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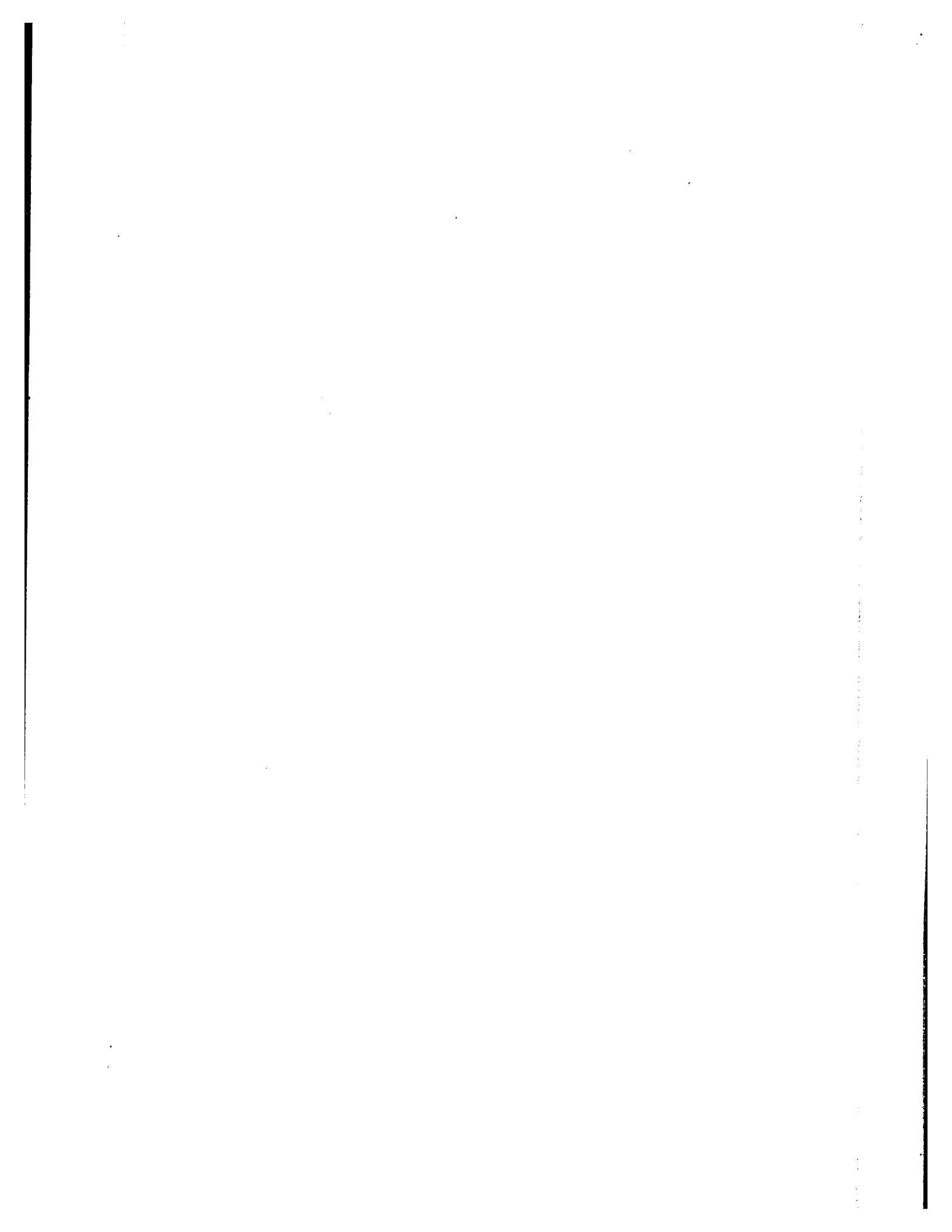
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ST. THOMAS AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS.

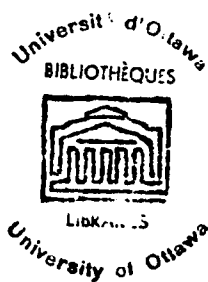
A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy of the
University of Ottawa in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy.

by

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(D.P. June 1927. U.O.)



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introduction

Neo-Scholastic philosophy is concerned with the adaptation of traditional scholasticism as embodied in the writings of Thomas Aquinas to modern exigencies, with the interpretation of the facts disclosed by present-day science in the light of Thomistic principles and with the bringing of the "philosophia perennis" into contact with contemporary thought. It holds the Thomistic synthesis to be a structure of sufficiently proven solidity and comprehension as to form a basis, a constant standard of reference, a beacon, a starting-point and a unifying principle for all the new facts and phenomena which the modern sciences legitimately establish.

Prominent among such facts stands the modern concept of the subconscious which is the material object of the present work. The formal object, that is, the scope or special phase of the problem with which we are to deal involves three distinct issues to each of which we shall devote a separate chapter.

(1) First, we must determine the location of the

concept of the subconscious in St. Thomas' system and show that this fact is thoroughly in accordance with his philosophy of mind. (2) Secondly, while we do not presume to maintain that there exists in his writings any formal, ex professo, treatment of the subconscious, as such, nevertheless we shall insist that St. Thomas was not only aware of phenomena from which this concept may be inferred but even that several of his doctrines imply a tacit admission of this notion. In other words, there are hints or evidences of an embryonic doctrine of the subconscious in his works. (3) Finally, we propose to examine the modern theories of the subconscious; to ascertain their value in the light of Thomistic principles; to decide, if possible, which theory makes the nearest approach towards a possible reconciliation with his doctrines, so that even if Aquinas expressed no formal attitude or definite position on this question, still we may hazard an opinion as to what modern theory he would probably endorse.

Chapter 1.

