

Read this passage by itself first, before you try to answer the questions. Do your best to get a sense of the whole passage.

I chanced on a wonderful book by Marius von Senden, called *Space and Sight*. When Western surgeons discovered how to perform safe cataract operations, they ranged across Europe and America, operating on dozens of men and women of all ages who had been blinded by cataracts since birth. Von Senden collected accounts of such cases; the histories are fascinating. Many doctors had tested their patients' sense perceptions and ideas of space both before and after the operations. The vast majority of patients, of both sexes and all ages, had, in von Senden's opinion, no idea of space whatsoever. Form, distance, and size were so many meaningless syllables. A patient "had no idea of depth, confusing it with roundness." Before the operation a doctor would give a blind patient a cube and a sphere; the patient would tongue it or feel it with his hands, and name it correctly. After the operation the doctor would show the same objects to the patient without letting him touch them; now he had no clue whatsoever what he was seeing. One patient called lemonade "square" because it pricked on his tongue as a square shape pricked on the touch of his hands. Of another postoperative patient, the doctor writes, "I have found in her no notion of size, for example, not even within the narrow limits which she might have encompassed with the aid of touch. Thus when I asked her to show me how big her mother was, she did not stretch out her hands, but set her two index-fingers a few inches apart." Other doctors reported their patients' own statements to similar effect. "The room he was in... he knew to be but part of the house, yet he could not conceive that the whole house could look bigger"; "Those who are blind from birth... have no real conception of height or distance. A house that is a mile away is thought of as nearby, but requiring the taking of a lot of steps... The elevator that whizzes him up and down gives no more sense of vertical distance than does the train of the Horizontal."

For the newly sighted, vision is pure sensation unencumbered by meaning: "The girl went through the experience that we all go through and forget, the moment we are born. She saw, but it did not mean anything but a lot of different kinds of brightness." Again, "I asked the patient what he could see; he answered that he saw an extensive field of light, in which everything appeared dull, confused, and in motion. He could not distinguish objects." Another patient saw "nothing but a confusion of forms and colours." When a newly sighted girl saw photographs and paintings, she asked, "Why do they put those dark marks all over them?" "Those aren't dark marks," her mother explained, "those have shape. If it were not for shadows many things would look flat." "Well, that's how things do look," Joan answered. "Everything looks flat with dark patches."

But it is the patients' concepts of space that are most revealing. One patient, according to his doctor, "practiced his vision in a strange fashion; thus he takes off one of his boots, throws it some way off in front of him, and then attempts to gauge the distance at which it lies; he takes a few steps towards the boot and tries to grasp it; on failing to reach it, he moves on a step or two and gropes for the boot until he finally gets a hold of it." "But even at this stage, after three weeks' experience of seeing," von Senden goes on, "'space,' as he conceives it, ends with visual space, i.e. with colour-patches that happen to bound his view. He does not yet have the notion that a larger object (a chair) can mask a smaller one (a dog), or that the latter can still be present even though it is not directly seen."

In general the newly sighted see the world as a dazzle of color-patches. They are pleased by the sensation of color, and learn quickly to name the colors, but the rest of seeing is tormentingly difficult. Soon after his operation a patient "generally bumps into one of these colour-patches and observes them to be substantial, since they resist him as tactual objects do. In walking about it also strikes him—or can if he pays attention—that he is continually passing in between the colours he sees, that he can go past a visual object, that a part of it then steadily disappears from view; and that in spite of this, however he twists and turns—whether entering the room from the door, for example, or returning back to it—he always has a visual space in front of him. Thus he gradually comes to realize there is also a space behind him, which he does not see."

The mental effort involved in these reasonings proves overwhelming for many patients. It oppresses them to realize, if they ever do at all, the tremendous size of the world, which they had previously conceived of as something touchingly manageable. It oppresses them to realize that they have been visible to people all along, perhaps unattractively so, without their knowledge or consent. A disheartening number of them refuse to use their new vision, continuing to go over objects with their tongues, and lapsing into apathy and despair. "The child can see, but will not make use of his sight. Only when pressed can he with difficulty be brought to look at objects in his neighbourhood; but more than a foot away it is impossible to bestir him to the necessary effort." Of a twenty-one-year-old girl, the doctor relates, "Her unfortunate father, who had hoped for so much from this operation, wrote that his daughter carefully shuts her eyes whenever she wishes to go about the house, especially when she comes to a staircase, and that she is never happier or more at ease than when, by closing her eyelids, she relapses into her former state of total blindness." A fifteen-year-old boy, who was also in love with a girl at the asylum for the blind, finally blurted out, "No, really, I can't stand it any more; I want to be sent back to the asylum again. If things aren't altered I'll tear my eyes out."

Some do learn to see, especially the young ones. But it changes their lives. One doctor comments on "the rapid and complete loss of that striking and wonderful serenity which is characteristic only of those who have never yet seen." A blind man who learns to see is ashamed of his old habits. He dresses up, grooms himself, and tries to make a good impression. While he was blind he was indifferent to objects unless they were edible; now, "a sifting of values sets in... his thoughts and wishes are mightily stirred and some few of the patients are thereby led into dissimulation, envy, theft and fraud."

