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ME, MYSELF, AND I

This is a philosophical essay on the mind, the brain, and the self. Much has been written on this subject but I find most of the things I've read to have mixed up these items or have made confusing and erroneous statements in their regard. We know the origin of the brain, but I have been unable to ascertain the origin of the mind or the self. Also, we can physically, medically, and electronically ascertain the demise of the brain but the demise of the mind and the self can only be determined by its disappearance of function. There have been many instances of brain-alive yet mind-self apparently dead individuals. On the other hand, there have been cases reported of brain death but mind alive individuals. The "Story of Ruth" or "I Raise My Eyes to Say Yes" is an excellent example of brain demise yet mind and self alive. It is not my wish at this point to discuss these two articles but suffice it to say that there is the story of a total paraplegic who wrote a book, got married, had sex, and developed a code utilizing eye movement that allowed her to communicate with her caregivers. The classic "Johnny Got His Gun" is another example of mind and self very much alive but brain unable to carry out many of its expected functions. So you see, brain, mind and self are distinctly different entities, yet completely inter-wound.

The purpose of this essay will be to attempt to isolate each and discuss their separate functions and the role of optometry in that regard.

I have proven to myself and to others that the brain has a machine-like quality while the mind has a more personal function attached to our desires and wishes. Bob Sanet came up with a good analogy stating that clock mechanically presents the time but cannot think temporally. Thus an hour from now means nothing to the clock but is quite meaningful to a human, even to individuals that cannot yet "tell time". In computer language, the mind is like the software, the brain like that hardware, and the person (or self) is hitting the keyboard according to their wishes and desires.

Studies on brain plasticity have proven that the brain can be altered as long as the mind and self are alive and operational. However, the person must be involved in new meaningful experiences involving mental operations of the mind, and affect operations of the self to have an effect on the brain. It is thus safe to say that the mind and self are the architects of the brain—that we do not think with our brain, rather we think with our mind and we do with our brain.

In vision training, we subject our patients to new meaningful experiences which, when resolved through brain plasticity, create new brain circuits. Thus the person, the self, and the mind are the architects of our brain. In optometry, we are treating the mind through the use of our brain to create more brain circuits and ore knowledge. Even though scientific studies have shown that certain functions utilize certain parts of our brain, these parts do not do the job, but rather, are available for our mind and self to use them to better understand what, where, and when we want the job to be done. The fact that they

show up as newly utilized areas in the brain after activities have been accomplished merely designates that the mind and self have finally turned them on.

I urge you, when reading articles on mind and brain, to refer to this essay and realize how, where, what, and why you are aiding your patients to accomplish any given task. Don’t change a thing you are doing, just do it more meaningfully and with more intellectual accuracy.