

The Subconscious Idea.

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Pope has said, "that the proper study of man-kind is man". It is certain that the highest and most important study of man is mind.

From the beginning of learning, philosophy has speculated on the mind or soul of man, its attributes, its processes, and its relation to the physical organism. Science, philosophy and theology have set forth man's trinity. Plato's idea of terrestrial man was that he is a trinity, made up of "soul, soul-body, and earth-body". Socrates believed that he was at times directed by a spirit independent of himself. The "salt, sulphur and mercury" of the ancient alchemists doubtless referred to the same idea.

Many experiences might be related which have had their origin within man, yet which have seemed to come from exterior sources, and being outside the commonly recognized powers of the human mind have been attributed to the supernatural.

There has been an operative force, an intelligent force in man, which he has denied being a part of himself. — a force sometimes manifesting itself in harmony with, but at times in opposition to, his will and desire.

Investigation along this line has been meager, until in 1882, the London Society for Psychical Research was formed and since then steady progress has been made to the

present day. Among the most indefatigable workers in this field is Frederic Myers, whose great quest was the scientific demonstration of the immortality of the human soul. From evidence found in his research he makes the statement that there is "a stratum of consciousness beneath the normal consciousness which is capable of independent action and which has powers distinctly its own." It is with this phase of that wonderful mechanism, mind, we shall attempt to deal.

Scientific investigation has not yet succeeded in defining clearly the nature of the two elements which constitutes the mind, nor in drawing the division line between the conscious, normal, or objective mind, as it is termed, and the subconscious or subjective element.

We may state the theory in Mr. Myers own language; "I suggest, then, that the stream of consciousness in which we habitually live, is not the only consciousness that exists in connection with our organism. Our habitual or empirical consciousness may consist of a mere collection from a multitude of thoughts and sensations, of which some, at least, are equally conscious with those that we empirically know. I accord no primacy to my ordinary waking self, except that among my potential selves, this one has shown itself the fittest to

meet the needs of common life. I hold that it has established no further claim, and that it is perfectly possible that other thoughts, feelings, and memories, either isolated or in continuous connection, may now be actively conscious, as we say "within me", in some kind of coordination with my organizing and forming some part of my total individuality."

The dual theory that each part of the mind is wholly distinct from the other, has not yet been established but that each does possess at least some distinct powers is generally accepted. Hence we shall assume Huxley's theory, that the objective mind is cognizant of the objective world and is so by means of the five physical senses. It is the outgrowth of man's physical necessities, it is his guide in the struggle for material environment. Its highest function is reasoning. The subjective mind has knowledge of its environment by means independent of the physical senses; it perceives by intuition. It is the seat of the emotions and the storehouse of memory. It performs its highest functions when the objective functions are in abeyance. That the human mind does consist of two distinct elements; that the subjective mind is a distinct and separate entity, having

independent powers and functions and a mental organization all its own, while the objective mind is merely the function of the physical brain, are questions which have yet to be definitely settled. Science will in time prove by more thorough and extensive investigation the truth or falsity of these suppositions.

Most writers hold that the subconscious mind is not a distinct mind; that it is merely a part of the whole mental process. It embraces all that portion of our mental life which lies below the plane of conscious feeling, action, thought, and will or volition. Just as that part of the plant below the ground as truly is a part of the plant as a whole, so is that part above the ground, so is the subconscious truly as much the mind as is the conscious. The difference consists wholly in a difference in process.

The objective mentality is accompanied by self-consciousness: when the conscious mind feels, it not only feels but knows that it feels; it is self-consciously aware of its thoughts and volitions. To an object before its eyes, it voluntarily turns its attention; thinks about it; then chooses some course of action in relation to and suggested by it. With the attention thus

can be concentrated, it cannot give equal attention to any other object. Our actively conscious life is limited to a single object or idea.

