MULTIPLE PERSONALITY

Boris Sidis, Ph.D.
Simon P. Goodhart, M.D.

PART III

CHAPTER XIX
A SINGLE APPEARANCE OF A SECONDARY PERSON

CASES of double and multiple personality, though few in number, have been published and republished, but they have not been given a close analysis. They always remained mysterious freaks, monstrosities of the human mind, and were described as scientific curiosities. The lay mind regards them with fear and awe, as mysterious manifestations of the supernatural; the scientific world looks at them as rare, exceptional phenomena, to which science has no key and which, on account of their exceptional occurrence, may as well, for "scientific purposes," be neglected. When the Greeks for the first time discovered electricity in the "electron" or amber, they considered it a freak of nature, an exception. It was reserved for the future generations, two thousand years later, to demonstrate the potency of electricity. Psychologists with one accord have passed the verdict: cases of multiple consciousness are exceptions to the law. From the stand-point, however, of our psychophysiological theory of the mind, the phenomena of multiple personality are full of meaning and import. Far from being mere freaks, monstrosities of consciousness, they are in fact shown to be necessary manifestations of the very constitution of mental life. Multiple consciousness is not the exception, but the law. For mind is synthesis of many systems, of many moments consciousness. The phenomena of multiple personality are due to disintegration of mental synthesis, to dissociation of many complex systems. Instead of being neglected by psychology, these phenomena, on the contrary, should form

its very basis. One great principle must be at the foundation of psychology, and that is the synthesis of multiple consciousness in normal, and its disintegration in abnormal mental life.

The consideration of the importance of the phenomena of double and multiple personality induces me to undertake here the work of analysis, however brief, in order to bring out the main points of their agreement and difference. An analysis of these cases, along with the experimental study of the Hanna case already presented to the reader in previous pages, may help us to formulate the law of the phenomena known as “double or multiple consciousness.”

We may begin with the following case, reported by Dr. Osborne in The Medico-Legal Journal for 1894:

“The subject was a man of muscular, somewhat angular outline, past middle age, in admirable health, and so far as is known free from any personal or inherited neuropathic taint. For many years he had resided in a thriving town near Philadelphia, and by strict application to his trade as tinsmith and plumber, had accumulated considerable means. With these resources he at last opened up an establishment of his own, and, being singularly industrious and straightforward, he prospered steadily in his business. As his sons grew up they shared in the business, and at the time of his disappearance had materially assisted him in the execution of some large contracts, from which he realized handsome profits. For years he had enjoyed ordinarily good health, and was not known to possess any eccentricities or morbid tendencies. His domestic relations were harmonious, his social position better than ever before, and he was not known to have any secret, immoral, or illicit indulgences of any kind whatever.

“The Sunday of his disappearance he remained in the house all day, as it was a dull, gloomy November day, engaged mainly in reading and in play with his younger children, to whom he was greatly attached. About four o’clock in the afternoon he got up from the lounge on which he had been reclining, reading, changed his house-jacket for an ordinary business-day coat, slipped on an easy pair of shoes, and, to his wife's questions, stated he was going out for a short walk in the street ‘for a little fresh air.” Noting the time, she cautioned him not to go far, as they would soon have dinner. He promised not to keep them waiting, declared he would be back in a few moments, and that he was only going for a little turn in the main street, on which his house faced. He quietly and leisurely stepped outside the door, and although a conspicuous figure in the town and perfectly well known to nine-tenths of the people of the vicinity, he disappeared as

mysteriously as though he had, as they say, ‘vanished into thin air.’ None of the townspeople saw him, although the streets were alive with the usual Sunday afternoon strollers. He left no trace. Rewards and detectives proved unavailing. When it was necessary to wind up the affairs of the establishment, it was found that he had taken no money, but that his wife and family were handsomely provided for. In due course of time the business was finally disposed of, the property sold, and the wife and family removed to Chicago. The family gave up all hope of ever finding even a clew to the long-lost husband and father.

