Ideas about Substance

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Hobbes, born eight years before Descartes, was slow to publish in philosophy but outlived both Descartes and Spinoza. It is his contribution to the *Objections and Replies* that go with Descartes' *Meditations* that the reader is apt to turn to with most interest—and be disappointed. The two great thinkers and writers read as though each had set himself not to understand the other. But if at first one learns chiefly that the little Frenchman and the big Englishman did not easily take to one another, there are lights beyond, upon each; and Hobbes makes emphatic what is a general characteristic of this first set of criticisms of Descartes—what it is that sets it off from our criticisms. There is very little dissent from the *cogito*, although it may be that the ready disposition to accept the conclusion held off any acerbity of criticism of the argument as an argument. But there is frequent echo of Hobbes's contention that there is no reason to restrict the conclusion to a disembodied mind and there is obvious reason to suppose that any existence proved will be of a body, whether or not it be also a mind. Men of the mid-twentieth century, reading these objections of the mid-seventeenth, if they note the difference, will, I suppose, just excuse those predecessors as not having been let in on the fallacious leading of the subject-predicate sentence and Aristotelian grammar. But I have heard all that, many times, (but have also read and compared Aristotle and Whorf and Korzybski) and find myself closer to Hobbes and even Gassendi than to Russell or Husserl.

Hobbes seems to me to be a Baconian (he had been
one of Bacon's secretaries and helpers in the days of the Latinizing of the *De augmentis scientiarum* from the *Advancement of Learning*), although he was not clearly aware of this; and back of his disagreement with Descartes as to the logic of the *cogito* is the fact that for him the sole components of the world are bodies and their basic motion is endeavor, whereas for Descartes the components are geometrical matter and basic motion is difference of co-ordinates. For Hobbes the world is bodies in motion. The most apparent strangeness is appearance itself; for some of these bodies “have within themselves the patterns” of other things: they are bodies that have acquaintance with other bodies, often at considerable distance. Motions coming from the things out there, through the bodily medium, into the physiological body with its sense organs, up to the central brain, are there met by a push back (origin of the “ejection theory”) which makes the thing out where it is rather than in where the pushing back of the motion is. In some sense, then and there, where the internal motion is, is the “phantasm,” not the thing but the caused appearance of the thing to me. Hobbes’s story of the sensing process, repeated in several books, has an imaginable clarity that makes it the platform for later physical and psychological theories. The word “phantasm,” and its meaning, as well as its reference—which seems to be definitely to a subjective, picture-like, “mental content,” although this reference is denied in the statement that the phantasm “too is nothing but motion”—all this is the most effectuating of the line of tentative and partial internalizations and picturizations of our ways of knowing. This line comes down from the “form without matter” of Aristotle, through the “intentional species” of the Scholastics, and the “perceptions of the senses” and ambiguous “ideas” of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. Hobbes felt the danger of the word and soon avoided it. (He had used “apparition” in the
earlier *Human Nature*, and given it up.) And the sturdy materialist, or better corporealist, never toyed with any weakening of his assurance that there is only body in motion (which therefore the phantasm must be) and never thought of doubting that even the most distorted of waking phantasms is an effect and communication of the thing outside. But calling it a “pattern in” the perceiving body (probably an echo from the “form” of Aristotle’s *De anima*) gets it into the perceiver and out of the outside; giving it the dream or ghost name of “phantasm” makes it an image not only in the body but “in the mind.” When he then adds, as he does several times, that “all knowledge is from the phantasm,” he sets a clear path for John Locke, agnosticism, idealism, and phenomenalism.

I think he should bravely (and despite his acknowledgment of timidity Hobbes never lacked at least dialectical bravery) have held on to his corporealism and asserted that some bodies have the trick of being aware of other bodies, and of their own bodies. Surely if there is one indicated starting element, one acquaintance in terms of which other acquaintances are to be explained, one epistemological indefinable, it should be knowing itself—knowing in the radical and widest sense as including all varieties of aware response or initiation and in the narrowest sense as abstracting from all the varying accompaniments knowing has in the varieties. “Of all appearings the most extraordinary, and ordinary, is appearing itself,” to paraphrase Hobbes just verbally. If it be a phantasm or an idea we know, or a toothache or a star, or a story of history or a theorem of mathematics, the perfectly familiar and perfectly inexplicable fact of knowing is there as is the fact known. The interposition of a phantasm, an idea, still leaves the same grasp by me of the phantasm and meanwhile creates a new and perhaps
hopeless problem of why what is “in my mind” somehow looks like what I am supposed to be knowing. This does not prove there are no phantasms or ideas. There may be; there may be nothing else, I suppose, in pure intelligibility, although that to me is indeed phantasmal. And no student of Lovejoy would ever deny that the representational theory, the phantasm, does do something to ease the problem of error. But to make true knowing preposterous is a heavy price to pay for the sake of making false seeming a little more easily imaginable as a histrionic deception or miscarriage.

