

Excerpts from Charles Darwin's *Notebook M*

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When a muscle is moved very often, the motion becomes habitual & involuntary.— when a thought is thought very often it becomes habitual & involuntary,— that is involuntary memory, as in sleep.— a new thought arises?? compounded of the involuntary thoughts.— An intentionally^a recollection of anything is solely by association, & association is probably a physical effect of brain the «similar remark» thoughts, being functions of same part of brain, or the tendency to habit of producing a train of thought.—

^aAn intentionally] 'An' over 'Are'.

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...Even the worm when trod upon turneth, here probably there is no feeling of passion, but muscular exertion consequent on the injury & consequently excited action of heart.— now this is the oldest <her> inherited & therefore remains, when the actual movement does not take place.— A start^a is HABITUAL movement to avoid any danger— Fear, shamming death, or running

^aA start] 'A' over 2 vertical lines, probably part 'H'.

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away. accompanied with want of muscular exertion, palpitation, voiding urine because done by some animals in defence, &c

Starting must be habitual «*involuntary*» movement from wish to avoid some danger— but it is instinctive because Nancy¹ tells me very young babies start at anything they hear or see. which frightens. them.— Now every animal moves quickly away from any sudden sound or noise, & therefore brain has been accustomed to send a mandate to the muscles & when the noise comes it cannot help doing it.—

Fanny Hensleigh² doubts whether young babies start.— . If children wink. it is instinct
Fear must be simple instinctive feeling: I have awakened

^aFanny . . . instinct] added grey ink.

¹. Nancy: The children's nanny at Shrewsbury.

². Fanny Hensleigh. See Wedgwood, Frances [Fanny].

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in the night, being slightly unwell & felt so much afraid though my reason was laughing & told me there was nothing, & tried to seize hold of objects to be frightened at.— (again diseases of the heart are accompanied by much involuntary fear) In these cases probably the system is affected, & by *habit* the mind tries to fix upon some object: — When a man, child or colt has once been frightened & started much more apt, this partly owing to heart? readily taking same movements, senses being on the look out, & the conveying means _____

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from the senses to the mind being more alive.— How is it. with people nervous from illness., <the> it must be an excited action in the involuntary mind which is startled.— My Father says he should think that in old people, in their dotage, who sing the songs & tales of infancy, it is very doubtful whether they could recollect these same things from any effort of will whilst their minds were sound.

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The sensation of fear is accompanied by «troubled» beating of heart, sweat, trembling of muscles, are not these effects of violent running away, & must not <this> «running away» have been usual effects of fear.— the state of collapse may be imitation of death, which many animals put on.— The flush which accompanies passion & not sweat is the <state> effect of short — but violent action.—¹ To avoid stating how far, I believe, in Materialism, say only that emotions, instincts degrees of talent, which are hereditary are so because brain of child resemble, parent stock.— (& phrenologists state that brain alters)

¹. Note similarity of this paragraph to Erasmus Darwin 1794, 1:57, ‘ . . . the whole skin is reddened by shame, and an universal trembling is produced by fear; and every muscle of the body is agitated in angry people by the desire of revenge.’

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It is known that birds learn to sing & do not acquire it instinctively. may not this be connected with their power of acquiring language.— Hensleigh. W.¹ says that babies know a frown very early in life, <before they> (I think I have seen same thing before they could understand. what frowning means)

if so this is precisely analogous or identical, with bird knowing a cat, the first it sees it.— it is frightened without knowing why— the child dislikes the frown without knowing why—² a man

¹. Hensleigh Wedgwood: (1803–1891), son of Bessy & Josiah Wedgwood II.

². See also Erasmus Darwin 1794, 1:146, ‘ . . . children long before they can speak, or understand the language of their parents, may be frightened by an angry countenance, or soothed by smiles and blandishments.’

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as in Guy. Mannering¹, feels, pleasure. in seeing the scenes of his childhood without knowing why—had not conscious of recollecting it— this may be nearest approach to <the> such instincts which full grown men can experience—

Instinctive walking of animals. that is the ready movement & co-relation of the proper muscles. may be illustrated by the extreme difficulty of moving muscles in different way from what they have been accustomed to, in certain actions— the difficulty of getting on a horse on the left side (not good example,) because leg is right handed.—

¹. Walter Scott, 1815, 3:26, ‘It is even so with me while I gaze upon that ruin; nor can I divest myself of the idea, that these massive towers and that dark gateway . . . is not entirely strange to me. Can it be that they have been familiar to me in infancy, and that I am to seek in their vicinity those friends of whom my childhood has still a tender though faint remembrance, and whom I early exchanged for such severe taskmasters?’

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