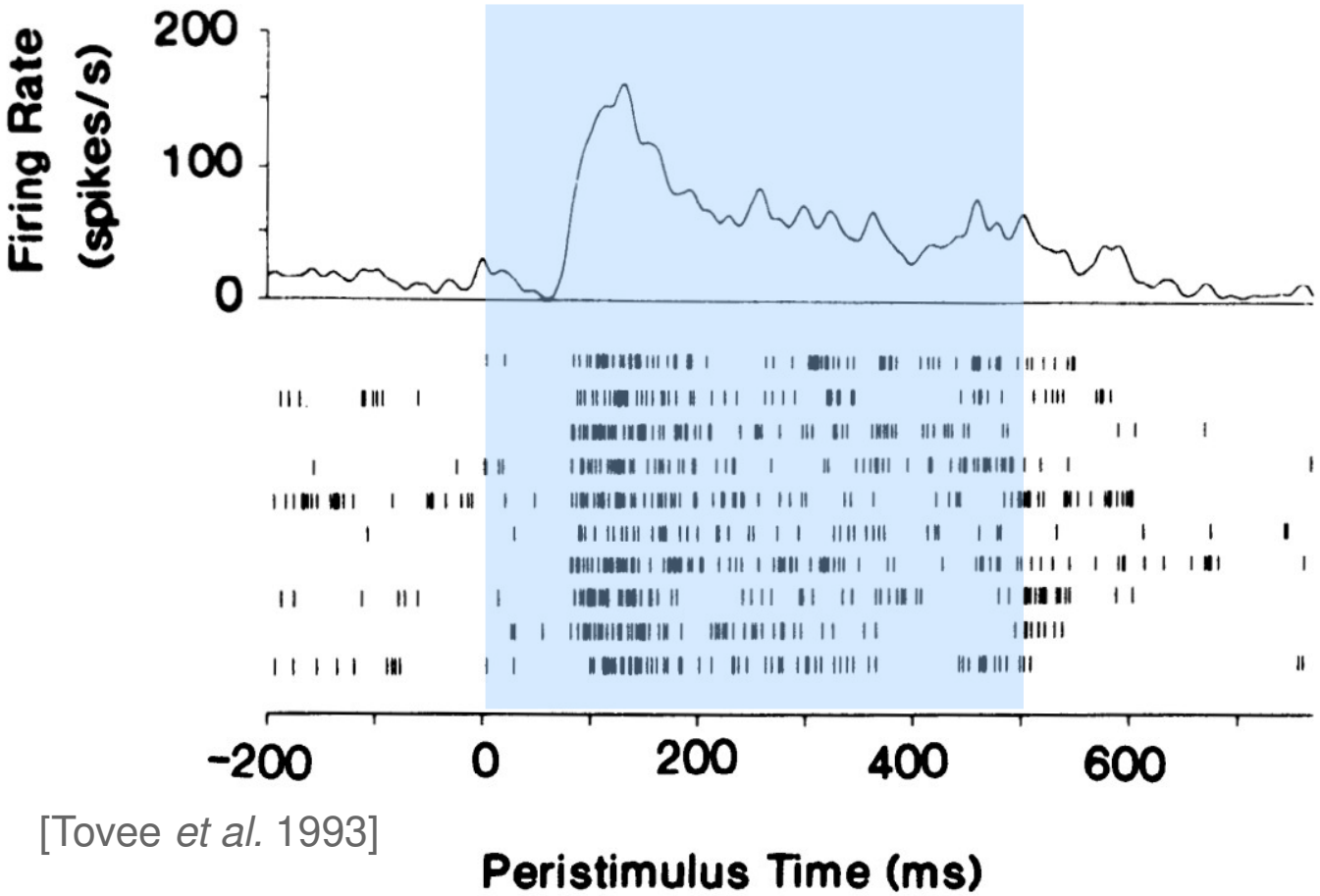
visual stimuli, duration = 500 ms



[Tovee *et al.* 1993]

