

NEW FROM

Seeing with the Hands

Blindness, Vision and Touch After Descartes

Mark Paterson

A literary, historical and philosophical discussion of attitudes to blindness by the sighted, and what the blind 'see'

The 'man born blind restored to light' was one of the foundational myths of the Enlightenment, according to Foucault. With ophthalmic surgery in its infancy, the fascination by the sighted with blindness and what the blind might 'see' after sight restoration remained largely speculative. Was being blind, as Descartes once remarked, like 'seeing with the hands'? Did evidence from early cataract operations begin to resolve epistemological debates about the relationship between vision and touch in the newly sighted, such as the famous 'Molyneux Question' posed by William Molyneux to John Locke? More recently, how have autobiographical accounts of blind and vision impaired writers and poets advanced the sighted public's understanding of blind subjectivity?

Through an unfolding historical, philosophical and literary narrative that includes Locke, Molyneux and Berkeley in Britain, and Diderot, Voltaire and Buffon in France, this book explores how the Molyneux Question and its aftermath has influenced attitudes towards blindness by the sighted, and sensory substitution technologies for the blind and vision impaired, to this day.

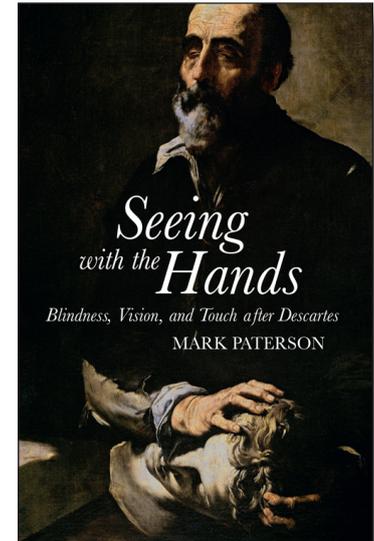
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