“Two years had almost passed when, in a tin-shop in a town in one of the far Southern States, where a number of men were engaged at their trade, suddenly one of them dropped his work and cried, as he pressed his hand to his head in a dazed, bewildered way: ‘My God! where am I? How did I come here? This isn't my shop. Where am I? What does it mean?’ At first the men were disposed to laugh at the reserved man, who had worked for several months so quietly by their side, and of whose history they had not been able to learn a word, but when they saw his changed expression, the perspiration standing on his brow, his nervous twitchings, and noted his piteous appeals, they realized that it was all something far from jest; as he was known as a sober, most exemplary-behaved man, they could not charge him with inebriety. They called him by a name that was now strange to him, and they insisted he had told them such was his name. At last, trembling with suppressed emotion, he made his way to the proprietor, who was quite as much startled by the man's talk and manner as had been the men below. After months of wandering and of work combined, during which period he had aged considerably, he was now awakening from—shall we say his somnambulistic sleep?

“It was with some difficulty that he made the proprietor understand his true condition or believe his story of a Northern home, a family, and a prosperous business. The proprietor only knew him as a wandering firmer who had drifted into the town, sought work at his trade, was employed, proved to be a reliable, skilled and attentive workman, and regarding whose antecedents the proprietor had not inquired and the workman had not volunteered any statements. Under the fictitious name he had given he had been known and paid, but he had no knowledge of the past. He remembered nothing. At last a dim recollection came over him of that fateful Sunday, his rising to go out, the request to come back for dinner, his promise to do so in a few minutes, and then all was a blank. He had no money, although he had worked steadily for some months in this shop and

had been paid good wages. What he did with the money, it seems, has never been discovered.

"After ascertaining the whereabouts of his family, he made straight for Chicago, where, by the last accounts, he was living his usual normal life. Somewhat mystified over his realization of the strange freak in which he figured, although feeling well and apparently in normal mental balance, he yet realizes that he has been the central figure in some over-strange mental phenomena, quite mysterious enough to make him, at times, doubt his sanity. There are no facts explanatory of the prime cause of his disappearance, to account for the failure of his neighbors to detect his flight, to explain his wanderings, or to solve the conditions of his return to his normal self."

In The Psychological Review for 1894 Dr. Dana gives the following account of an interesting case of double consciousness that has come under his personal observation:

"The patient, Air. S., aged 24, was an active, intelligent and healthy young man. Though coming of a somewhat nervous stock, there is no actual psychosis in the family. He had himself always been well. His habits were good. For a year or two before his trouble came on he had been I; subjected to some nervous strain, but it had not perceptibly affected his health or spirits.

"About two weeks before his accident he had some financial trouble, and on coming home had a 'nervous chill.' However, he seemed perfectly well next day and continued his usual duties. On Friday evening, November 18th, he retired as usual. Next morning, as he did not appear at breakfast, a member of the family entered his room and found it full of gas and the patient lying unconscious in bed. The escaping gas was due to a leak in the pipe, as was subsequently found. The stop-cock of the gas-burner was turned off, and there was no possible reason for or suspicion of suicide. The patient was, as stated, unconscious, the face livid, the lips blue, the eyes open, the respirations slow and stertorous, sometimes almost ceasing.

"The family physician, Dr. Rodenstein, was called, and worked over him for three hours before the breathing became natural and his life seemed out of danger. He, became partially conscious by 4 P.M., and to a clergyman who had called he talked rationally, but not clearly. Next morning he recognized his sister and father, and said he, thought he was losing his mind. In the afternoon he became somewhat delirious. He slept that night, but during the succeeding six days his mind wandered and he was apparently distressed and excited. He was oppressed with the idea that

someone wanted to take him away and do him bodily injury. He talked about a trip he had been expecting to make to Washington, and called for his time-tables. He spoke also about his business and of various plans he had been intending to carry out. On Tuesday, four days after the accident, he was seen trying to read a newspaper upside down. On the eighth day he was taken to Dr. Granger's sanitarium. He went without trouble, though he was still somewhat excited and maniacal. That night he slept, and next morning awoke free from any signs of mania. He was quiet and sane in every way.