The Problem

1. What is the Subconscious?

We may perhaps best expound the concept of the subconscious by comparing it with kindred notions. Literally, subconscious signifies something that is semi-, or non-conscious. But what is conscious? The name conscious is given to all the ordinary acts of our cognitive and appetitive (affective and conative) life in its sentient and rational grades. Thus consciousness is a generic term used to designate the various forms of experience of which we are aware in our waking mental life. It includes sensations, thoughts, feelings, emotions, impulses, desires, volitions, etc. etc. It may be à propos at this juncture to call attention to the obvious ineptitude of the term consciousness because of its confusion with introspective, reflex or self-consciousness, the *sensus communis* of the Scholastics, the *apperception* of Leibnitz, that is the process

by which we know that we are aware of something. St. Thomas says: "the act by which the intellect knows the rock is not that by which it knows that it knows the rock". (IaQ87a3ad2) In his "Outline of Psychology", page 16, McDougall writes: "Consciousness is a thoroughly bad word and it has been a great misfortune for psychology that the word has come into general use The word conscience would have been a better word for psychological purposes if it had not been appropriated by the moralists and given a special popular meaning. The French language is more fortunate than ours in that it retains the word conscience in its original sense". In its improper sense, which has, however, been sanctioned by general usage, consciousness connotes the mental experience or state of awareness itself. It is important to bear this in mind, for otherwise the terms subconscious and unconscious are meaningless.

Now we know that in the human organism these conscious processes are numerically a fragment of

the sum total of personal immanent activity. When we consider that our waking hours constitute roughly but two-thirds of our temporal existence and that there are unconscious organic or vegetative processes which are continuous throughout life, we see that our unconscious processes are in the ratio of 3:2 to our conscious processes. But besides these processes which we prefer to designate as non-conscious there are, according to most psychologists, phenomena of a mental or psychological character which are unconscious, facts of which the subject is unaware because they are totally unperceived, and still others which they call subconscious.

At this point we encounter a difficulty in terminology. Scientific writers are not at one as to the proper discrimination between the terms subconscious and unconscious. Thus Barrett writes: "We use these words as synonyms, disregarding oft-made but seldom observed distinctions between the two". (The New Psychology, p. 31, note.) Lahr attributes the confusion to the attempt of authors to designate

the degree of decrease between conscious and unconscious. (Psychologie, p. 64) Some psychologists add fuel to the fire of discord by coining still further terms with which we shall deal in a later chapter. Let it suffice now to offer a definition of the subconscious which is commonly accepted, leaving the distinctions between terms until the end of the present chapter. The subconscious is a psychical existence and activity which does not appear continually in consciousness but which exerts an influence on conscious activity and out of which new forms of that activity from time to time emerge.

We shall postpone consideration of the definitions proposed by men who hold specific theories of the subconscious to our final chapter and consider for a moment a few typical definitions presented by general commentators. Lahr considers the subconscious to be "a psychological activity more or less unconscious in its point of departure and arrival and by its projection into clear consciousness". It is for

him a shadowy, secret, subterranean current of mental life, a diminished consciousness parallel to consciousness but lower in the depths of psychological life, not clearly visible but not totally absent from consciousness. (Psychologie - p. 62-65).

Likewise Dr. T. V. Moore (Dynamic Psychology, p. 17-41) regards as subconscious those processes or states which "are neither strictly conscious, nor strictly unconscious, but occupy an intermediate position". He compares the subconscious to the field of vision in contrast to the focus point which corresponds to consciousness. It is a state in which we are "dimly aware" of things, a potential consciousness which may become actual by dint of attention. It belongs to the edges of the stream, the outskirts of the mind but is connected with central consciousness. There are many degrees of the subconscious. As examples he offers the ticking of a clock in the room where one is occupied, the pressure of clothing on the body, the temperature

of the body and the tension of the skin, all of which are normally unconscious but potentially conscious, that is, capable of becoming conscious under given conditions. The unconscious for him is a stream of mental life of which we are absolutely unaware that is, processes, phenomena and states parallel to actual or clear or focal consciousness but on a lower plane and entirely unconnected with consciousness.

Other authors treat the subconscious as being synonymous with the unconscious. Thus De la Vaissiere writes: "Subconscious facts are those psychological (i. e. mental) facts of which the subject is unaware". (Elements de Psychologie Experimentale p. 272-275).

J. S. Moore, (Foundations of Psychology - pp. 189-230) to whose excellent treatise we shall frequently refer, is hardly consistent in his terminology. The subconscious is defined as "any form of psychical existence which underlies but is not

identical with personal consciousness". He fails to distinguish it from the completely unconscious and indeed frequently considers it as a genus of which the unconscious is a species.

2. Origin of the Concept.

These typical conceptions will give us a working notion of the subconscious. Let us now investigate the origin of the concept.

We have referred to the subconscious as a fact but we do not mean by this that it is a phenomenon, for the subconscious as such, by its very nature, is obviously neither an object of introspection nor a matter of immediate experience. As a reality the subconscious has a twofold foundation, namely its basis as a postulate and its basis as an inference. Without going into detail we shall present an outline of the facts classified by J. S. Moore as grounds for the subconscious. (op. cit. 190-197).

As a postulate the concept of the subconscious was invented in an effort to avoid the con-

trast between the realm of thought and the physical world of visible and material things. The former sphere is characterized by a transitory irregular current of phenomena, while the latter is remarkable for its uninterrupted and permanent continuity in time and space. Accordingly, this concept was constructed to overcome the apparent discontinuity in the mental life of the individual and in the relation between individuals; for individual consciousness is subject to temporary suspensions as in sleep, hypnosis or amnesia while the consciousness of one individual is distinct from that of another. In this respect the doctrine may be construed as an endeavor to bridge the Cartesian gulf between mind and matter by seeking in our psychical experience a continuity parallel to that in the physical world. Is there not a subconscious stratum connecting on a lower level individual minds as parts of this psychic continuum? The affirmative answer to this question constitutes the historical or theoretical foundation of the subconscious.

As an inference the concept of the subconscious is derived from observation of behavior as is our knowledge of consciousness in other persons. The notion was constructed purposely to explain psychological facts which are not explicable in terms of consciousness. Its nature cannot be observed but is inferred from its manifestations and traces. The evidence "for" the subconscious (since it is not a phenomenon there can be no evidence "of" it) is divided by J. S. Moore into three groups.