- recording in primate visual cortex
- each line represents a repetition of the same recording

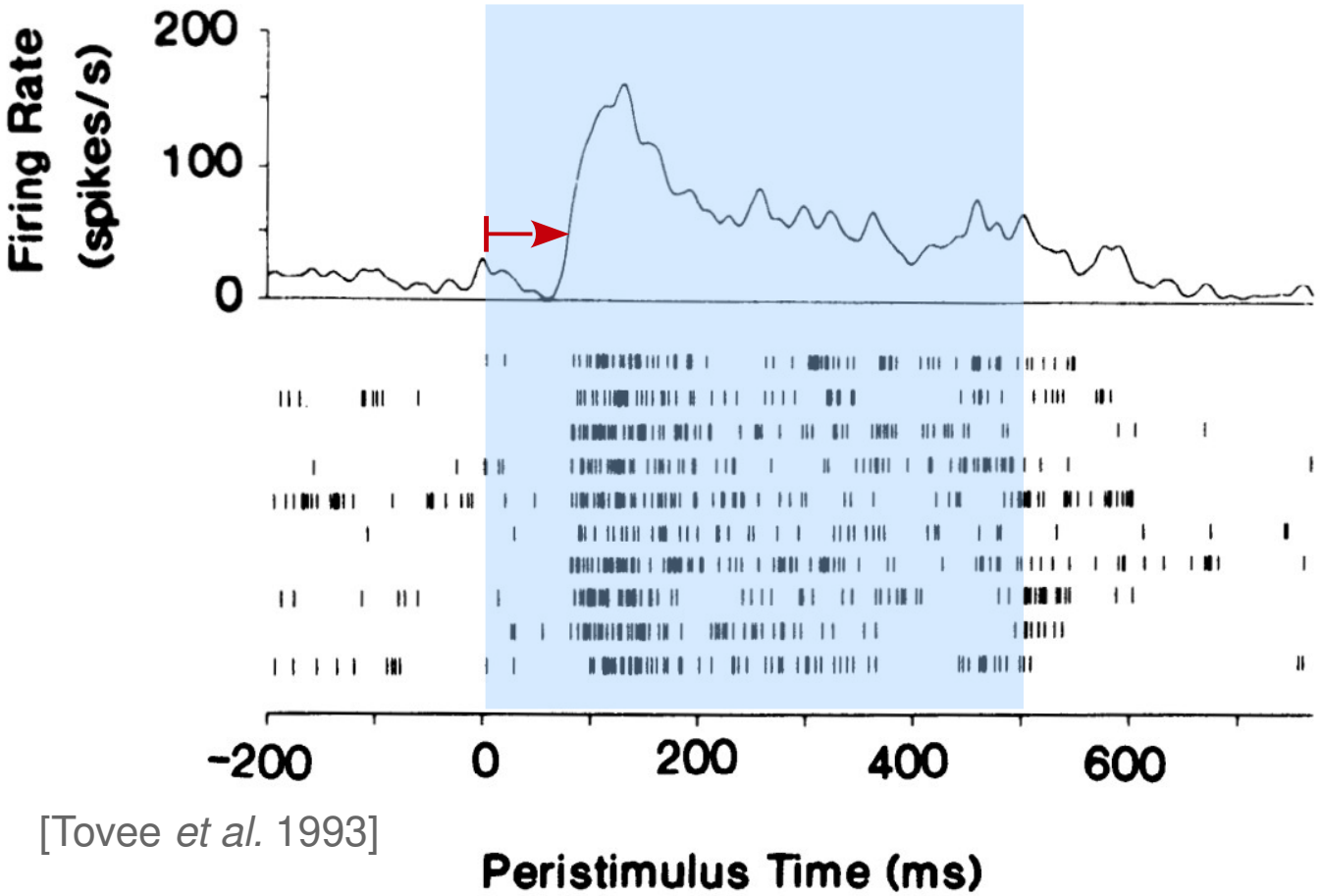
Visualization of spike-trains : PSTH



[Tovee *et al.* 1993]