"From this time the evidences of his changed personality were apparent. He dressed himself neatly and with his usual attention to his toilet, understanding apparently the use of the various articles of dress. He showed by his conversation at once that he did not know who he was or where he was, and that his conscious memory of everything connected with his past life was gone. His vocabulary at first was very limited; he could only use familiar words, and could only understand language of the simplest character, such as that bearing on the things immediately about him. He did not know the names or uses of the things in and about the house, though he at once remembered and never forgot any name told him. Consequently his vocabulary and understanding of conversation rapidly increased. He had a German attendant, and pronounced many of the new words with a German accent. Everything had to be explained to him, such as the qualities and uses of the horse and cow and of the various articles about the house. Yet he would sit at the table and eat his meals with his former neatness, preserving also the courtesies and amenities of a gentleman, but he could not understand why he did certain things until it was explained. He did not recognize his parents or sisters or fiancée, though he said that he had always known the latter, and his great desire and longing was to have her with him. He did not remember the slightest detail of his former relations with her, and did not know what marriage meant or the significance of the filial relation. Those persons whom he had liked very much before he seemed especially glad to see, though he could not explain why. He could not read, and did not even know his letters or figures. But he soon learned both to read and write simple sentences involving ordinary words.

"His vocabulary was gradually increased, but even two months after his accident he could not read a newspaper" understandingly, except simple accounts of every-day happenings. He was naturally slowest in understanding abstract terms. He learned figures and arithmetic very quickly and could soon do ordinary arithmetical computations easily. He

had been accustomed to play billiards a little, but played the game badly. He very soon learned to play again, appreciating the value of angles, and before long he became much more skilful than he had been in his former state. He had always been clumsy with his hands and never liked mechanical work or showed the least capacity for it; he never could draw or carve. With a little instruction from another patient he soon became very skilful in carving and worked a monogram in the back of a brush in a most creditable manner. He also made a shuffle board, doing the work very neatly. He showed, in time, a much greater cleverness with the hands and finer development of muscle-sense than he had had before.

"He used to play and sing a little. About six weeks after the accident, he picked out a tune on the piano, which he had known long before, but had not heard or played for a year. He did not know what it was, or associate it with any early memory. He sang some of his old songs and played a little on his banjo. The old musical memories were there, but dissociated from any thoughts of the past. He was very imitative and his memory for everything told him was extraordinarily retentive. He had always been careful and even fastidious about his person, and he continued to be so. His habits of courtesy and affability continued the same.

"He had had some religious upheavals in the past. Two or three years before he was distinctly and positively atheistical; later he was more inclined to theism and agnosticism. In an argument which I undertook with him to test his logical powers and knowledge of abstract ideas he showed a distinctly atheistical state of mind. His views were those held some years previously, not his later ones. In argument he showed considerable dialectic skill and logical power. But he evidently could not understand any conceptions at all abstract. His 'mind stuff' was made up of conceptions closely related to his recently acquired practical knowledge. He had previously acquired a special repugnance to any form of religion, and he showed this feeling of antagonism in his conversation.

"He was even-tempered and obliging. He had never been demonstrably affectionate, and was not in his new state except as regards his fiancée, about whom his thoughts and feelings were intensely centred.

"If one were to meet him and discuss ordinary topics, he would show no evidence of being other than a normal man, except that he might betray some ignorance of the nature or uses of certain things. His conversation ran chiefly on the things he did every day and on the new things he every day learned. He was exactly like a person with an active brain, set down in a new world, with everything to learn. The moon, the stars, the animals, his friends, all were mysteries which he impatiently

hastened to solve. He was somewhat sensitive to his condition and did not like to meet persons whom he had known before. He cherished also a lurking suspicion that someone might want to take his fiancée away from him. But he never was in a passion, never became incoherent or delirious, had no delusions or hallucinations, and was not in the slightest degree demented.

"He spoke of his own mental condition, and seemed to understand that it was not right. He was very anxious to get well.

"Physically his health was perfectly good. He had no anaesthesia of the skin, no limitation of visual or aural fields no stigmata of a trance or hysterical state. He slept well, and so far as I know had no dreams. He had a tendency to coldness and redness of the extremities, and there was evidently lack of vasomotor tone. At times, when a little excited, he would move his head constantly from side to side, as if working in an uncomfortable collar. This was a violent exaggeration of a habit I observed that he had when in his normal condition.

