

THE MIND

BRO. STEPHEN MCGONAGLE, O. P.



HE mind is still one of the central points in psychology. By some schools it is admitted and by others it is not, for no two schools will admit the same subject matter for psychology, nor will any two schools agree on the methods of approach, on the use of terms, or on their implied content. Each psychological school deals with the problem of mind and body in its own way, and its observations are sure to be found colored by its own private prejudices and philosophical assumptions.

Despite its etymological signification, i.e., word about the soul, one will deny that psychology is a study of the soul and its operations; another will insist that psychology is to be taken as a comprehensive study of the conscious subject, and forthwith divide it into a number of subsidiary sciences, physiological psychology, experimental psychology, genetic psychology, behaviorism, anthroponomy, etc. Psychology, like charity, has come to cover a multitude of sins.

Modern psychology has taken over the terms of traditional psychology, but in this transference the traditional meaning of these terms has been perverted and confusion reigns supreme. In the manuals of psychology the terms, 'mind,' 'intellect,' 'will,' 'imagination,' 'ideas' are to be found, but at bottom their use is a misrepresentation of terms. In the traditional psychology, spirituality and immateriality sound the keynote for the mental faculties. Since the last century, however, evolution has entered into psychology, claiming it for its own and enforcing a divorce from philosophy. In truth it is impossible to conceive how a spiritual substance and spiritual faculties could evolve from material organisms.

The Standard dictionary defines mind as "that which thinks, feels, and wills." Mind is a term that has acquired a various number of significations. Usually it is a general term contrasted with body, or a synonym for the intellect and intelligence. Etymologically it refers to a state of remembering. For some it is an abstract and collective term for all forms of con-

scious intelligence, or the entire psychical being of man. Occasionally it signifies the activity of knowing, or subjects with minds, as 'Great Minds.' Thus it may refer to consciousness, to psychic phenomena or to the subject for which they are phenomena. Defined as the subject of consciousness, it refers to whatever organism can be shown to possess powers of feeling, sensing, and the like.

It is rare to find a strict definition given by any author of the modern school as to what is meant by mind and intellect. Any intimation as to the intimate nature of these terms is usually avoided, and generalizations take the place of definitions. As to the nature of mind different schools have different formulations. By the psycho-physicists, mind is taken in a broad sense to correspond with the nervous system in all its ramifications. The materialists identify it with the brain. The behaviorists designate the concept of mind as a 'mystical interpretation' used by psychologists who dislike the materialistic sound of brain. These have given up altogether the use of such terms as 'mind,' 'soul,' 'substance,' 'faculties,' and the like. Spencer and many others of the Darwinian school, like Dewey and Judd, consider the mind to be the terminus of an evolutionary progress from reflex and tropism, by way of memory and imagination, to intellect and reason. Man not only has a body but also a mind. Assuming that his body has evolved they likewise assume an evolutionary history of his mind. The Purposive group of psychologists, like William McDougall, Morton Prince and others, concede that the mind is not material, but at the same time they agree that it is not spiritual. In short they do not insist that the mind is to be reduced to matter, but only that mind and life are to be interpreted, not in theological terms as, e.g., spiritual faculties, spiritual substance, but in biological terms as, e.g., an organism, an organ of adjustment, structural fabric, and so on. They draw back at proclaiming the mind to be material, a protoplasmic commotion, but apparently they do not see the contradiction of considering the mind as an organism which is not material.

Psychology, to retain the right to be considered a science apart from physiology, biology, and anatomy, must have some subject matter apart from the nervous system, glands, and cells to discuss. In brief, it must have some problems peculiar to itself. And, too, it must have a terminology. They cannot define their science as the science of the nervous system without be-

coming physiologists, nor will they define it as the science of the workings of the mind. As we said before even a psychologist has a few metaphysical assumptions. "Psychologists being human beings first and searchers after truth afterwards, are like all mortals, too often concerned with maintaining their own points to which they have committed themselves rather than discovering the truth."¹ So we have psychologists calling their science the study of the organism as a whole. Woodworth writes, "We may dodge the futile questionings that attend the use of the word 'mind,' and substitute 'organism' or 'individual.' Then, to dodge physiology as well, we may simply explain that by organism we mean the organism *as a whole*."² In such a way modern psychologists avoid the questions of the spirituality and materiality of the mind, and concern themselves simply with processes. Titchener, psycho-physicist, admitted that the mind is immaterial, but his immateriality meant nothing more than a psychical aspect of the functioning nervous system. "The mind is the sum-total of the mental processes. . . . Mind is invisible, because sight is mind; mind is intangible, because touch is mind."³ Ladd and Woodworth state that the mind cannot be material, that it is immaterial and spiritual: "The negative conclusion that mind is *non-material* is quite inevitable for everyone who admits that mind is a real being with any nature whatever. It is not difficult, also, to show that we must make the corresponding positive statement, and affirm the *spirituality* of mind. To perceive, feel, think, will—in brief, to be conscious in some one of the various forms of conscious life—this is to be positively spiritual."⁴