But can we say that this is our whole mind? While the concentration is fixed upon a certain object or idea, the subjective mind receives more or less distinctly, other impressions, as of the surrounding light and shades, intrinsic noises, or sensations or thoughts arising from within. There is thus a gradual transition from the chosen object of thought to the dimly perceived, the indistinct and finally the subconscious or that of which we are not at the time aware at all. We cannot say we are ever aware of our subconscious life. Only as it becomes conscious, can we know the subconscious; and for this knowledge of its processes can only be obtained by watching the results on the mind and body and by inference from these to certain facts. As in health, the functions of the body are performed without the cognizance of our conscious mind or subconsciously, until the sense of disorder or pain brings the knowledge to our consciousness that the equilibrium has been disturbed; so the effects of mental changes upon the body are produced

subconsciously, so long as they are moderate and normal, we are unaware of them. In excitement when the heart beats violently and the blood runs fast, when by an effort of the will the mental state becomes calm and natural, the body also responds, returning its normal condition. But what causes the change? We cannot feel that we are acting consciously upon the muscles, veins and arteries, causing the flow of blood to become slower. It is through the hidden activities of subconsciousness that the body yields to the command. A change which is health giving may be felt to the extremities of the body, although consciously we are not aware of it.

It is a well known fact that if we retire at night with the firm confidence that we shall awake at a certain time, a good restful sleep follows with the awakening at the appointed time. On the other hand if we fall asleep in a state of worry and nervous fear that we shall fail to awaken, our rest is broken and troubled with many awakenings before the proper time. In the first instance we calmly and forcibly made the impression upon the hidden mentor of subconsciousness and the command was executed in the same mood in which it was given.

In the second instance, in the same nervous condition in which we fall asleep, we awake. So, this agent must be turned in the right direction; the commands will be carried out in proportion to the degree of confidence, and will be executed in exactly the same mental state in which the suggestions are made.

Let us consider the thought upon which we voluntarily concentrate our attention as the apex of a pyramid. The consciousness ideas related to it as the approach to the apex, gradually shading down into the base and the foundation upon which the base rests — the sub-consciousness. In this subconscious mind are registered every impression ever received since life began — each thought, word and act. With the attention concentrated upon the apex of the "pyramid of thought," a constant stream of related ideas wells up from sub-consciousness, ideas which are accepted or rejected according as they are useful or not, as regards the apex thought. Some messenger of whose workings and processes of search in the storehouse of the sub-consciousness, the objective mind is unaware until the desired idea or bit of information comes into consciousness, is constantly bringing up data on the subject upon which the conscious attention is

voluntarily turned.

In practical life, decisions must each day be made and problems solved. A question to which an answer must be given is placed before us; we ask for time to consider, then usually when that is granted, dismiss the matter altogether from our minds. When it is again brought before us, the solution to the difficulty springs to our minds with the surprise that we should ever have been troubled over it. As Dr Carpenter says,—"What is the nature of this process which evaluates, as it were, this result unconsciously to ourselves, when we have either been asleep or when we have been giving our minds to some other train of thought in the interval? What is it that brings spontaneously to our consciousness a fact which we endeavored to recall with all the force of our will, and yet could not succeed?"

Man derives all his knowledge from surroundings and himself from impressions received by the different organs of sense, and conveyed to the brain by means of the connecting nerves. Modifications of these impressions occur in the peculiarities of the apparatus of perception

and transmission of the individuals; as the difference in construction of the sense organs and variations in the conducting nerves and their functional energy primarily form the perception of impressions in the central organ. Waldeyer says, - "But in whatever degree or manner these perceptions have been received, they are permanently registered. They are never absolutely lost." That we cannot at will, recall any impression ever received, does not prove their non-existence. Impressions received during childhood, reappear suddenly and when not searched for, thus showing their original tenacity at a period of life when no selective processes nor reasons for remembering or forgetting could possibly have been at work. This fact of permanent retention refers not alone to those impressions which strike the so called higher senses but also to those recorded from the various organs of the body, as the organs of assimilation and secretion etc. It has been shown by modern anatomical research that there is a direct nerve connection between these organs and the center

of perception. Normal functioning of these organs excite corresponding and repeated impressions which are incorporated unconsciously into our memory. These impressions are repeated in such continuous monotony that it results in a tonic condition which remains unperceived owing to the more powerful normal and active state of the mind.