The first group of phenomena whose analysis betrays the fact of a subconscious activity includes those involving personal continuity. Among these are (1) the sense, feeling, or conviction of one's own continuity and identity thruout the experiences and vicissitudes of life; (2) the factor of recognition in memory and (3) the revival of lost memories.

The second group comprehends phenomena of the cognitive, affective and conative order without conscious causes and whose explanation in psychical

terms seems to demand a subconscious source. Here are listed: (1) Unaccountable ideas having no antecedents in consciousness such as conviction, intuitions, "hunches", sudden witticisms; (2) Unaccountable feelings and emotional states such as grouches, blues, vague fears and anxieties, instinctive impulses, strange tastes, sympathies and antipathies, complexes, etc; (3) Unaccountable acts, as slips of tongue and pen and movements of bodily members.

The third group embraces phenomena apparently involving reasoning, such as (1) solution of problems and constructive work done during sleep and by so-called "lightning calculators"; (2) answers to questions and automatic writings; (3) post-hypnotic suggestive phenomena; and (4) the pathological phenomena of dissociation, a condition in which mental contents are split up into diverse currents enjoying independent existences manifesting an alternation of characters in the same individual who is said empirically to have a multiple personality.

3. Importance of the Concept.

We must admit then that the existence of mental activities which may emerge only intermittently above the threshold of consciousness, i. e. subconscious processes, is a fact well established by a variety of experiences. Accordingly, it behooves us to recognize and admit and confront this fact, whatever attitude we may hold as to the value of the theories which attempt to explain it, just as we must admit the phenomena of "aurora borealis" and "heredity" even if no adequate explanation of the facts has been supplied.

Moreover, few will deny that the subconscious is a fact of sufficient importance to warrant a thorough examination by Neo-Scholastic thinkers.

The processes and activities enumerated above, which arise from forgotten experiences and from instinctive and emotional sources, which affect our feelings and views while they escape our direct

knowledge and control, exert a profound influence on human conduct and behavior resulting sometimes in a veritable psychological revolution. This may be explained by the role they play in the association of ideas and consequently upon the memory, the imagination and the more complex states of soul. At any rate their existence is a problem of immense import to the student of the human personality, whether his object be the education of self or the direction of others. We know that every experience leaves its trace and hence that knowledge of our subconscious life is invaluable.

The brilliant French writer and thinker, Bergson, ventured upon the following prophecy a few years ago: "To explore the most sacred depths of the unconscious, to labor in what I have just called the subsoil of consciousness; that will be the principal task of psychology in the century which is opening." (The Birth of a Dream, The Indep., Oct. 30, 1913). His prophecy seems justified.

Chapter 11

The Subconscious in St. Thomas

1. Fundamental Notions

In order that we may translate the concept of the subconscious into scholastic terms and re-think it in functions of Thomistic doctrine, we shall expound certain fundamental notions of Aquinas' philosophy of mind. The concepts of personality and of the soul are so essential to the doctrine of the subconscious and have been the objects of such confusion on the part of recent psychologists that it behooves us to ascertain with precision the proper significance of the terms personal and psychic.

The central doctrine of St. Thomas' anthropology is that a human being or rational animal is a unit in nature and in person constituted by the substantial union of two co-principles, body and soul, as its matter and form respectively. (p. 3-q3-a.6ad 1). The ego, self or person is "an individual substance of a rational nature". Personality is that entity or principle, substantial, permanent,

unitary which is the subject of all the states and acts, conscious, unconscious and non-conscious, that constitute human life. It includes therefore both the corporeal principle of this composite being, the body with all its parts and members and organs and the simple, spiritual, substantial soul whose various functions and roles we shall consider later. In fact all that is essential to complete individual human nature enters into and constitutes a person in the concrete.

Furthermore in accordance with the scholastic aphorism "operationes sunt suppositorum", all the actions emanating from a human source are attributed and ascribed to the person as the "principium quod operationis", for it is the concrete individual man properly that discharges or suffers all these functions whether they be of the inorganic, the animate, the sentient or the rational orders. All actions performed by man are human and therefore personal. Man is one in person, not multiple.

We emphasize this concept of personality

because on a truly Thomistic basis it is indispensable that we should avoid; - (1) the identification of personality with self-consciousness or with the operations and functioning of the mind, as is common among modern philosophers; (2) the consequent restriction of the term personal as being merely coextensive with the word conscious, an application that is manifest in the definition by J.S. Moore quoted above; and (3) the admission of the existence of such abnormalities of consciousness, such eccentric species of mentality as dissociations, i. e. secondary, split-off processes isolated from the main current of our mental life, disintegrations of character, habit and memory.

In justifying St. Thomas' position as to the essential unity of personality which is derived from its formal principle that is simple and spiritual, several observations may be made in passing. Regarding the evidence alleged in support of the opposite view first in such cases it is frequently fraudulent and obscure. Secondly, these phenomena

belong to morbid mental life and are often but symptoms of disease, as v.g. cerebral lesions, in one and the same personality. Of course we realize the intimacy of the substantial union of soul and body and that the soul is conditioned in its activity by the state of the physical organism, which however acquires its instrumental efficiency from its animation by the soul. On this problem Coffey writes:-

" 'A perversion of imagination and a rupture of memory can sometimes induce the so-called illusions or alterations of personality'.... When we remember that this objective conception of the self is so dependent on the function of memory, and that on the normal functioning of the brain and nervous system, we can hazard an intelligible explanation of the abnormal facts recorded by most modern psychologists concerning hypnotism, somnambulism, and "double" or "multiple" consciousness. Father Maher ascribing these phenomena partly to dislocations of memory, partly to unusual groupings of mental states according to the laws of mental association --- groupings that arise from peculiar physiological con-

nections between the various neural functionings of the brain centres, ---and partly to semi-conscious or reflex nerve processes, emphasizes an important fact that is sometimes lost sight of: the fact that some section at least of the individuals conscious mental life is common to, and present throughout, the two or more "states" or "conditions" between which any such abnormal individual is found to alternate. This consideration is itself sufficient to disprove the theory that there is or may be in the individual human being a double or even a multiple human personality." (Ontology p. 276).

