

MUMBLE

Research Group



Mumble Research Seminars
<https://mumbleproject.weebly.com/>

Tuesday, 20 April
16:00 – 18:00 (CEST)

JOIN:

<https://unito.webex.com/unito/j.php?MTID=m06364f81b42cc21113a42b4b05f3df2e>
PW: 27SFcWXkip7

Ian PHILLIPS
(Johns Hopkins University)

Bewitched by Blindsight

Textbooks tell us that, across a range of paradigms and conditions, perception parts ways with consciousness. The poster child is blindsight: a neuropsychological disorder defined by residual visual function following destruction of primary visual cortex. Blindsight is especially striking because residual visual function apparently includes capacities for voluntary discrimination in the total absence of awareness. Together with other neuropsychological disorders and studies of neurotypical vision, blindsight has revolutionised our thinking about visual consciousness, seemingly revealing a dramatic disconnect between performance and awareness, and motivating diverse theories of the neural and cognitive basis of consciousness. Counter to this orthodoxy, I'll argue that blindsight is in fact severely and qualitatively degraded but nonetheless conscious vision. This residual conscious vision appears unconscious only because of conservative (and unstable) response criteria. I'll first answer a series of apparently compelling arguments against this interpretation. I'll then offer a range of behavioral and first-person evidence consistent with my proposal. This evidence helps answer the question of what it is like to have blindsight, as well as to account for the conservative and selectively unstable response criteria exhibited by patients. I'll end by considering the lessons for the study of consciousness more generally.

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