Among the charms of scholastic psychology one always notes that it is logical, explicit, and proffers its conclusions in the elemental language of common sense. Logical, because it contains those features which form the subject matter of logic; namely, consistency of thought and cogency of reasoning. The scholastics, following the example of Aristotle and St. Thomas, undertake to explain the nature of thought; they distinguish thought from sensation, and by their analysis suggest the hope of illuminating the ultimate nature of things. Scholastic psy-

¹ *Psychologies of 1925* (Worcester, 1927), p. 221.

² *ibid.*, p. iii.

³ W. H. Howell, *A Text-Book of Psychology* (New York 1909), pp. 16 and 17, Part I.

⁴ *Elements of Physiological Psychology* (New York 1915), p. 682.

chology is explicit since multiplication of terms is avoided, ambiguity of phrase is carefully checked, and to its terminology precise and coherent definitions are given. Unintelligible theories have no place in the subject matter, for the dictates of common sense are rigidly adhered to. The basis of all thought are our fundamental practical ideas taken from the common immediate world in which we exist, and feel, and reason, and will. These are the essentials of common sense language to which we must return when describing the world which common sense admits, whatever be the philosophic realms of thought we may inhabit. Ideas, images, sensations, understanding, reasoning, memory, willing, and desiring are, in the common sense world, separate and distinct. Philosophy accepts the data admitted by the normal human intelligence, and classifies and coördinates. In drawing conclusions from this data of our common sense world there are several lines of departure. One may tend to over-simplification and attempt a more or less complete unification of the mental functions and faculties, or, with scholastic psychology, retain the common sense distinctions and refuse to identify ideas and images, sensations and thought, willing and feeling.

In *de Veritate*⁵ St. Thomas treats *ex professo* on the nature of mind. His first query is—Whether the mind is the essence of the soul, or one of its powers. He answers that the essence of the soul is the principle of all forms of life in the body, sensitive and nutritive as well as rational, while the mind is the proximate principle of understanding. Again, the essence of the soul is common to all these powers while the mind designates rational life, and is used in opposition to sense knowledge.⁶ Thus St. Thomas refuses to identify soul and mind. Later on Descartes was to insist that the essence of soul is mind, "*Essentia animae est cogitatio.*" This Cartesian statement, identifying the soul with the faculty, carries the implication that the soul must think incessantly, which paved the way for the development of the theory of the "unconscious mind" by Von Hartmann and others.

⁵ *Quaestiones Disputatae*, "de Veritate," q. X.

⁶ *ibid.*, a. 1. "Animae essentia est principium vivendi. Sed mens non est principium vivendi, sed intelligendi. Ergo mens non est ipsa essentia animae, sed potentia ejus. . . . Praeterea, essentia animae communis est omnibus potentiis, quia omnes in ea radicanur. Sed mens non est communis omnibus potentiis, quia dividitur contra sensum."

"The mind is not a special power over and above the memory, intelligence, and will," St. Thomas writes, "but is a potential whole comprising these three."⁷ It (the mind) is not a particular power of the soul, for such a power does not admit parts, but rather a general term including the separate and distinct entities, intellect and will, as parts.⁸ The term "mind" includes the will as well as the intellect, St. Thomas reasons, "inasmuch as, namely, it designates a certain class of powers of the soul, so that by 'mind' can be understood to be included all those powers which in their operations are entirely removed from matter and from material conditions."⁹ The reason is that although in the individual the vegetative and sentient operations are operations of the living organism, the animated body, yet the higher operations of rational thought and volition are the operations of the soul alone, the spiritual principle of these operations in the individual.¹⁰

Thus in the problem of mind and body St. Thomas teaches that the concept of mind refers to the higher faculties of intellect, memory, and will. In accordance with this view one cannot define mind as the "conscious" subject. The soul is the direct subject of states of consciousness, that is, of mental acts, functions, and processes. There are two forms of life connected with consciousness, namely, rational and sentient. The soul alone is the subject of rational consciousness, since the intellect and will are radicated immediately in the soul. The composite, the animated living organism, is the subject of sentient consciousness, because sentient operations are exercised through corporeal organs.

