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NOTES ON THE EFFECTS OF "THOUGHT" UPON ACTION*

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NOTES ON THE EFFECTS OF "THOUGHT" UPON ACTION*

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With the many new conceptions of seeing being advanced today, all emphasizing the role of the mind, the following notes should be of interest to many optometrists who are engaged in training visual skills.

The problem of how thought becomes action has been discussed for generations, but no solution has been developed and it is possible that none ever will be. That does not mean, however, that men of science are likely to concede that nothing more can be learned about the transformation of ideas into exercise. Much more intricate riddles have been read, and the effort to trace the mechanics of what Shakespeare called "doing" is bound to continue.

One group of biologists has held that the explanation might be discovered in chemistry; another, equally impressive, insists that the desired answer must be "electrical in nature." John J. O'Neill, writing in the New York Herald Tribune, says that the controversy has "narrowed itself to the problem of what takes place at the end of the nerve where it makes contact with a muscle." Almost any portion of the nerve system, it seems, may serve, in effect, as a fraction of the grain. Thomas Henry Huxley long ago declared: "In its essential nature, a nerve is a definite tract of living substance through which the molecular changes which occur in any one part of the organism are conveyed to and affect some other part." Such a view apparently is justified by recent experiments.

Evidence in support of both chemical and electrical theories has been reported in Science by Professor J. F. Fulton of the Yale School of Medicine and his colleague, Dr. D. Nachmansohn of the same faculty, who have engaged in a careful study of certain types of fish possessed of power to give electrical shocks. The technical details of their paper probably are beyond the comprehension of the average reader, but their conclusion is not insuperably difficult to understand. A relatively common variety of the finny tribe is equipped with a series of electroplaxes—pairs of structures "one of which functions as a nerve end and the other as the plate of a muscle fiber."

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EMOTIONAL DISORDERS AND THE EYE*

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*An abridgement of the material presented before the American Academy of Optometry at Chicago, Ill., August 25, 1936.

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EMOTIONAL DISORDERS AND THE EYE*

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PREFACE

It has been the experience of the writer to consult with patients, who presented eye troubles that did not respond in any marked degree to Optometric treatment. This offered a challenge and opportunity for a closer investigation.

The following is a synthetic study—an attempt to bring into focus the labors of many investigators in various branches of psychological research on the influence of emotional disturbances on the eyes.

The author will be rewarded if this humble study will stimulate the interest among his colleagues to view the human eye in its relation to the "person" and not merely as an organ of sight.

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Life is a continued process of birth and death, of coming into being and disappearing. In his life upon earth man has left us with the objects, implements and inventions which he used in the stuggle for survival and this furnishes us with the material of primitive civilizations. Not only in the material fields have the past generations bequeathed to us their acquisitions but also in the fields of thought. Religious, folk-lore, and myths are in a sense the cultural fossils of the great past.

The eye has always played an important role in the thinking of man. No other organ has been used in allegory, in parable and paradigm, as the eye.

In the great book, the Bible, we find striking verses touching on the eye, as the following:

"Mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon me."

"Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow."

"Mine eye wasteth away because of grief."

"Keep my law as the apple of thine eye."

"The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness."

*An abridgement of the material presented before the American Academy of Optometry at Chicago, Ill., August 25, 1936.