"On three occasions I hypnotized him, using the methods of Braid and Bernheim combined. On the second and third trial I put him in a light degree of hypnotic sleep. During this I told him that after waking at a certain signal he would go through certain acts, such as rubbing his eyes, walking about the table, opening the door and giving a certain greeting to his mother. Also that at a certain hour in the evening he would remember the past. He did everything that I suggested except the last. At the time named, in the evening, he simply said, without suggestion, 'Dr. Dana told me to remember something, but I can't do it.'

"I saw him once or twice a week at my office. He continued in much the same state day after day. His knowledge increased so that he was able to go about alone to a considerable extent, and I had begun to advise his going to his old place of business and learn something of his old work.

"At the suggestion of Professor Josiah Royce, to whom I gave some account of the case, I told him to get some of his old love-letters and copy them; also to copy some of prayers that he used to say daily as a boy, and finally to get some of his old business accounts and copy them off; I was in hopes that some of these things might revive old memories by appealing to his affections, his religion, and his business instincts. He did this, but with no apparent success.

"On February 15th, Friday evening, exactly three months from the time of his attack, he went to see his fiancée. She thought after the interview that he was rather worse, less like himself. She cried that night when he left, thinking he would never get well. While riding home, with

his brother, he said he felt as though one-half of his head was prickling and numb; then the whole head, then he felt sleepy and was very quiet, but did not fall asleep. When he got home he became drowsy and was carried to bed, where he fell asleep. At about 11 o'clock he awoke and found his memory restored. He remembered distinctly the events of three months ago; his visit to his fiancée, his supper at the club afterward, his journey home, his shutting his bedroom door and getting into bed. His memory stopped there. He did not recall a thing that had occurred between times.

"He knew all his family at once and was plainly just the same man as before. But the three months were an entire blank to him. Next day he came to see me, but did not know me (I had never seen him before his accident). Not a thing connected with the three months could be recalled. It was so much taken entirely out of his existence. He at once resumed his old work and habits and has continued perfectly well up to the present time."

This is one of the simple cases of double personality. The patient lost consciousness due to the action of a toxic stimulus and when he awoke a. whole tract of his life experience was gone. Memories of his former life were swept away from the domain of his upper consciousness and submerged into the subconscious. The lost tract of consciousness seemed to have involved a large mass of psychic content, inasmuch as but the simplest systems were preserved to the upper consciousness, while the more complex were erased from his conscious memory. Apparently new systems had to be developed, new adaptations to the complex conditions of the environment had to be learned. The process of acquisition, as it is usually the case with such forms of amnesia, is rather accomplished with extraordinary ease and rapidity, clearly showing that the old content is really present in the subconscious. It is not clear from the account as to whether the patient had some general feeling of recognition or familiarity in the process of learning by the help of his attendants. As far, however, as it can be judged from the report, this feeling was absent.

The psychic content has become greatly reduced in the secondary state; only the instinctive, automatic, secondary automatic habits of life, as well as words and phrases of a simple character, have alone become the possession of the secondary personality. The dissociated moment formed was narrow and constricted, as it is the rule with secondary personalities formed after a physical or psychic shock. The accident giving rise to a state of unconsciousness, formed the gap, the chasm, between the two personalities, primary and secondary. The state of unconsciousness formed the hypnoleptic state which separated two dissociated moments, two

persons. No amount of suggestion could bridge over the two dissociated mental states.

This case, like the rest that follow, has no doubt a full claim to double consciousness or double personality, because the two dissociated tracts of consciousness form separate moments, so to say; they keep strictly apart; their conscious experiences do not fuse; they have their own past, present and future, their own retrospect and prospect; each possesses its own chain, indissoluble chain of memories which run independently side by side or in alternation; they cannot be directly attached to each other, not any more than the life and memories of one person can be fused and organically united with those of another person and form one personality of the two individuals. The two streams of consciousness cannot be directly bridged over; not even hypnosis suffices. One may know of the other by information, but they are not directly conscious of each other. The two dissociated personalities, with a common stock of instincts, form a kind of mental dicephalus; they are like two individuals with a common organism between them.

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