Another author (De la Vaissiere - op. cit. 274) writes : "No experimental fact authorizes one to say that there can be two distinct psychological systems, double personalities This hypothesis is brilliantly expounded by Myers has no support in experience. Apart from certain isolated facts which are not the object of experience precisely because they do not repeat themselves, most phenomena show the continuity and systematized unity of facts of consciousness.... In conclusion personality is one,

psychologically speaking, and the dissociated states should be considered as secondary rather than second personalities".

It may be well to note here that St. Thomas was familiar with the phenomena of diabolical possession. "Finally there remains a sense in which phenomena of the same nature as those we have been considering may be indicative of the presence of a second personality, e.g. when the body is under the influence of an alien spirit. Possession is something the possibility of which the Church takes for granted. This, however, would not imply a true double personality in one individual. The invading being would not enter into composition with the body to form one person with it, but would be an extrinsic agent communicating local motion to a bodily frame which it did not inform". (Catholic Encyclopedia- Personality by Geddes).

An adequate conception of St. Thomas' doctrine of the human soul is equally important in our analysis of the subconscious. Accordingly we shall

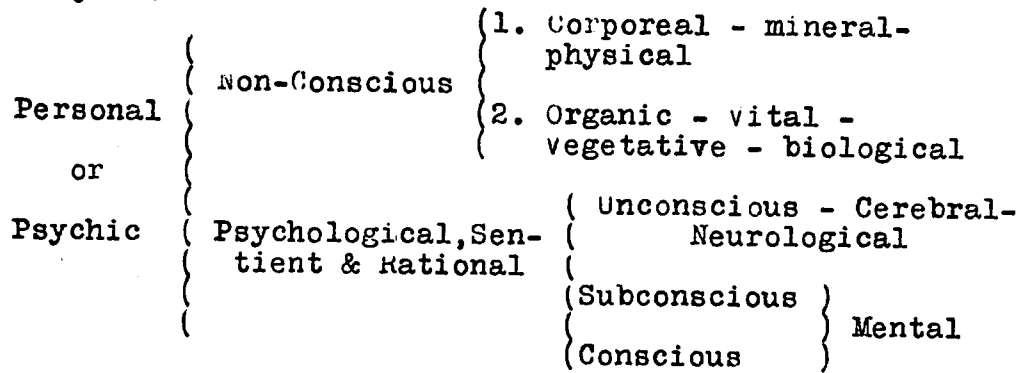
now delineate this notion as briefly as, we trust, will be consistent with lucidity.

The human soul or psyche as we have said above is a simple spiritual substance and one of the ultimate intrinsic causes or principle-constituents of the human being. Its functions may be considered in three groups, viz:- (1) As the substantial form of man's corporeal nature it is the principle of existence, actuality, activity and finality and its role is commonly expressed by such terms as actualizing, energizing, determining, specifying, differentiating, coordinating, unifying and perfecting. It is thus the sustaining element which secures the continuity and individual identity of the organism. "The various parts are compenetrated by the informing principle, their individuality is merged, their several tendencies unified and their natural properties transformed by this dominating force". (Maher - Psychology p. 520). In conclusion then let us note that as the substantial form the soul maintains the body in existence (dat esse),

gives the matter the specific character of humanity, renders the potential matter actual and initiates all human action as the remote principle or source of activity and energy. (1a 2ae Q37a1) (2) The soul is also the vital principle or entelechy of the organism. It not only animates or vitalizes the body but is the origin or root of all forms of organic or vegetative activity. This is its biological function. (3) Finally the soul considered as mind is the basis or subject of man's whole conscious and subconscious life, the root of sentient and rational activity, the thinking principle, that by which the ego, self, or person feels, knows and wills.

Now inasmuch as on a Thomistic basis the soul is the remote principle of all activity every function may be considered psychical and the term psychical is coextensive with personal in this respect. It is obviously more comprehensive than the term mental while both are broader in meaning than conscious. In order to show the true relation bet-

ween these terms and avoid possible confusion we shall have resort to a schema showing the various grades of human immanent activity as related to our subject.



It will be seen thus that the activity of the human soul is not confined to consciousness. Man's soul is formally rational but virtually sensitive, organic and mineral. "Man is said to be a miniature world because all the creatures of the world are found contained in him in some manner or another." (1a-q. 91-a.1.c). This is of importance because modern psychologists refer to certain cerebral and vegetative processes, as though they were mechanical and not psychical. It is obvious that St. Thomas admits the existence of conscious and non-conscious

psychical processes and we shall soon see that we may infer from his works the notion subconscious and unconscious processes without reading into his lines or doing violence to his text.

2. Interesting References and Implications

Before we proceed to "discover" the subconscious in St. Thomas it will be of interest to remark his acquaintance with some of the facts which present-day writers adduce as evidences for the subconscious. He writes that "man performs many actions of which he does not even think as when he moves his foot or hand or rubs his beard while he is engaged with other things". (1a2aeQ1a1). This he would call an "actus hominis" or perhaps an actus primo-primi.

Again we read: "It sometimes happens that a person syllogizes while he sleeps. (1aQ84a8ad2) Is he referring to the special adaptability of the subconscious mind to suggestion when he writes: "The waking mind is occupied with external stimuli and consequently is less capable of receiving subtle

impressions"? (2a2ae Q172 a 1 ad 2). Father Barrett finds an implicit concept of the subconscious in St. Thomas' words: "Notitia non totaliter menti coaequatur" (1aQ93 a 7 ad 2) which he translates thus "awareness is not coextensive with the mind".