Hobbes, with his Baconian-Milesian doctrine of integral body, could have made this acceptance and assertion as it could not be made in the abstract materialism of Descartes’ world or in the corpuscular but still devitalized mechanism of the Boyle-Newton physics. But the phantasm got in the way. (And it is possible I am wrong about, and probable that he did not clearly realize, his difference from the more fashionable and more abstract sort of materialism.) A Milesian-Baconian-Aristotelian doctrine of substance could have led to a more hospitable doctrine of perception and so diverted, or pointed out an alternative to, the coming phenomenalism. And a more hospitable doctrine of perception could have diverted, or pointed out an alternative to, the slipping away of substance into the abstracted stuff against which our postphenomenalist philosophers have rebelled. Something was attempted by Hobbes’s contemporaries the Cambridge Platonists, especially Henry More, and then by Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury; but they were aside from the main stream of science, and of common sense. Hobbes was in it. But his clear perception of the situation wrongly viewed was, with the phantasm, probably the decisive impetus down the declivity.
John Locke, without really meaning to, helps fix the modern idea of substance on a stuff of which things are made, underly all qualities; and, without himself giving up the belief, did the most to make substance (in this sense) disreputable in one phrase when he gave it its name as the "something I know not what." The interpretation of this he carries off from the reputableness of Anaximander's "boundless" with the often-quoted rest of the passage about the "Indian" and what the earth rests on—a fine phrase and a fine story (from a somewhat unexpected phrase-maker and story-teller) which finely test and put into suspicion the literal and existential acceptability of a stuff theory when pushed. We feel the attractiveness of the apple. That rests, partly, on the color, which we see. The color may rest on the shape and motion; and these perhaps on the corpuscular nature, the "real essence" for Locke; and so to some more arcane presence. And this "rests on"—"Something I know not what" and "You must not ask that." So the honest and common-sense English semanticist tries to weigh the ghost of the abstraction of Anaximander's boundless and Aristotle's substrate rematerialized for the physics of Descartes. He does not like the result but sees no way to avoid the regress or to deny that in which all perceived and all theorized characters inhere.

What is often not remembered in this connection is that when, as in talking of "power," he comes to Aristotle's doctrine of things as changing, doing, and being done to, Locke is not only willing to go along, but glad to. And he goes along in passages much longer and more varied than those he gave to his dilemma with what he thought of as "substance."

The layer-by-layer procedure toward substance we have used above—from value to color to shape to corpuscle to X to x—is the one suggested by the story of the Indian and
his successive resting-grounds for the earth. But it is not the procedure of Locke's own trouble with "substance," which is rather a procedure of moving around a thing and plucking off all its discoverable characters, one after another, but all as it were on the same level—and then wondering what could be, although it must be, left. Descartes tells us precisely what is left, what must be there to start with and to end with, as matter: in the language of Francis Bacon, a precisely formed, though naked, Cupid. The layer-by-layer procedure takes us to Anaximander and Aristotle and the necessary but never actual substrate, a completely formless Cupid. Bacon's own "body," and I think Hobbes's, like the Milesian and Aristotle's living body, is more richly, but imprecisely, more "potentially" clothed than Descartes'.

Locke's warmth of feeling for power, as for resistance (which ranks first for him among the "primary qualities," where Descartes and the Continentals do not want it at all), shows Locke's nearness in the English tradition of Milesian body and qualitative motion as against the Cartesian geometrical matter and motion. This is also shown in his long argument with Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester, as to whether God can give matter the power of consciousness. Along with Aristotle's actual existing matter and even its simplest "yearning for form as the female yearns for the male," or Hobbes's "appetency," surely even Locke's God—not the most supralogically omnipotent—can quite easily mold or allow a thinking thing. But with a strict atomic or Cartesian matter precisely defined as including only size-shape-position-motion and as excluding responsiveness, the job becomes one for a fiat-out-of-nothing, which would not make matter think but add thinking to matter à la Descartes, or for a supralogical omnipotence.