- the **peri-stimulus time histogram** averages all repetitions of an experiments, showing spike number/firing rate before, during and after a stimulus
- construction : time is binned and responses falling in the same bin are combined

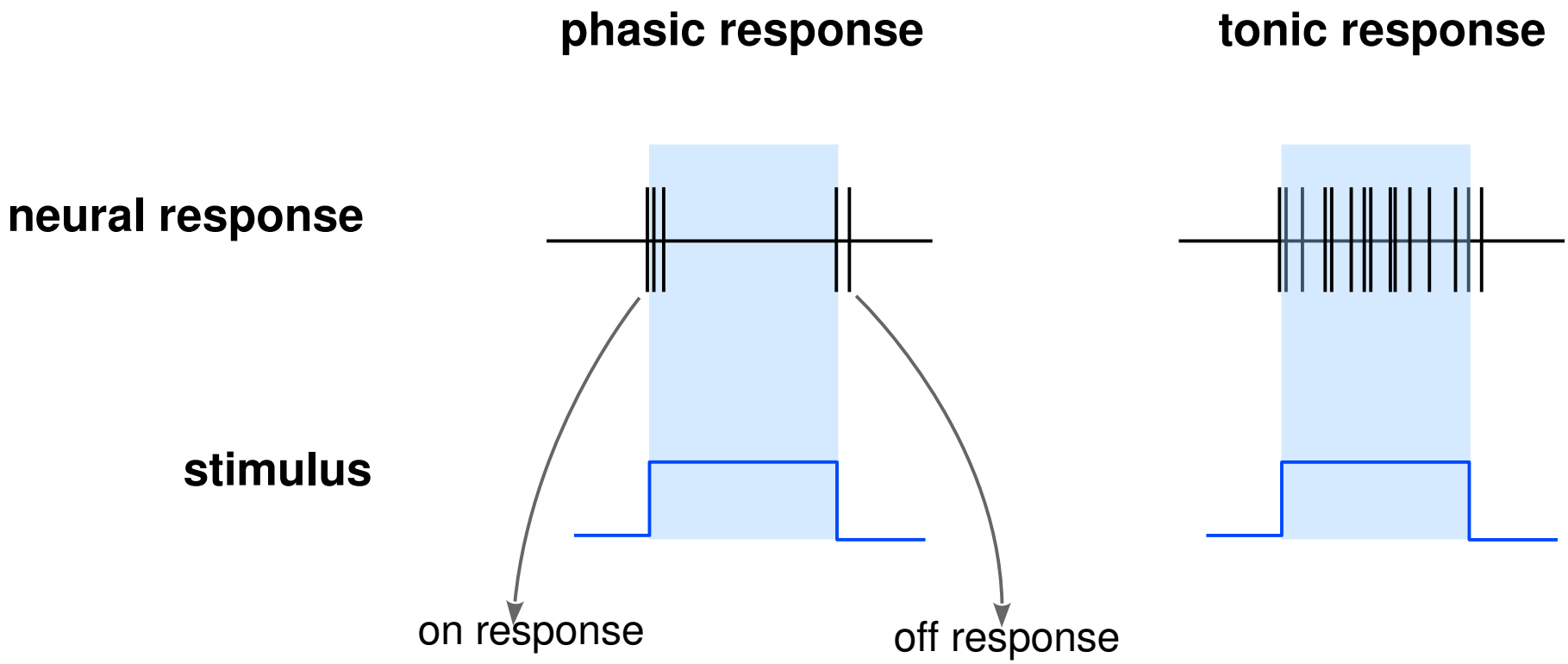
Response latency



[Tovee *et al.* 1993]