In the case of disease or functional disturbances the absence of this condition is noted. For example, so long as the stomach is supplied with food, the tonic condition is continued, but when the stomach is empty, the excitation is felt in the sensation of hunger. Thus we are active and selective relative to the successive, passing only in respect to the subconscious impressions. The brain serves as the mechanism of our thought but there can be no question at all that it works of itself, as it were, - that it has an automatic power, in the same manner as the sensory centres and the spinal cord have.

automatic powers of this man. A very large
 part of our mental activity consists of the
 automatic action of the brain according
 to the mode in which we have trained it,
 and it is this automatic activity which
 we term the subconscious. Just as the
 impressions received in the brain from the
 functional organs in the tonic condition
 finally become reflex, so the subconscious
 activities do their normal work in their
 share of the mind's labor, wholly independent
 of the will power, until the idea is
 projected into the conscious mind. The will
 guides the the impulses in the first instance,
 and keeps before the mind all the thoughts
 which it can immediately lay hold of, or
 which association suggests bear upon
 the subject. These thoughts do not im-
 mediately conduct to an issue, they
 require to work themselves out; this
 last is the task for the subconscious
 mind. Many, many cases have been
 recorded in which the mind has obviously
 worked more clearly and more successfully
 in the automatic condition when left
 entirely to itself, than when we have been
 engendering our brains, so to speak, to

obtain the solution; in all these instances the result is owing to the mind being left alone without the disturbance of any emotion and it really does the work better than will ever direct. The objective mind must not be too busily concerned with external affairs or the promptings of the subjective mind cannot make themselves felt. The subjective mind has a reserved timid individuality; when the objective mind will listen to none of its expressions of wisdom, it does not intrude them upon its more powerful complement. But again, neither can the objective mind dictate unreservedly to the subjective. At the proper time and only then, when the reasoning process is fully completed, does the subjective mind give forth its results. We must wait the melting into consciousness of the products of the subconscious activities, neither hurrying nor hindering the final result which is always presented spontaneously into active knowledge.

As yet psychical research has been unable accurately to define and state

the attributes of this subjective mind. We have seen that its memory is practically perfect; that it has the power to register, retain and even forewarn; then too, it possesses synthetic and assimilative powers, reconstituting thoughts and ideas and incorporating them into our individual life. Certain phenomena depend for their perfect development upon objective education, and certain other phenomena are exhibited in perfect form independent of objective education, or in other words, certain powers are inherent in the subjective intelligence.

Hudson holds that all laws of Nature may be perceived intuitively by subconsciousness. Under certain conditions the subjective mind comprehends intuitively the laws of mathematics, of music, and of harmony of colors. The truth of this statement has again and again been demonstrated by mathematical and musical prodigies.

Blind Tom, with his wonderful musical abilities, was an idiot. His memory for music was so perfect that he could reproduce after one hearing,

long and difficult piece. He improvised without an effort, but was entirely incapable of objective education. These facts of Blind Louis testify furnish complete illustrations, first, of the perfection of subjective memory; and second, of the inherent power of the subjective mind to grasp the laws of the harmony of sounds, and that too, in dependence of objective education.

Mozart recognized this inner force, compelling him to write his wonderful masterpieces. In writing to a friend, he says: "All this fills my soul, and provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodized and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it like a fine picture or beautiful statue at a glance. Nor do I hear in my imagination the parts successively, but I hear them, as it were, all at once." Again he says: "If one has the spirit of a composer, one writes because one cannot help it."

Mathematical prodigies have also been numerous. One striking example is that

of Zerah Calburn who before the age of six years exhibited great powers of mathematical calculations; - as for instance, when asked how many minutes in forty eight years, before the question could be written down, the answer was given correctly. When questioned as to the method of calculation, the child could not answer, but it was evident some process was taking place in the mind.