Also without really meaning to, John Locke gave us our modern, distinct—if not at all clear—idea of the idea, tak-
ing Hobbes's phantasm literally and seriously as he did everything. He also took Hobbes's "all knowledge comes from the phantasm," took it seriously and completely, and turned it into his own maxim (the maxim of the world since): "All knowledge comes from experience." His early draft of that so-called bible of the eighteenth century, the Essay on the Human Understanding, shows that Locke's first understanding of the nature of perceiving the world is much more realistic than his final one: the phantasms, the "ideas," involved a saving remnant, an ingredient, of direct apprehension, grasp, contemplative possession of what is perceived but is apart from the perceiving. The primary qualities are not only in the thing but are directly perceived and not "phantasmally" reproduced "in" the mind; they are also, as it were, embroidered with all the secondary qualities as well as feelings. I think this is indeed the paradigm of the general theory of perception of Locke's modern predecessors and a sort of continuation, through the medieval "sensible species," of Aristotle's theory that when we perceive, the form but not the matter of the thing perceived is received into the psyche. By the seventeenth century "form," with its proper antecedent Pythagorean association of "figure," has come to focus in shape, in the geometric and arithmetic. This is made express and emphatic as a hypothesis about perception in that second part of Descartes's Direction of the Mind after Descartes consents to become understandable by the use of the shape hypothesis. And more epistemologically it is (and explains) what Descartes means by "formal" truth as more than merely "objective" truth of idea. So when Descartes tells us,

The perceptions of the senses are related simply to the intimate union which exists between body and mind, and . . . while by their means we are made aware of what in external bodies can profit or hurt this union, they do not present them
to us as they are in themselves unless occasionally and accidentally. . . . In this way we shall ascertain that the nature of matter or body in its universal aspect consists . . . solely in the fact that it is a substance extended in length, breadth and depth. . . . [Principles, II, iii, iv]

he does not mean that the senses pick out from the richness of the real what is hurtful or profitable, but that they put into the soul qualitative symbols of the threats or promises of the outside; while the "formal" truth with respect to that outside material world can be found in the senses only by paring away and simplifying, with intellectual scrutiny, down to that extension which is univocally both in the matter of the world and in our perception.

The Englishmen, Bacon and Hobbes, kept this assurance of formal realism plus a suspiciousness of the Continental abstractions and an assurance that even the nonformal elements in perception and sensation are not a phenomenal or differently existing mental-content world but are themselves endeavors and appetencies in bodily but living nature. Locke had something of this bodiliness; but he had taken Hobbes's phantasm seriously. He announces at once (Essay, Introduction, § 8) that "idea" means "phantasm," or "whatsoever is the object of the understanding when as man thinks" (a permissible nominal definition except for the reminder that "object" still then meant not thing but presentation), and then, casting the die in a sentence I should vigorously not grant, "I presume it will be easily granted me, that there are such ideas in men's minds" (italics mine). By the time Locke wrote this sentence he had evidently drawn into the mind all that we directly sense, however much some aspects of it may "resemble" what is beyond. If, indeed, the "object" is a composite of externally real and internally subjective items, as for example of shape and color, how is it, he seems to have asked himself, that the two items never get
unpasted? Even our 1968 movies, put together by several projectors, require a crew of watchful technicians and then sometimes lose single focus. And our movie projections are of the same sort in their physics; our knowing would be a superposition of ontologically different natures. The honest Locke was no fighter with the preposterous. Let there be a picture in the mind, a stream of ideas; and let the mind do the best it may—and Locke is modestly quite confident of doing quite well enough with our “candle”—to know what it needs to know about itself and the world around it. After a little, in the ingenuity of philosophic history—which is often not at all averse to the task of making the preposterous intelligible—the mind and the world are both going to collapse into the picture.

Such a story is the answer to the possible question as to why a study of substance should be excited about the theory of perception. As the theory of perception becomes phantasmal, the subjective becomes picturesque and objective in seeming, and the known presence and the theoretic axiom of the subject, the self, is forgotten. And as the theory of perception becomes phantasmal, the world is left in need of argument, argument is not enough, and the world becomes phantasmal. So, as now, substance becomes unfashionable. And so, as now, philosophy becomes at best fashionable, and usually out of touch with common sense and common patience.