Our concept of mental states, like any of our concepts, comes from experience, as St. Thomas teaches. Though we are conscious of the spiritual nature in the functioning of intellect and will, yet the spiritual action is allied with sentient action and sentient action with organic action. Through sense cognition the mind is able to attain to a knowledge of the possible and actual existence of spiritual and immaterial realities. But we can neither conceive nor describe spiritual action without the aid of the images in the phantasm. "Incorporeal things, of which there are no phantasms, are known to us by comparison

⁷ *ibid.*, ad 7 um.

⁸ *ibid.*, ad 9 um.

⁹ *ibid.*, ad 2.

¹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 77, a. 5.

with sensible bodies of which there are phantasms . . . and therefore, when we understand something about these things, we need to turn to phantasms of bodies, although there are no phantasms of the things themselves."¹¹ The moderns make the mistake of identifying the images of the phantasm with the thoughts of the intellect, and forthwith deny the spiritual nature of thought, and, consequently, any such spiritual faculty as intellect. A mistake which certain ancient philosophers also committed, as St. Thomas notes, who "not properly realizing the force of intelligence, and failing to make a proper distinction between sense and intellect, thought that nothing existed in the world but what could be apprehended by sense and imagination. And because bodies alone fell under imagination, they supposed that nothing existed but bodies."¹² St. Thomas teaches that there are three grades of cognitive power: "one cognitive power, namely, the sense, is the act of a corporeal organ. There is another grade of cognitive power which is neither the act of a corporeal organ, nor in any way connected with corporeal matter; such is the angelic intellect. . . . But the human intellect holds a middle place: for it is not the act of an organ; yet it is the power of a soul which is the power of the body. . . . Our intellect understands material things by abstracting from the phantasms; and through material things thus considered we acquire some knowledge of immaterial things."¹³

The scholastic concept of mind, then, is of an immaterial or spiritual power, making use of, but in no way subjected to, the sentient organism. The terminology of most modern psychologists implies the opposite. Professor McDougall describes mind as "a highly complex organized structure."¹⁴ He assigns three fundamental faculties to the mind, "the faculties of knowing, of striving, and of feeling." But for McDougall the term faculty has no specific meaning. His term which approaches the scholastic definition of faculty is "disposition," which he defines as "any enduring part of the structure of the mind which renders possible some particular mode of mental activity." He considers intellect as but an "aspect" of mind. The intellect, or cognitive structure of the mind, he writes, "comprises a vast number of dispositions, one for every distinct object and class of

¹¹ *ibid.*, q. 84, a. 7 ad 3 um.

¹² *ibid.*, q. 50, a 1.

¹³ *ibid.*, q. 85, a. 1.

¹⁴ *Outline of Psychology* (New York, 1924), pp. 378 ff.

objects which that mind is capable of conceiving, either in the way of perceiving it, or recollecting, anticipating, or merely imagining it." Mind, for McDougal, then, is as complex, composite, organic, and structural as is the brain. His structural formula for mind is the linking together of cognitive and conative dispositions. "A mind of simplest possible structure, must be conceived as consisting of one cognitive disposition linked with a single conative disposition." "The perfectly developed and organized mind would have a cognitive disposition for every individual object and for every species, genus, and class of objects."¹⁵ This intellectual bit of structure, or cognitive aspect of mind, includes thought, intelligence, sensual and intellectual memory, sense impressions, and whatever refers to consciousness. For St. Thomas, the intellect is not an organ, nor is the mind any kind of a structural fabric. The mind is physical, real, as physical as any structure of cells forming an organism, but it is of an immaterial nature. The mind has its sensitive reference, it operates in conjunction with sensitive structure, but the difference between sense and intellect is one of kind, and not a difference in complexity.