On the other hand, many newly sighted people speak well of the world, and teach us how dull is our own vision. To one patient, a human hand, unrecognized, is "something bright and then holes." Shown a bunch of grapes, a boy calls out, "it is dark, blue and shiny... It isn't smooth, it has bumps and hollows." A little girl visits a garden. "She is greatly astonished, and can scarcely be persuaded to answer, stands speechless in front of the tree, which she only names on taking hold of it, and then as 'the tree with the lights in it.'" Some delight in their sight and give themselves over to the visual world. Of a patient just after her bandages were removed, her doctor writes, "The first things to attract her attention were her own hands; she looked at them very closely, moved them repeatedly to and fro, bent and stretched the fingers, and seemed greatly astonished at the sight." One girl was eager to tell her blind friend that "Men do not really look like trees at all," and astounded to discover that her every visitor had an utterly different face. Finally, a twenty-two-old girl was dazzled by the world's brightness and kept her eyes shut for two weeks. When at the end of that time she opened her eyes again, she did not recognize the objects, but, "the more she now directed her gaze upon everything about her, the more it could be seen how an expression of gratification and astonishment overspread her features; she repeatedly exclaimed: 'Oh God! How beautiful!'"

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humming oblong creature pale as light that stole along the walls of my room at night, stretching exhilaratingly around the corners, is gone, too, gone the night I ate of the bittersweet fruit, put two and two together and puckered forever my brain. Martin Buber tells this tale: "Rabbi Mendel once boasted to his teacher Rabbi Elimelekh that evenings he saw the angel who rolls away the light before the darkness, and mornings the angel who rolls away the darkness before the light. 'Yes,' said Rabbie Elimelekh, 'in my youth I saw that too. Later on you don't see these things any more.'"

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1. So many means A. very many B. merely C. incredibly D. frequently

2. What is the point of this anecdote about the index fingers? A: to show that the child's understanding of space has no connection to the real world. B. to show that the child misunderstood the doctor C. to show that the child was incapable of learning more D. to show that her fingers were smaller in her imagination

3. Meaning. A. disconnected from B. uncovered by C. not weighted with D. enlightened by

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4. How would the author of the story explain the patient's description? A. He does not know what the world looks like without cataracts in it. B. He has not learned to process sense data with his mind C. The world is too bright for him to see properly D. The surgery has made his eyes more sensitive.

5. Explain the conflict between the mother and the daughter. A. The mother sees the real world but the daughter sees the world of her imagination. B. Both see the real world, but the daughter sees the truth about it. C. The mother has learned to see in a way that the daughter has not learned. D. The daughter dislikes what her mother sees and replaces it with what she wants to see.

6. Meaning. A. inspiring B. fascinating C. informative D. naked

7. What process is being described? A. The patient realizes that color has powers he was unaware of. B. The patient learns the names of color patches. C. The patient physically encounters an object while he is moving D. The patient tries to understand color patches but is unable to do so.

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8. Whose words are these, presumably? A. A graduate student doing research on von Senden’s book. B. The parent of the child. C. A person who observed the child after the operation. D. The author of this essay.

9. What is the child trying to express? A. He is frustrated that the girl does not return his love. B. He has deep, soulful emotions. C. He is dissatisfied with the results of the operation. D. It is important for him to speak figuratively rather than literally.

10. This phrase means A. the patient cares less about eating B. the patient cares more about the world now that he can see it C. the patient is becoming more dangerous D. the patient is reevaluating how he makes certain decisions

looked at them very closely, moved them repeatedly to and fro, bent and stretched the fingers, and seemed greatly astonished at the sight." One girl was eager to tell her blind friend that "Men do not really look like trees at all," and astounded to discover that her every visitor had an utterly different face. Finally, a twenty-two-old girl was dazzled by the world's brightness and kept her eyes shut for two weeks. When at the end of that time she opened her eyes again, she did not recognize the objects, but, "the more she now directed her gaze upon everything about her, the more it could be seen how an expression of gratification and astonishment overspread her features; she repeatedly exclaimed: 'Oh God! How beautiful!'"

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11. What were the dark marks? A. flies B. signs of depression C. shadows D. gaps in her vision

12. The author means A. She's too old to appreciate colors B. She has seen through many illusions C. She can't uncouple eye and brain D. She is bored by the variety of nature

13. The author means that A. She no longer thought she could touch the moon B. The moon set behind the horizon C. Her parents brought her back inside D. As the plain unrolled, the moon moved too.

14. Which example from this selection is most like this statement. A. "a row of Lombardy poplars takes its place" B. "Some patches swelled and loomed, while others vanished utterly." C. "it is dark, blue and shiny... It isn't smooth, it has bumps and hollows." D. "A house that is a mile away is thought of as nearby, but requiring the taking of a lot of steps..."

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15. This phrase means A. I would no longer judge good and bad B. I would see the world as it really is C. My eyelids would no longer feel heavy D. I would see in a spiritual sense rather than a physical one