George Berkeley was willing, with his own imaginative aims and interpretation, to be persuaded of Locke's “way of ideas” for all the “objects of knowledge.” But he saved himself from its subjectivistic and antischolastic tendency by his warm assurance of the reality of the self, of spirit, and of God. This enabled him to stress his early advocacy of what seemed to him, and what doubtless was for the time,
his most original doctrine: the nonexistence of "unthinking matter." This even lets him outmaneuver the subjectivity of the idea, for from his firm base of spirit he can assert the idea as what it is in its own vivid presence, and without demeaning it as the "mere representation" of anything—except the language and grace of God. So of supposed things like chairs and mountains he can repeatedly declare "their esse is percipi," their being is to be perceived; for them, to be means to be in some mind's acquaintance. But Berkeley never says, and never would have been able to imagine himself being brought to say, "esse is percipi." All activity is of spirit, and true being is active; perceiving itself is an activity, and what is perceived, the "object," is inactive, dependent upon the perceiving subject. On the first page of the Principles of Human Knowledge we are told that "all the objects of knowledge are idea." On the second we are told that in addition to the objects of knowledge there is that which knows, the subject of knowing, the self, the soul, spirit. Of selves it is not true that their being is percipi; it is not even percipere. Their esse is simply esse, substantial existence, the root meaning of esse; although our souls' esse is not original since we owe our existence to God.

That our ideas, although not real in the way we are, have a reality for Berkeley, is a fact of which students, and teachers, have every now and then to be reminded. The distinction between the real and the subjective has been, I think, for common sense usually between the world which we sense and perhaps otherwise perceive outside and the internal stomach aches or emotional responses which our physiological and psychological internalities add to our perceiving. When the subjective addition moves in on the apparently external object, as it does in seventeenth-century theory as I have taken it, the line becomes more difficult to place but the distinction remains the same: between what
we truly “see” and what we add. When we find ourselves in Locke’s completed dualism, all that we are aware of is subjective and the real world has withdrawn beyond our acquaintance but not beyond our belief. One way to drop contrariety is to deny the contrary. Berkeley, declaring there is no unthinking material thing, takes away the reproach of the idea as a flimsy substitute for the thing. It is no longer less real as subjective, not material; it is less real as unsubstantial, less real than spirit.

So when the farmer sees a round red apple on his tree, bites it, and finds it cool and juicy and sweet and refreshing to taste and smell and energy, Berkeley waves aside the zealous scientist who would tell the farmer the real apple is an atomic configuration without color or taste, imperceptible and literally unimaginable. Berkeley assures us, and the farmer, that the apple is just as the farmer sees and tastes—especially if the farmer has the childlike recognition of the glory of God in God’s language of the senses and nature. Berkeley is quite honest—if somewhat poetically kind to common-sense religion and religious common sense—when he calls himself the champion of common sense as well as of religion. He thought seventeenth-century science and philosophy had stolen the rich and lovely and meaningful world that our senses know and substituted an abstract mathematical machine, and this machine then gets between us and our God.

For our ideas of the world, or rather our ideas which are the world, although they are not representative and bring us no messages of a senseless world behind them, are communicative and syntactic. They make a descriptively and narratively consistent world for each of us and a common world for all of us. That a ball should both look and feel round and should appear round to several is scarcely a marvel; but that visual roundness and tangible roundness should as-
associate themselves for one and for many is a marvel, and a marvel that Berkeley welcomes; for it is the marvel of the syntactic language of the creative and infinite spirit with his creatures. The meaningfulness of human language is one of the most trustworthy assurances of the presence of another person, as indeed is the diminishingly syntactic communication of the animal. So Berkeley is assured (but not only so) of the presence of God.

But all this beauty and meaning of the ideas goes with their fragile inactivity and "object of knowledge" character. They do nothing, and they lapse without the activity of the mind that has them. And they do never and can never represent, stand for, anything of which they are images. So far as I can see, for Berkeley (and here I agree) there literally are no literal mental images—Pompey's statue was an image of Pompey but it was not in Mark Antony's mind when he spoke in the Forum. Ideas have no substance and they stand for no substance. So, for all his enthusiasm and affection for the ideas as his own, Berkeley is quickly aware he can have no idea of himself or of self. If he had found such an idea he would have been scandalized for, on the basis of his own prized theory and belief, it would have meant that he himself was nothing but an idea and that he would lapse and cease and not be if he stopped holding that idea. I suppose he might be for someone else—that is he might be among someone else's ideas since there could be no more real self—if that idea happened to pop up there. And it seems our very use of that pronoun "he" for George Berkeley—the fact of our never falling into the curious dilemma of having to choose between using the pronoun for the ideas which are him or using it for our idea of him, and then of deciding whether our idea of him is our idea of the ideas which are him or our idea of the ideas we have when we look at him, and whether those ideas are our visual ideas of
his body or what—yes, it seems all this ought to put us on
his side. Selves there are and no self is a sight, a sound, a
touch, a taste, a smell, or any assemblage of these in some
mind. There is no idea, in Berkeley’s sense, of self.

