

# Reflections

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## Our Rats

If we want to grow upward, toward God, we have to first succeed growing on the natural level. Within the natural, importantly apart from our being, is the subconscious.

**Why is it so important?** Because man is led by the impulses of the subconscious much more than by the conscious will. The subconscious is like a “control tower” for human conduct. It happens to all of us that, suddenly, we act totally contrary to what we had thought or decided. We have allowed ourselves to be surprised by the almost irresistible power of the subconscious. And that happens, in large part, by the power for acting which is the subconscious.

And in that subconscious world, a number of impressions not worked out or digested, can be found at work there. Also in healthy people, what are called “acts of failure” (forgetfulness, lapses, putting the foot in the mouth, etc.) come to the surface; for example, I am about to open a new package of cigarettes and I tell myself that I can wait an hour longer. A few minutes later – immersed in my work – I am surprised that I am smoking a cigarette. My subconscious has sought to impose itself when my conscious control has ceased; therefore, the importance of grasping and purifying the subconscious because if it is not orderly and healed, it stops and impedes our journey toward maturity and sanctity.

To this can be added that today’s man is weaker and more fragile than the ancient or medieval man. Father Kentenich, founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, speaks of a deficit of natural and mental power, of power of resistance, of modern man’s moving-power. He also comments that for today’s man it is already difficult to make a spiritual retreat: his subconscious is too closed, hardened; the subconscious life of the soul has absorbed all of man’s vital powers.

## What is the subconscious?

All impressions which man receives and registers are recorded in his interior. None are lost. Some are kept in his memory so that he can use them when he needs them.

Others are lost by the conscience, but they do not disappear: they sink into the subconscious and remain there.

Now then, the difficulty for modern man consists in that he receives so many impressions that he is no longer capable of working through them or of assimilating them interiorly. When it has to do with positive experiences, it is easier to put them in order and to integrate them into his interior world. Up to here, everything proceeds OK. The problem comes forth **with the reactions**: each impression produces a reaction, in some cases a chain reaction. They can be immediate or later on, interior or exterior. When the stimulus is **positive**, for example, a hymn, an affectionate gesture, a gift, the impression and the reaction are positive. The subconscious puts it in order and assimilates it more easily and thus helps the proper growth.

It is different when the stimulus is **negative**, for example, I am challenged unjustly. I am left with a negative impression and this generates reactions, for example, I go and cry in my room, I create a scene with the one who challenged me, I do not speak but I internalize the impression, my relationship with that person begins to deteriorate. Frequently, I cannot achieve digesting nor do I try to digest or assimilate the matter. Perhaps in time I forget the matter – it sinks into the subconscious – but not digesting it nor assimilating it, does not contribute to my personal growth, instead it creates conflicts and obstacles of all kinds.

To characterize this situation, Father Kentenich uses some **images of the animal kingdom**: The impressions in the subconscious – especially those not digested – are like rats which run and run and chase each other. Or, they are like fish in a lake. Or, like snakes which deposit their poison in our nature.

## Questions for reflection

1. Do I have uncontrolled reactions?
2. Which are the fish which swim in my interior?
3. Or, which is the “breed of vipers” which moves in my subconscious?

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<http://cmsms.schoenstatt.de/en/resources/periodicals/virtual-retreat.htm>