Having cited these few, more or less pertinent, statements let us examine some of his doctrines in which there are hints of subconscious existence and activity in man. In the first place the human soul or mind is a subconscious or more properly an unconscious existence and not an object of conscious perception. (1a Q87 art 1). It may be proper here to comment upon the very concept of the subconscious considered in its theoretical foundation. It was said above that the subconscious was constructed to fulfill a demand for continuity in mental life. Professor Leghton (Field of Philosophy - Introd. p. 6) considers it one of the "expressions of the soul's thirst for communion with a spiritual reality; attempts to satisfy man's metaphysical hunger He must commune with some sort of higher

reality, lest he perish. So recourse is had to that mysterious hybrid of body and soul 'the subliminal self', which is accounted the channel of man's communion with God and the source of all our deeper and wiser insights." All of which is very interesting. St. Thomas would probably recognize in these efforts on the part of writers to postulate the subconscious the natural and inevitable human tendency to substantialize accidents when one has denied the reality of traditional substance. For the "imperative need for admitting the reality of substance always ultimately asserts itself"; it is an indispensable concept, a necessary category of human thought and there is an insistent rational need for it". If by the subconscious they merely meant an abiding substantial rational principle of all mental activities, even of those which may be semi-conscious or subconscious, they would be merely calling by another name what we call the rational nature of man But if it is only a process or a function or a series or a stream, it can no more constitute or explain, or even reveal,

personal identity, than a series or stream of conscious states can". (Coffey - Ontology p.281 &282).

Then again the so-called necessity for postulating the subconscious as a means of communication between minds, an "anima Mundi" of which our individual souls are but parts would be rejected by Aquinas. For this is simply a restatement of the mediaeval pantheistic theory known as Averroism, Monopsychism, or the theory of the "intellectus separatus". (1aQ76 a 2).

Secondly, all mental operations, processes or functions as such, that is, the mechanisms by which various forms of consciousness are produced, are unconscious. (T.V. Moore - Dynamic Psychology p. 18). As examples of unconscious activities which are strictly psychological or mental we may mention (1) the abstractive function of the "intellectus agens" which abstracts the "species intelligibilis impressa" from the phantasm or concrete quiddity of the material object and renders it an actually knowable concept which then rises into consciousness; (2) the final operation (electio) in the series of acts (Viz/Vel-

leitas, intentio, consensus, etc.) which constitute volition and the influx of the will on the organism in the execution of a movement freely decided i.e. imperium sev usus (3) the functions of association and conservation.

Thirdly, prominent among unconscious mental modifications in Scholastic psychology stands the "species intentionalis impressa objecti vicaria", that imental impression, similitude, image, replica, resemblance or representation of the external object, that psychic expression or reflection of material reality, which is an essential factor required as a cognitional determinant for ordinary knowledge either sentient or rational and whose conservation as a subconscious entity is indispensable if we are to explain the recognition factor in memory.

Then again dispositions and habits which are classified as the first species of quality and defined as states, conditions or modes of being, accidental determinations, more or less stable modification of the powers of a substance whose nature is thus perfected and whereby the subject is somehow

disposed either in itself or with respect to its activity ---- these too are unconscious mental states. "Our mental habits, whether in their ultimate nature they are psychological dispositions or neurological traces, are absolutely outside the field of consciousness. They may influence conscious life, but their nature, their character or anything whatsoever about them, is not given to us among the immediate data of consciousness". (T.V. Moore - op. cit. - p. 19).

So too "the scholastic doctrine of instincts also clearly presupposes 'unconscious' mentation". (Barret - op. cit - p. 32 - note).

We cite these instances merely to show that subconscious mentation is neither foreign nor antithetical to Thomistic psychology but that it is implicit in several doctrines of the Angelic Doctor.

As to the possibility on a Thomistic basis of admitting the existence of latent modifications or subconscious states in the form of actual processes we may profitably consult some neo-scholastic

writers. Donat admits the existence in us of psychic powers, habits, dispositions and species or traces of acts which are unconscious. He likewise acknowledges that there are actions of which we have but an obscure imperfect weakened consciousness. But he finds repugnance in the notion of an action which is at once psychic and unconscious, for according to him direct consciousness pertains to the very nature of a psychic act and must ever accompany it although reflex consciousness may sometimes be absent. (Psychologia - p. 135-136).

Hugon likewise admits the possibility of sensations without reflex consciousness because the concept of sensation doesn't necessarily imply self-consciousness, because distraction may diminish it to zero and because the principal phenomena of somnambulism hypnotism and daily experience prove it. He considers the notion of a weak, obscure or lower consciousness to be unfounded but hesitates to state whether there are sensations entirely without concomitant consciousness and tells us that Pesh denies this latter possibility. (Psychologia - tract 3 q. 3a2).

Sortais (Psychologie - p. 170) insists that the hypothesis of a phenomenon that is psychological and unconscious is contradictory. Of course he admits that physiological or cerebral activities and states are absolutely unconscious, or, as we prefer, non-conscious. However he says "consciousness is innerent in all psychological phenomena as their essential and common form. It is not merely an accessory or an accident even if it be susceptible to various degrees". The lesser, lower, insensible consciousness, the relatively unconscious or subconscious will suffice perfectly to explain the facts. The obscure depths of our mind are filled with a multitude of subconscious phenomena. This is probably what Leibnitz understood by "petites perceptions".

Mercier thinks that "induction justifies the probable existence of unconscious sensations - he recognizes however that this is only probability and would not quarrel with the supporters of the subconscious which he calls the obscure or vague con-

sciousness. (Mercier - Psychologie - 1923 - tome 1-p. 201-205).

By way of clarification Lahr makes a noteworthy contribution to our present problem. He writes "Can the diminution of consciousness extend to total actual unconsciousness without destroying the psychological character of the phenomena? If one admits the Cartesian equivalence between the soul, actual thought and consciousness one would say that psychological and unconscious are contradictory terms and one would take shelter under the gratuitous hypothesis of little unconscious perceptions (Taine) or better of infinitely small particles of consciousness (Leibnitz) whose total constitutes proper consciousness without going that far one may reserve the name psychological for whatever is actually conscious and refrain from speaking of psychological unconscious phenomena and call them psychical . . . One sees that this psychic life doesn't deserve to be called unconscious in the same sense as the physiological phenomena". (op. cit - p. 63).

So also Mercier insists that unconscious perceptions are modifications or impressions of a sentient subject which are destined to become conscious, which have consciousness as their normal effect being granted certain conditions of intensity and duration. He distinguishes these excitations from organic modifications which are never capable of awakening consciousness. (p.201 op. cit).