Hume had no such sensibility. I think he was silly to
say he could find no idea or “impression” of the self and so
he would not believe the self is real. He learned so much
from Berkeley; why did he not learn that if he were to find
himself among his impressions and ideas, he could have it
nowhere else? I suppose the answer for Hume is that he
never really believed the theory of ideas that Berkeley so
warmly believed, although he verbally accepted it as a part
of his intellectual skepticism (whereas Berkeley made it part
of his intellectual and esthetic faith). And the answer for
Hume is also that his is a two-level doctrine with his skep­
ticism as a sort of avowedly hypocritical front for his assur­
ance of the propensities of “human nature.” On this basis
the writers since Hume, who often ignore his skepticism as
to his skepticism and his realism as to the passions, are still
sillier when they assert that Hume merely said what Berkeley
should have said.

To be sure the knowledge of the self makes a problem,
as Berkeley is aware. If not an “object of knowledge,” the
self is still something we talk about, a topic of discourse, and
the ground or subject of our objects and known both in­
tuitively and as necessary. Let us call its presence to our
minds a “notion,” not idea. The difference? It is not as
vanishing as some funmakers suppose. The idea is like a pic­
ture, an image, the “phantasm.” The notion we cannot
figure. It may be like that recognition of activity which as
Spinoza tells us, or tries to tell us, at the end of the second
book of the Ethics, is more needful to the mind than the
easier images and words. And Berkeley soon comes to know
what the rest of his century did not have the wit, honesty, or
insight to heed or understand, except in part and at cross-purposes: Self is not the only notion or only important notion. Of course, Berkeley says briefly but clearly what Hume then said at length: we do not see, hear, touch, taste, or smell it. Yet, says Berkeley, we use it and believe it and indeed are acquainted with it. So, more controversially, of the physicist’s “force,” the preacher’s “grace.” Relations generally, Berkeley says, are notional, since in order to “imagine” one we have arbitrarily to supply two or more terms and then understand what we mean. Is this not true also of the master value word, “good”? What is your “idea” of good, not of this or that of the many good things we know but of good? Yet we all know good, or we would not know that those good things are good—even when it turns out, or should turn out, that we were mistaken.

Thus Berkeley’s strictly nonrepresentative ideas required his substantialism, for him at least, and strengthened his substantialism with regard to himself, other selves, and God; and at the same time taught him that knowing is more than any presence of, or even awareness of, ideas. His love of the ideas enabled him to be clear as to their shortcoming as well as their beauty and reality; and his profoundly enriched knowledge of knowing enabled him to feel at home with the substances and the active realities of the world we live in, which are not “objects of knowledge” as the ideas are. I do not want his “idealism.” I get too many intellectual as well as bodily comforts from body. I have come all the way from impatience with Dr. Johnson when he kicked the stone in the road to thinking he had the best answer to Dr. Berkeley. It is true that if I admit the “objects of knowledge” as “ideas,” as psychological objects “in the mind,” then I will go on as far as Berkeley went and stop where he stopped. But I prefer to stop before his step among the ideas, to refuse all ideas. There is nothing in my mind but minding
and that is an activity of the self which is just what it may turn out to be—apparently a body that is responsive, an awareness that chooses and loves, a substance that maintains itself through constant change.

The misfortune is that the newest and most profound aspect of Berkeley, his partly grasped or expounded theory of knowledge beyond the idea, was not understood and not taken up; and the oldest aspect, his common-sense realism as to the qualities of things and as to the existence of the self, was promptly shoved aside by the ingenuities of Hume and phenomenalism and "absolute idealism"; while that for which his youthful enthusiasm excusably burned, his immaterialism, went to encourage and divert the ingenuity which was ignoring and destroying the worthwhile parts of his doctrine and his belief.

Berkeley might have been a restorer of the notion of substance. He is a figure in its caricaturization. With Shaftesbury he is the imagination of the age. And Shaftesbury, who might have understood or who indeed may have dimly anticipated the view of knowing most nearly set forth in the seventh dialogue of Alciphron, died young and now figures ironically as the free-thinker opponent of Berkeley's polemic, Alciphron himself, in that work—at once perhaps Berkeley's most profound work and certainly the one in which his ecclesiasticism shows. But the age went off after the sedater side of Locke, the correctness of Pope, and the wit of Hume's false front; so that when imagination and depth came back in the later century it had to be rebellious and violent.

