Johannes Kepler 1571–1630

In his first work on optics (a sequel to Vitello’s in 1604) the astronomer Kepler gave a clear description of the eyeball. He was the first to demonstrate that cones of light given off by luminous bodies were refracted and focused by the lens on to the retina and that the retina was essential for sight. He discovered that if the point of light fell in front or behind the retina the vision would be blurred, and was thus able to explain why spectacles were useful for those with poor eyesight. Kepler was portrayed in 1971 by the German Democratic Republic on a stamp honouring prominent Germans. (Stanley Gibbons No E1372, Scott no 1275.)

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