- **response latency** : the time it takes a neuron to respond to a stimulus

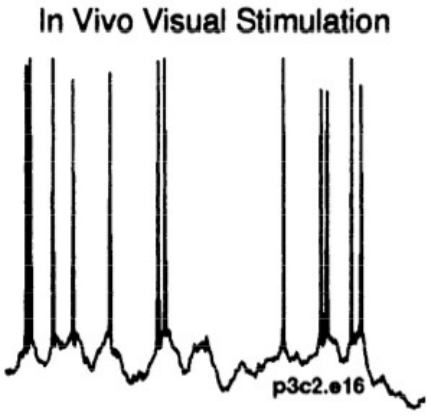
Neural response behaviors



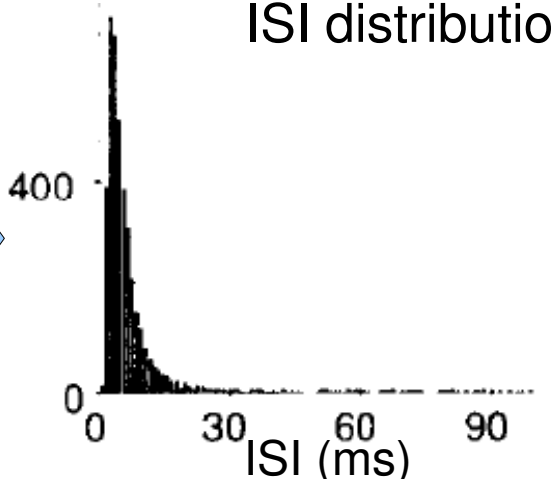
The Poisson process

real neurons

→ highly variable, maybe spikes don't matter, only the rate

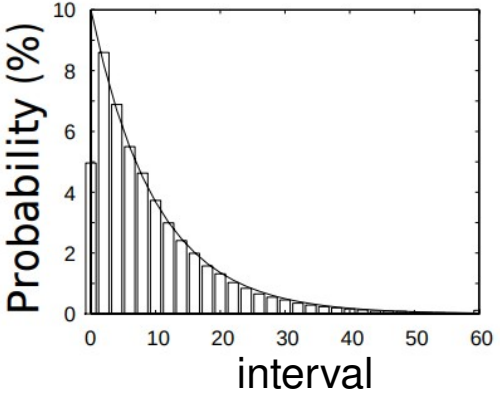


ISI distribution

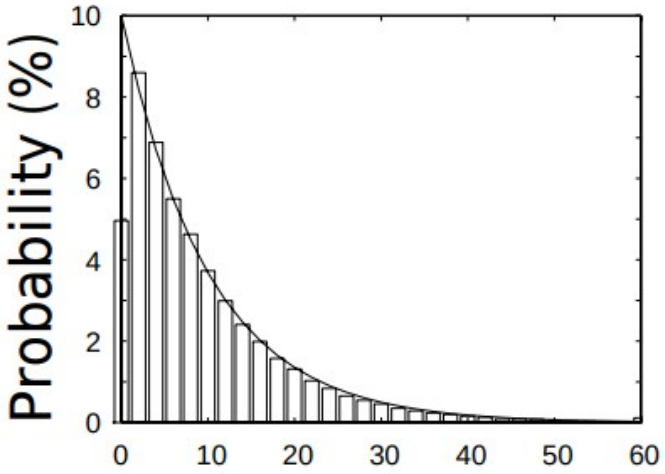


→ **Poisson process**

Poisson processes are used to describe cases with rare, random events in time or space, e.g., radioactive emissions, traffic accidents, earthquakes and action potentials.



The Poisson process



- **Poisson process** : used in scenarios where we are counting the occurrences of certain events that appear to happen at a certain rate *r*, but completely at random (without a certain structure).
- The **interspike interval (ISI) density (histogram)** for a homogeneous Poisson process (constant rate) is an exponential function. The most likely interspike intervals are short ones and long intervals have a probability that falls exponentially as a function of their duration.

$$p(\tau) = r \exp^{-r\tau}$$

τ ... waiting time for the next spike to occur

r ... rate of the Poisson process