David Hume completes the retraction of the realistic entities of common-sense belief—the knowing selves and the known things—into that at best half-realistic device the mental content, the phantasm, the idea, which was made
up or discovered (somewhat late in the story) to help account for the selves' mistakes about present things and their successes with absent things, as it had first, I suppose, helped account for the selves' dreams. So now there are "loose and disconnected" impressions and ideas—not only nonrepresentative, as were Berkeley's ideas, but also nonrepresentative since there is no self to be presented to. They are "conscious ideas" although it hardly seems they are conscious of themselves (certainly not "reflectively" so) or of each other. Since our "ontological argument for the existence of substance" proves there must be a "most really there," these ideas, or, in the Lockean and more recent generalization, experience, is or are substance. They meet the criterion of relative, or even absolute, independence since there is nothing else; and they could be developed into a phantasmal Spinozism with an infinite number of intra-experiential aspects or attributes known and unknown, or Leibnizianly into a pre-established harmony of idea-monads. Their supposed fleetingness introduces a difficulty here, as does relative endurance for the criterion of substance; but the phenomenalist may say, if he wishes, that the only thing that endures at all is the species phenomena or, as later and more realistically and imaginatively with Whitehead, he may thread his experiences together into "societies," individuals by "prehension." Actually, it is hard to think of anything more unlike a monad than an idea; and anyone who tries to make his substance of ideas must do without that unique character prized by the Aristotelian substantialist—the focusing of the individual mind.

Hume evidently enjoyed his virtuosity but never believed its theoretic outcome. His language—as he tells us but only inadequately—is often realistic in even its least realistic topics. In the second part of the Treatise (the Enquiries are more common-sense in manner), on "The Pas-
sions,” almost no effort is made to keep the impression-idea metaphysics. The passions, we are told on the first page, are “impressions,” “secondary impressions” (we are referred back to the “reflective impressions” of the first book—a rather curious offshoot of Locke’s “reflective ideas”); but to be bothered about the background of these passions would take us at once into “anatomy and natural philosophy.” Anatomy and physiology are not forbidden words or topics to the Humean phenomenalist, but they are not the underlying origin of anything. Hume has given us the key to all this in the title for this first and most incisive of his books: A Treatise of Human Nature. The first part alone deals with the understanding: “The reason is and of a right ought to be the slave of the passions.” The second and third books of the Treatise have to do with the passions and with morals (which are not “rational”), and these are more important, and more real, in human nature. The understanding leaves us somewhat skeptical skeptics, but the understanding should mind its own business, and when we “leave our closet” we go to the coffee house and our friends and we believe and act as they do, according to the propensities of human nature—with, to be sure, an enlightened moral sentiment, sympathy, and a decent recognition of the entertainment of polite society and the dangers of “delusive superstition.”

Hume does not assert an ontology of emotion or will—except, as it were, pragmatically. Such an ontology may be suggested in his unargued assurance that human nature is the same everywhere and is so not in its logic but in its feelings. And it may be suggested in his assurance that the understanding is as such and utterly inefficacious. This view, that it is not enough—not even partly enough—to know unless in addition there be a “motive,” is one that seems quite foreign to common sense and early theory; but it is one that appears every now and then after the third book of
Aristotle’s *De anima* and becomes orthodox and even axiomatic in modern philosophy. It is emphatic in Spinoza, for all his apparent anticipation of something like Berkeley’s doctrine of the activity essential in knowing and also in the object known. Hume makes it still more emphatic and more axiomatic.

In basis it is presumably a particular, and I think a particularly unfortunate, working of that process we have noticed a number of times whereby the elements we come to in our analysis are assumed to be original components of what we have been analyzing. Looking back we can see at least a physical analogue in Empedocles’ separation of motion and force; and we may find a hint of it in the *Republic* in the need the philosopher kings have of the “defense establishment” guardians to keep the productive class in line with the directions of wisdom. Much more operative in the development of the doctrine that knowledge is “perfectly inert” in respect of the knower’s action—as Hume says of the “understanding”—is the corresponding division of the soul into the reason, the spirited part, and the appetites. (Both divisions—of the citizens and of the soul of the single citizen—come down from the Pythagorean metaphor of the three sorts of the Olympic games: those who take care of the crowd and the arrangements, those who compete, those who look on and understand.)

Going from the three classes of the state to the three parts of the soul, the fundamental fallacy of that fine and sometimes useful analogy gets in its counterdamage. Its direct damage is to the members of the state: for, though an abstracted aspect or activity of the soul can scarcely complain if it is not supposed to do what it is not supposed to do, anymore than the number two complains that its definition does not let it be an odd number, the individual human being who happens to be a citizen and happens to be good
at making speeches, like Winston Churchill, will have a perfectly good complaint if he is told he must not also paint pictures.