Another phenomenon of the subconscious mind seems to possess, is that of the measurement of time. This has already been demonstrated by the example of the instructions to subconsciousness to arouse the objective mind at an appointed time. Animals possess this faculty to a marked degree.

Thus by intuition and wholly independent and apart from any action of the objective mind, the subjective mind may have perfect perceptions of the laws of Nature. But all subjects not governed by these fixed laws, is independent for knowledge upon objective education. Thus the subconscious mind cannot know by intuition, the name of a person, a geographical location or a fact in human history but it

may recognize intuitively the law of the harmony of sounds.

Hudson declares also, that the two minds differ in reasoning capacity and process. He says, "the objective mind is capable of reasoning by all methods, induction and deduction, analytic and synthetic. The subjective mind is incapable of induction reasoning." The first of the first statement we admit immediately. The second statement concerns the purely subjective mind, as exhibited in the mental processes of persons in a profound trance or state of hypnosis. In this state, it has often been demonstrated that the reasoning is syllogistic or deductive. The objective mind never describes a series of known facts, and reasons from them up to general principles; but given a general principle to start with, it will reason deductively from it. If in this exaggerated condition of the hypnotic state the subconscious mind reasons deductively and is incapable of inductive reasoning, then normally it must pursue the same process. We might say that this peculiar

characteristic of the subjective mind argues its kinship to God; that it is indeed the very soul of man. To reason inductively, then must first be ignorance, a search after knowledge, inquiry, and an effort to arrive at conclusions of things not heretofore determined. God himself is incapable of inductive reasoning. Can we conceive of God, the Omniscient, the incarnation of the highest wisdom, reasoning from premise to premise, seeking knowledge by finite processes? Our boasted "god-like" reason loses then some of its god-likeness. "Then it is that the soul - the subjective mind - will perform its normal functions, untrammelled by the physical form, which impressions it and binds it to earth, and in its natural realm of truth, unimpeded by the laborious process of finite reasoning, it will shake all truth from its Eternal Source."

Not until recently has there come to man the beginning of the full

realization that "as a man thinketh, so is he"; that he is a product of his most habitual thought. An oft repeated action so deepens its path in the brain that it literally can never be effaced. "Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar." This tendency of all living organisms to the recurrence of an action once done is a powerful agency in the whole process of life and exercises untold influence in making us what we are. Activity along a certain line in the objective mind, generates corresponding activity in the subjective mind; so an act performed thus the will power and consciousness, transmits its activity to the subconscious mind. If the action is oft repeated, the subconscious mind finally gives no attention to its performance but relegates it wholly to subconsciousness; thus it becomes reflex or automatic and consequently, a fixed habit. Although the muscles are indeed fitted by long practice to perform the movement as

maneuvers, the reflex action cannot be considered as the result of a well trained muscle alone. It is rather the response of the muscle to a certain stimulus given by sub-consciousness. Thus all habits are sub-conscious activities; to change a habit the sub-conscious mind must first be trained. The repetition of an act establishes a constant desire to continue, until it is so great that the feeble impulse finally to resist is overcome.

James says, "The drunken Rip Van Winkle, of Jefferson's play, excuses himself for some first hesitation by saying, 'I want cannot this time!' Well he may not cannot it, and a blind man may not cannot it, but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is in scientific literature wiped out."

It is this change in desire of a person upon whom the habits of vice

or intemperance have fixed themselves,
 that determines his helplessness. The
 desire to continue becomes a sub-
 jective desire, one fixed and constantly
 operating in the subconscious stratum of
 mind. The tendency of subconsciousness
 is toward a stubborn conservatism, so
 that when a desire for a habit has
 become a part of its processes, it
 requires more than a weak and only
 occasional contrary desire to ever favor
 and change the habit. Reason has
 obtained the subjective mind to become
 trained in a direction antagonistic
 to itself and cannot successfully com-
 bat the powerful opponent. Along
 with the desire for the things of the
 acquired habit, go a vast array of ex-
 periences as subjective memory, which
 serve as material for the processes
 going on beneath the objective con-
 sciousness and independent of it. When
 once trained it takes but a hint,
 a small stimulus, to set the whole
 subconscious process moving in the direction
 of the acquired habit. It is these un-
 conscious activities which we have reason
 to believe are going on all the time,
 awake or asleep, that become the