Let us quote Father Maher again:-

For the existence of latent modifications in the form of actual energies or processes below the surface of consciousness Hamilton argues: (1) The reality of minima visibilia, audibilia, etc. -- the fact that our sensations of sight, sound, and the rest are made up of an aggregate of elementary states excited by combinations of stimuli which are separately unperceivable. Thus the leaves of the forest, individually indiscernible, each contribute to the general presentation of colour. (2) The effects of unconscious trains of thought by which sudden reminiscences or discoveries are presented to the mind without the

intervening links being apprehended. On the other side it is argued: (1) That a conscious state made up out of units of unconsciousness is unthinkable, and that the facts of sensation indicate merely show that the neural or organic stimulation must reach a certain degree of intensity to awaken mental life at all. (2) That sudden reminiscences, discoveries, and the like, apparently resulting from the unconscious working of association, may be due to unconscious cerebration. Thus, it is supposed that neural processes in the brain being once set in motion may run their course unconsciously, till the cerebral situation arises which forms the appropriate condition for the final mental act. Or, it may be held that the intermediate mental links do actually appear in consciousness, but are too fleeting and transient, like the perceptions of the separate letters of a printed page, to be remembered. (Cf. Hamilton, *Metaph.* Vol. 1 pp 338, seq.: Dr. Carpetner, *Mental physiology*, c.XIII; Mill, *Exam.* c. xv.) The scholastic writers who have treated

the subject at greatest length are Sanseverino (Dynam. Pp. 944-982) and Gutberlet. The latter writer argues in favour of the existence of unconscious perceptions. (Cf. Die Psychologie, pp. 49-59, 166, seq.). If we define a mental modification as a "state of consciousness", then of course it cannot be unconscious. So much of the dispute regards verbal propriety. Philosophically, however, we see no sufficient reason for denying, either in the vegetative, sensuous, or spiritual grades of life, the existence of energies or processes of the soul which do not themselves rise into consciousness. The conception of the activity of the intellectus agens and the potentias vegetativae in the Aristotelian Philosophy appear to us quite in harmony with the doctrine of latent energies." (Maher - Psychology - first edition - p. 339).

While differences of opinion may be due to confusion of terms whereby self-consciousness and consciousness are employed almost indiscriminately it may be declared with a reasonable measure of as-

surance that this problem is still a mooted question even among Neo-scholastics.

Chapter 111

Modern Theories

In accordance with our plan, as stated in the introduction, we shall devote this final chapter to an examination of the modern theories of the subconscious from a Thomistic standpoint.

Dual Mind Theory

Exposition:- This theory as defended by T. J. Hudson in his "Law of Psychic Phenomena" endeavors to solve the subconscious by positing in man a dual mind. The objective mind corresponds to ordinary consciousness and deals with the external world while the subjective mind has no relation to external reality but merely with internal states.

Under this head we may also include the concept of the German philosopher, Von Hartmann and that of Janet. Hartman maintained that we have two per-

sonalities, the conscious personality functioning through the cortex of the brain and the unconscious personality through the spinal cord and subcortical ganglia. Janet conceived of the unconscious as a fragment of a split mind operating independently and without association or fusion with the conscious elements of our mental life.

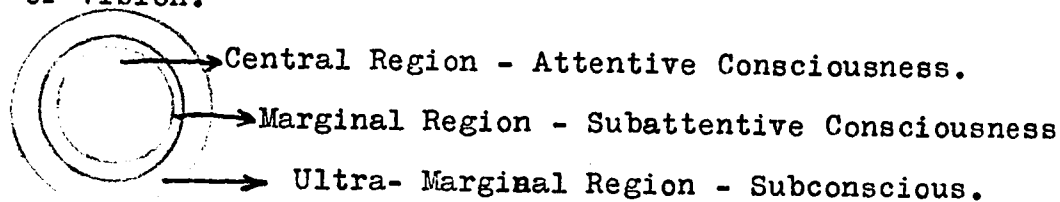
Critique:- Of course Hartmann's theory is a fiction and not demonstrable for the functions of the cortex and the lower centers as known to science do not suggest or warrant his conclusion. As to Janet, he is subject to our general criticism directed against any doctrine of multiple or even dual personality.

The test par excellence for the validity of a theory is its ability to explain facts and this theory fails to account for the phenomena under consideration. Consciousness is found to be unable to explain certain mental facts which require a substantial principle or soul as their origin but me-

taphysical prejudice forbids their acceptance of a soul and to escape the quandary they formulate grotesque hypotheses rather than admit the logical conclusion which embarrasses them.

ultra-Marginal View

Exposition:- This theory to which for all practical purposes we need only attach the name of J. S. Moore compares mental content to the field of vision.



Focal vision corresponds to concentrated attention while lateral or marginal vision corresponds to indistinct, dim or vague attention. The ultra- marginal region is for them the counterpart of the subconscious.

Critique:- This theory likewise does not explain. It merely multiplies terms. It fails to approach the requirements of a theory as demanded by Aristotelian logic, namely, the statement of the

ultimate causes of a thing, its nature, origin and purpose.

Furthermore the terminology which it substitutes is not acceptable. The prefix "ultra" is not as truly suggestive of the nature of the existence as the term "sub". If the margin be the edge of reality the ultra marginal appears to be a non-entity.

Then again the terms focal and marginal and region are spatial terms and have no significance unless a central substance be understood. Metaphors are not scientific. What is the something to which the subconscious is a margin? Has consciousness regions? Regions imply extension and it implies material substance. But the proponents of this theory avoid the notion of a substance. Here again is evidence of that dread of a possible remote hint of a substantial principle of consciousness, an indication of studied purpose to ignore a subject of transient states, a soul. They inconsistently employ the term psychical without admitting the existence of a psyche which is the subject of these states and undergoes these processes called psychical.

in conclusion then we may say that apart from their concept of the subconscious as a potential consciousness the theory is valueless because it does not remove the obscurity. It is a metaphorical figurative description and is no clearer than that which it purports to explain and which at least has the merit of being literal and logical.