In the counter direction, the individual human beings who are citizens are separate and varyingly separable, are born and move and grow and die separately. The classes, any classes, seem to me to be contrivances on partly arbitrary and abstract grounds, but even they can be taken as collections and thought of as herded into separate enclosures. There are no such parts of the soul. However we contrive a division, it has been and may be divided differently. We can set up a part of the soul we call “reason” or “understanding” or “knowledge” and define it as being “cognitive” and only cognitive; and then “it” can never be anything else. But it may be the case, and I am persuaded is the case, that no actual instance of my knowing, my cognition, or yours, or any other person’s, ever exists without growing out of and into action—not only action of the knower but also ordinarily action of the object known—and without involving feeling, value, and possible choice. So when we abstractly define knowledge as a part of the soul and say that when an actual person knows he must call in feeling, Aristotle’s inclination, Hume’s propension, we are calling for what the abstraction, when it exists, guarantees. It guarantees this because what we have chosen to abstract our aspective knowing (or whatever) from was all that other and was so substantially: neither nature nor God put the substance together out of those elements. I think also that if our abstracting and defining is accurately and successfully done it will be so far from debarring participation of the parts of the soul that the definitions of the parts will exhibit the internal relations that allow us to infer the intervention of the other parts.

But it was only the master analytic scalpel of Aristotle
that laid out psychologically the doings of the soul and, especially for our present interest, the need on the part of animal motion—which Plato had been content to leave just as the contribution of soul—for something more than those abilities of the nutritive, the sensitive, and the rational souls which the first two books of the De anima had worked out: chiefly the five senses, the “common sense,” and thinking with the passive and the active reason. So this last book of the De anima seems to give us both the idea as image and the inertness of knowledge-without-inclination; and indeed, also perhaps in this last, the seed of the soon-after invention of the will, which the Greeks previously seem, sufficiently happily, to have done without.

The shredding of our conscious life (the soul) into knowledge plus feeling plus impulse (normal but unemphasized from the time of Aristotle on) was accelerated with the analysis of modern science and philosophy. The process went on to shred impulse—propensity—into many “motives” among the intellectualist phenomenalists, and, among the more biologically inclined of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, into many instincts (the word was just beginning to appear in modern use, or something like modern use, in the later eighteenth century, for example with Gibbon and Burke). The motive development, going back to Locke and indeed to Hobbes with their analysis of “deliberation,” was helped by and itself greatly helped the growing psychological determinism. Whatever one does can be said to be the outcome of whatever motive or motives may be needed to produce it, regardless of the doer’s unawareness of those motives. “Motive” here was apt to be that part of the total intention (the prevision of the action and its consequences) which fits in with an underlying passionate propensity to propel action. Thus the needful dynamic may be felt to be in the underlying propensity rather
than in the more particular and particularizing part of the intention which the dynamic seizes upon as its target.

This associates the motive doctrine with the later fashionable "instinct" development—which similarly buttressed determinism in a more bodily interpretation. Whatever one does can be said to be the outcome of the appropriate instinct, an unlearned and inexplicable but by no means altogether blind or useless mode of performance. It has been counted up that by 1930 a total of some 3,000 instincts proposed by psychologists was in the field; and it is clear that this number did much to aid the attack which was now being led by the behaviorists against the notion, or at least against the word.

I have been fond of claiming some credit for that attack. The founder of behaviorism, John Broadus Watson, and my teacher of philosophy, Arthur Lovejoy, gave a joint seminar which was a model of its sort—one year using a still-unpublished manuscript of Bertrand Russell's *The Analysis of Mind*. Lovejoy and Watson, disagreeing widely and radically, were brilliant arguers who had the rare ability to argue without disputing; to be ferocious without losing their tempers; not to sulk. One day I was reporting as a student in the seminar and used the phrase "intelligent action." Watson interposed that he did not doubt I knew what it meant but he did not, that for him all action was instinctive or habitual. Retorting with, I think, mainly verbal dexterity, I said I did not doubt he knew what "instinctive action" meant but I did not; for me all action was intelligent or habitual. He laughed and I went on with my report. The next week he came in and at once told us he still wanted no muddling with intelligent action but (he was always generous with the individual student, certainly with me) he had decided I was right about instinct—it was even worse—and he would settle for random, reflex, and habitual (condi-
tioned reflex). It is history that he and his behaviorists became the front of the widely successful battle against instinct. Instinct is now making a comeback, in chastened form, with the ethologists. For my part I willingly accepted the random while hanging on to the intelligent. Looking over his *Behaviorism* again, I can see I also accepted some of his theory and tactics, for I have often said that the rocking chair rocks without our calling in a rocking instinct to explain it. The image is not his, but the appeal to physical structure is. I added, as he would not have added, that our superiority in intelligence, awareness, over the chair lets us see that the functioning of structure is fun and lets us try and sometimes succeed in finding new ways and sometimes fail or lamentably go astray.