Scholastic psychology never minimizes sense knowledge and sentient activity. In general man has the same sentient powers as the animals. The difference between the human brain and the animal brain is only quantitative; and the brains of both depend upon the same kind of nervous impulses to regulate the action of the organism.¹⁶ Physiology studies the workings of the organisms of animals to gain a knowledge of the organism of man. Both man and the animal have inherited reflex mechanism for the adaptation of the body; and both have sensuous memory and the capacity to learn by experience and habit formation. Born without a brain, man would never achieve a knowledge of the outer world, never even gain a consciousness of his own individuality. The materials for intellectual knowledge come through the senses. St. Thomas seven centuries ago named five channels for the acquisition of sense knowledge; namely the sense of touch, taste, sight, smell, and hearing,¹⁷ and so far, science has not enlarged the list. The sense of touch has been broken up, and partly localized, into hot and cold spots, pain spots, touch bulbs, the

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 260 and 263.

¹⁶ Howell, *op. cit.*, pp. 185 ff.

¹⁷ *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 78, a. 3.

muscular sense, and so on, but these are but modifications of the sense of touch. Intuitive knowledge has no place in scholastic psychology, for the dependence of man, as well as of the animals, upon sentient powers and upon the sense organs as the means of communication with the external world has always been clearly understood.

However, scholastic psychology never reduces man to purely sense consciousness for, as St. Thomas teaches, the mind has power of performing operations beyond the power of sense. Sense knowledge is organic, intellectual knowledge, anorganic or spiritual. An organic faculty, as of vision, is a power that inheres in a corporeal organ, can be exercised only by mediating that organ, and for its existence and operation depends upon that organ. An anorganic, or immaterial, power, as the intellect, has no organ, nor for its existence and operation does it depend upon any organ. United with sensation there is another way of knowing which goes beyond sensation, and this is intellectual thought. No purely sentient creature has yet furnished us with any introspection, an act beyond a sentient process. Intellectual thought finds its object in that of sensation itself, namely, being. Being is at first the concrete being of the sense reality, but through the power of the intellect it attains abstract being—becomes the intelligible object. This operation, the production of abstract being, necessitates the existence of a faculty, or principle, specifically different from any power of sense. And this faculty St. Thomas terms the intellect; a faculty of soul by which we apprehend the quiddities of sensible things. Sensuous action, whether simple or concrete, whatever grades of evolution it may have passed through, can never attain the capacity of producing thought. St. Thomas points out that the most manifest difference in the operation of sense and intellect is the difference in the content of their respective modes of activity. What the sense knows is a concrete corporeal quality. Sensation is particular, concrete, conditioned by time and space. Thought, the product of the intellect, is at once abstract and universal, free from all the restrictions that matter imposes. The intellect is immaterial and spiritual; the sentient powers are grounded in the corporeal body.

One may reasonably conclude that man's position in the organic and inorganic world is not due to his sentient powers, since he has not been endowed with any more sentient powers than the animals. It cannot be attributed to his unaided human

senses, for the animal feels, sees, hears, smells, and has consciousness as well as man. The powers of sense are limited in their operations and responses, and the animal is restricted to the capabilities of his sentient powers. Man, possessing the same set of sentient attributes as the animal, shows no such restrictions. At will he transcends the sphere of life to which his sense organs are adapted. To man, then, must be conceded some power over and above those he holds in common with the animal. This power the scholastic calls the intellect. It is neither a material structure nor a sense organ; if it were, it would be restricted as the other sense powers are. The scholastic solution is an intellectual faculty, immaterial and spiritual, beyond all restrictions of sense, and with infinite capacity for apprehending and comprehending the finite world and eternal truths.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Summa Theologica*, Ia.
 Michael Maher, S. J., *Psychology, Empirical and Rational* (London, 1903).
 John X. Pyne, S. J., *The Mind* (New York, 1926).
 Jos. Gredt, O. S. B., *De Cognitione Sensuum Externorum* (Rome, 1924).
 Frederick Barry, *The Scientific Habit of Thought* (New York, 1927).
Psychologies of 1925 (Worcester, 1927).
 Ladd and Woodworth, *Elements of Psysiological Psychology* (New York, 1915).
 W. H. Howell, *Text-Book of Physiology* (Phila., 1928).
 W. McDougall, *Outline of Psychology* (New York, 1924).

PER VIAM IMMACULATAM

BRO. NICHOLAS WALSH, O. P.

How should He come to sinful man,
 To put on man's array?
 And God in His infinite wisdom chose
 Mary—the Immaculate way.

And how shall we to Jesus go,
 To God in eternal day?
 Shall we not choose as wisdom chose
 Mary—the Immaculate way?