The Subliminal

Exposition:- This theory of Myers is an analogy based on the following facts derived from experimental psychology. There are sensory stimuli which have measurable intensities but which produce no conscious effect even though they impress or stimulate the organ. Furthermore, given a positive amount of stimulation producing its effect in consciousness it is possible to add to or subtract from that intensity to a measurable extent without causing any change in sensation or perception the part of the subject. Subliminal quantities are those which either do not produce sensation or which have no effect on a sensation already existing although

they have positive value as a physical agency. The difference threshold is a value, namely, the amount required to make a change in consciousness. A familiar application of this fact is found in Weber's Law.

On the basis of this fact these writers formulated by analogy their theory of the subconscious according to which the threshold or limen of consciousness is a value or level. Dr. Stanley Hall compares the whole field of mental content to an iceberg so that the surface of the water represents the limen or threshold of consciousness and just as the bulk of an iceberg is beneath the surface of the water so also the major portion of our mental life is subliminal. (Cf. J. S. Moore - op. cit. p. 207).

Critique:- This theory is a conglomeration of figurative expressions and not a scientific explanation. It has therefore but a literary value. The division of consciousness into levels is somewhat arbitrary and especially remarkable because it is upheld by men who ridicule the scholastic classification of mental faculties which is based on the various types

of mental operations. Furthermore facts do not justify a region of subliminal consciousness or mentation. The fact or phenomenon depicted above is capable of receiving a physiological explanation, thus:- What appears to be a loss of stimulative effect is really the amount that is necessary to energize or activate the nerve centres and overcome their inertia. It is not wasted but is insufficient to produce a conscious effect, that is, to overcome the inertia of the nerves.

Let us quote here an apt paragraph from the article on the "subliminal self" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica by William McDougall.

" The conception of a limen (threshold) of consciousness, separating subconscious or subliminal psychical process from supraliminal or conscious psychical process figured prominently in the works of G. T. Fechner, the father of psycho-physics, and by him was made widely familiar. Fechner sought to prove that a sensory stimulus too feeble to affect consciousness produces nevertheless a psychical effect which remains below the threshold

of consciousness, and he tried to show ground for believing in the existence of a vast realm of such subliminal psychical processes. But his arguments, founded though they were on epoch-making experiments, have failed to carry conviction; and it is in the main on other grounds than those adduced by Fechner that the reality of modes of mental operation which may properly be called subconscious or subliminal is now generally admitted".

Freud's Concept of the Subconscious

Exposition:- Among the recent and somewhat complicated developments of the concept of the subconscious we find the theory of Dr. Sigmund Freud of Vienna, the father of psychoanalysis, and one of the most prominent figures in the New Psychology.

According to Freud our subconscious mental content embraces (1) a sphere which he terms the foreconscious which is a continuous though dormant psychic existence, a field of mental events that is always available to consciousness (potentially conscious) or easily recalled, and (2) the region of

the unconscious, the storehouse of all past experience, of unavailable memories which were once conscious materials but which have been repressed by educational and various environmental influences and are now capable of discovery or recall only by the technique of psychoanalysis --- these memories are retained, but cannot be evoked. The unconscious then is not a continuous but a dissociated psychic existence and it is potentially conscious also.

Critique:- Such in brief is a tolerably fair account of Freud's concept of the subconscious. What is it worth? It is at least more valuable than the descriptive accounts outlined above for he attempts to explain the proximate origin of the subconscious and its relation to ordinary consciousness. His statement that the unconscious contains only what was at one time a personal experience of the individual is faintly reminiscent of the scholastic axiom "nihil in intellectu quin prius fuerit in sensu".

However failure to give proof is an idio-

syncrasy with Freud and his statements are for the most part gratuitous assertions unfounded on reality. As we shall see in our final chapter he emphasizes the purely psychical at the expense of the cerebral or organic factors which are neglected.

Jung's Concept

Exposition:- C. G. Jung, the well known founder of the Zurich School, and originally a disciple of Freud, differs from the master in that he regards the unconscious as a field of psychic content which comprehends all the psychic elements which have not attained the level of consciousness. These include all forgotten and repressed mental acquisitions of the individual's own past existence and the various activities of the collective psyche which is the total experience of the races of the earth, past and present. This collective psyche embraces the collective spirit or fact of collective thinking and the collective soul or function of collective feeling.

Critique:- It will not be necessary for our

present purpose to examine the evidence adduced in support of this grotesque theory; for since it must involve the theories of innatism and pantheism it is manifestly not acceptable on a Thomistic basis. We may state, however, that the facts of modern biology and antropology do not justify his contention. (Cf. hereon - T. V. Moore - op. cit. pp. 264-265 and 275-277). In his later work, entitled "Totem and Taboo", Freud refers to a "mass psyche". The same criticism applies in his case likewise.

Prince's Concept

Exposition:- Dr. Morton Prince of Boston divides the subconscious field into the unconscious and the coconscious. The former consists in what he terms neurograms. These are physiological traces in the neurones, cerebral modifications, residus, dispositions, complex brain patterns, records of past experiences, and though latent they may become active and conscious.

The coconscious is a dissociated but active form of psychical existence. It corresponds

to what is ordinarily understood as the psychological unconscious. According to him there are focal and subfocal trends of thought both of which have a psychical nature.

The dissociation theory in general has been developed largely by Prince by experiments demonstrating the existence in our mental life of coconscious ideas or unconscious conscious processes. These "Jekyll and Hyde" experiments have been accepted by many as evidence of multiple personalities in the same individual. Dissociation may be defined as an abnormal condition of mind in which its contents are divided so that certain subconscious events and processes group together in a unit system which has an existence independent of and beyond the control of the normal ego.