Scarcely were instincts subdued, to be sure, when they began to be replaced with "drives." There was a bit of the same multiplication; but something had been learned, not only from the behaviorists. At the present time, it seems to me, the lively, scientifically based and qualified study of motivation can compliment itself—as can other fields—that psychology has found depth without myth in the move toward the one motive: motivation; living things are active. This is human nature because it is animal nature, is biological nature, or indeed perhaps is nature.

Is there more specific human nature? For my part, as I said in parting from and in support of Watson, I should be content to say we have a wider and brighter field of awareness than the plants and the other animals; and we are, for example, two-legged, which makes human nature different from dog nature, and featherless, which makes human nature different from chicken nature. We aspire and we get tired. So in its range does every living thing. We are vain, anxious for our own and others' applause (Lovejoy's "approbativeness"), and foolish; susceptible to fear and
cowardice, selfishness, cruelty, and deceit, but also capable of their opposites. So in his range is every animal. And these characters not merely are so, they must be so in the nature of life as aware and choosing (as Socrates may be said to have seen); just as it must be the character of a circle to be the figure of maximum enclosure.

In my days of teaching aesthetics I argued that the artist, creative or performing, may have emotion as a topic (there are other topics) and may express emotion in the sense that the mathematician expresses the binomial theorem when he writes its symbols. But if the artist expresses the emotion as the hurt animal—dog or human—expresses his pain, then it is not art or not good art; it may be sentimentalized art, even very skillfully artful; still a special but frequent sort of bad art.

John Stuart Mill said motives have nothing to do with the good or bad of action (although much to do with the good or bad of the agent). It may be that insofar as action is “motivated” it is not virtue. The supposed psychological causation from the particular dynamic instinct, drive, impulse (if any), or from that particular item or extent of the intention which is the agent’s target, will be a matter of determinable or indeterminable fact. The goodness of the person might be in the goodness of his motives or his choices, and the goodness of the act might be in conformity to principle or acceptability of outcome. That beautifully two-handled word “virtue” looks both ways, it seems: with something of the Greek “arete” for the skill with which the good workman brings about his end in view and something also of the Greek “practical wisdom” which chooses—as Aristotle says in the Rhetoric—what the man who knows most about it would choose, if he is a good man. Or shall we say that action, like music, should stand wisely in the light of relevant emotion and desire but should not be
driven by it, should not be apart from the life from which it springs yet should not be its outburst? But the virtuous man has a harder job than the good musician: for the musician can or must, at his peril, sacrifice some other goods to his music. The man, with his widest and by definition final end, must choose among often competing ends and cannot take refuge in the supposition that any abstraction of virtue-as-such or good-as-such may itself be taken as a specific target.

We can and should say that the good man has the better of it as against the bad man. But we must quickly add that if we do right for this reason—as a motive—we do not do right. So the virtue of motive, requisite when generalized to the proper degree, can be made a reason, but a hypocritical one which is worse than the direct impulse.

Luke, in the chapter that includes the parable of the talents, starts off by warning that we must be better than the publicans who “have their reward”; and winds up, in his own superb narrative fashion, but not always easily logical fashion, urging us to be good for the sake of the goods “pressed down and running over” that the good shall get. So our substitute preacher read the whole chapter, forgot the precious beginning, and eloquently proceeded to try to bribe us into righteousness.

This too is substance: the integralness of life, knowledge, love, choice; Aristotle’s “contrary predicates” and Heraclitus’ fire, folly, and “the common.”

Substance “is what has external relations and the parts of which have external relations.” Square is a species of rectangle as red is of color. Straight is contrary of crooked. Justice resembles courage as against deceit. But Solomon was the son of David and one of his hands was right and one left. Solomon was a substance—or existed, for an existent collection which may not be a substance (say David's
army) also has external relations; and the part which may not be a substance (say the surface of Solomon’s body) has external relations even if no parts. But these are substantial.

Taking Locke’s thesis that only the perception of the agreement and disagreement of our ideas (internal relations) is knowledge, and Berkeley’s thesis that cause (an old-time master external relation) is never observable, Hume can figure as the somewhat surprising champion of internal relations (such as are left) and destroyer of external relations. But what of passion? Is it internal or external? It is human nature, and Humean human nature, which is most internal; but it is trustworthily uniform and it governs our dealings with the outside as well as our belief about the outside. “Reason the card, but passion is the gale.” Thus human nature, as a radically accepted set of biases and propensions and certainly not as a searchlight power upon the world plus an observable anatomy, becomes the governor of action and judgment.