power too great for the weakened volition. If the subjective mind is going constantly over the scenes and experiences, sensations and pleasures of the habit, exerting up these effects to the objective mind, unconsciously thereby influencing it, how can it exercise a will or volition strong enough to combat this subjective power? And is it not this that constitutes the weakened will? It may be that such a one is not in reality a will less strong than normally, but a will unable successfully to combat the powerful development, thus oft repeated processes, of the subjective mind, along lines which are finally recognized as antagonistic to reason.

This fact must be considered as one of vast importance, in the study of man, for methods and principles for his correction and conduct. These cerebral and cranial activities cannot be stopped at will, therefore some material must be supplied them. Hence let new and unusual stimuli be given until they also have reacted upon the subjective mind and are then fixed.

crowding out and occupying the place of those processes revolving around the habit.

If man is normal, reason will govern all his actions, especially if his attention has been called to them.

If normal, he sees that nature's provision is such that he may easily check an impulse that needs correcting, by putting in operation a counter impulse which is there ready for use.

The acceptance of the theory of the existence of the subconscious mind, will satisfactorily explain many phenomena, hitherto unexplained.

We recognize that suggestion deals almost wholly with the subjective mind; that it is then autosuggestion, health-bringing thoughts sent beneficently upon the body; that it is because of the power of the subjective mind over the functions and conditions of the body, that makes suggestion therapeutics possible.

Hypnotism and telepathy are connected almost exclusively with the subconscious state of mind. Orlan thus defines telepathy. "Telepathy is a power peculiar to the subjective mind.

It is the normal communication between subjective minds, independent of the five objective senses."

Accepting the truth of these statements of the subjective mind, its existence as an essential and important part of man's mind, its attributes, and influence upon the life of the individual, then the training of the activities of subconsciousness become of paramount importance.

"Equanimity is the power it is because of its habitual though subconscious influence upon the activities of the body. It is not what we think superficially and in passing that regulates our lives, but the habitual state of our organism as centers either of nervous discord or harmonious adjustment. It is the deep undercurrent of life that sways us and this is the synthesis of all we have stored in the past; it is thought and character made continuously dynamic."

Dresser considers the subconscious

mind a most important factor in spiritual life, and in speaking of it, says; "The deeper self is evidently in immediate living contact with the immanent Spirit and what it receives from that is limited only by the power of the desire or prayer which set it into activity. The Spirit is wisdom, it knows what is true and right and guidance is made known to the conscious self which far surpasses in power the keenest intuition of merely self-conscious thought."

Dr Carpenter remarks that "common sense is the general resultant of the whole character, discipline, and previous action of our minds," and Titchener adds that "mind is the sum total of the mental processes experienced in a life time." Then I think we may consider our individual life, our character, as the general resultant of the whole "character, discipline, and previous action of our minds," considered subjectively and objectively.

The possibilities presented in the proper training and development of

the subconscious mind cannot be estimated. The practical results obtained in health, powers of concentration, more ease, clearness, and consciousness in mental labor, would of course be great. But can we estimate the value to a life if the subjective mind, having been filled with noble thoughts and beautiful ideals, uses its synthetic and assimilative powers and propels into conscious activity, the results in the form of high aspirations and promptings to acts of nobility and self-sacrifice? What a storehouse of everlasting happiness would a subconscious mind so filled become?

But if turned in the wrong direction, the subconscious mind is as strong a power for evil as it may be for good. The objective mind should always lead the controlling power, which is God-given and both elements be developed simultaneously if a perfect result would be obtained.

Truly we agree with Henry Wood, who said of the subconscious

mind; "It is a hidden force to be
dealt with and educated, for it is
often found merely and in-
subordinate."

But let us also remember that,

"Minds are of celestial birth;
Make me then a heaven of earth."