Critique:- Morton Prince's theory is a compromise between subconscious mentation and unconscious cerebration and this is a merit. Prince's coconscious is a mental existence while his unconscious is cerebral. The former explains those phenomena of the

subconscious apparently involving intelligence while his unconscious is supposed to explain the phenomena of the first and second groups, namely, those involving personal continuity and those that are unaccountable in terms of consciousness. Prince waives the question of the nature of these neurograms. (p. 148). "It is not necessary to enter into the question whether they are in their ultimate nature psychical or physical. That is a philosophical question". However his general trend seems to indicate their purely material character. Now according to scholastic psychology the proximate principle and immediate subject of all sensory activities and existences is the compound of body and soul.

He considers personality (p. 530) as "a composite structure built by experience upon a foundation of performed, inherited, psycho-physiological mechanisms containing within themselves their own driving forces". Elsewhere (p. 532) he defines it as "the sum total of all the innate dispositions,

impulses, tendencies, appetites and instincts of the individual and all those acquired by experience".

The scholastic concept of a substantial ego is of course incompatible with this modern prevalent notion of personality as something of an accidental character.

As we stated in our second chapter the doctrine of multiple personality is unacceptable. The value of this theory as a whole, however, will be evident in our treatment of the theory of

Unconscious Cerebration

Exposition:- Without going into elaborate detail this theory may be described as an attempt to explain the phenomena listed above in terms of cerebration rather than mentation. It considers those phenomena as manifestations of brain processes entirely unaccompanied by mental activity. Prominent among its supporters are Hugo Munsterberg, Theodore Ribot and Joseph Jastrow, but there are many others. Indeed it may be said that in general the philoso-

phers and psychologists of the 19th century showed themselves in the main reluctant to admit the propriety of any conception of unconscious or subconscious mental states or operations. The predominant tendency was to regard as the issue of automatic nervous action or of "unconscious cerebration" whatever bodily movements seemed to take place independently of the consciousness and volition of the subject, even if those movements seemed to be of an intelligent and purposeful character. This attitude towards the subconscious is still maintained by some of the more strictly orthodox scientists; but it is now very widely accepted that we must recognize in some sense the reality of subconsciousness or of subliminal psychical processes.

Unconscious cerebration is defined as the working out of purely physical nervous processes without any concomitant mental state till the final cerebral situation is reached, when the corresponding mental act is evoked.

Conclusion:- The question of the existence and nature of unconscious psychic activities has occupied the attention of such philosophers as Leibnitz, Mill, Schopenhauer, Hamilton, Hartmann, Herbart, Taine, Lotze and Wundt. It was not treated explicitly by the scholastics, sanseverino informs us. The real issue seems to be whether or not these latent activities of the soul, these unconscious psychical modifications whose existence is indisputable are properly mental or cerebral.

Because of the Cartesian gulf between mind and body modern philosophers cannot endure a physiological (which is on their basis a mechanical) account of an existence which is essentially psychological. On a Scholastic basis, however, unconscious cerebration, if conceived of not merely as chemical change, but the activity of a living organism, is acceptable in principle and makes the nearest approach toward Thomistic theory. For the theory of unconscious cerebration is the only theory which

takes into account that "perpetual and intimate influx and interdependence between the psychical and corporeal life", the substantial union of the human soul and body, their solidarity. Cerebral processes, organic, physiological, neurological activities, all these are psychical on the scholastic position because as we asserted above the soul or principle of life is identical with the mind or subject of consciousness and subconsciousness.

The theory of unconscious cerebration is not acceptable "in toto". We realize that during the last quarter of the 19th and the opening years of the 20th century, there has been accumulated a mass of observations which suffices, in the opinion of many of those best qualified to judge, to establish the reality of processes which express themselves in purposeful actions and which bear all the marks from which we are accustomed to infer conscious cognition and volition, but of which nevertheless the subject or normal personality has no knowledge

or awareness other than such as may be shared by any second person observing his actions. We fully appreciate that certain phenomena of subconsciousness cannot be explained as "merely highly complex reflex activity connected by continuous transitions with the simplest automatic reactions". (Cf. J. S. Moore - op. cit. p. 217) Nevertheless it approaches the scholastic theory of the connection and dependence of mind and brain. We cannot overlook the importance in our mental life of those physiological dispositions, those cerebral registrations or impressions which are the trace or effect of a sensation produced by a liminal or supraliminal stimulus. The nature of these "preservations" is disputed. A psychical effect usually follows the withdrawal of ~~the~~ the stimulus but sometimes the subject is not conscious of the original stimulus but only of its trace or effect which may be latent for years. Does this suggest unconscious cerebration?

In scholastic psychology we call these traces or mental images phantasms and they play such an important role in our mental life that St. Thomas

writes (Summa Theologica p. 1 q. 84 a 7):- "Impossible est intellectum nostrum secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori jungitur, aliquid intellegere in actu nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata".

Then again unconscious cerebration seems to present a satisfactory explanation of the phenomena cited above which apparently involve intelligence. Consider the fact of the solution in the morning of a problem that was insoluble the previous night. Advocates of subconscious mentation maintain that during repose the subconscious mind overcomes the difficulty that was encountered by ordinary consciousness in our waking hours. But this implies a dual mind and we have already rejected this doctrine. The following account seems more acceptable:

Owing to long continued effort a state of fatigue intervenes in the brain which is the instrument of the mind. Consequently this toxic condition prevents the occurrence of those nervous processes

which are necessary in order that the brain may supply the images and combinations of images required for intellectual abstraction. Then after repose the brain, having resumed the instrumental efficiency, presents the required images to the mind which returns to its task and performs its function of abstraction.

It must be noted (1) that the brain and not the intellect, is subject to fatigue; (2) that we assign different functions to the brain and to the mind; the brain with its cerebral tissues, cells and fibres prepares for the solution by forming combinations of images and presenting the results of its processes to the mind which by intellectual abstractive manipulation performs the actual solution which bears an intelligent character, and (3) that the cerebrum is informed and rendered organic by the soul or mind which thus endows it with its instrumental ability.

In conclusion then we may say that this theory is the most acceptable one presented to ex-

plain the subconscious although it is subject to qualification. Let us also agree with Father Barrett that the very concept of the subconscious, which, like Caesar's wife, is above suspicion, must inevitably "lead honest investigators to recognize the spirituality and substantiality of the soul".

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