The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce, Volume I
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The Rediscovery of the 
Inner Life: 
From Spinoza to Kant

In the lecture of to-day, as I must frankly assure you at the outset, our path lies for the most part in far less inspiring regions than those into which, at the last time, Spinoza guided us. You are well acquainted with a fact of life to which I may as well call your attention forthwith, the fact, namely, that certain stages of growing intelligence, and even of growing spiritual knowledge, are marked by an inevitable, and, at first sight, lamentable decline, in apparent depth and vitality of spiritual experience. The greatest concerns of our lives are, in such stages of our growth, somehow for a while hidden, even forgotten. We become more knowing, more clever, more critical, more wary, more skeptical, but we seemingly do not grow more profound or more reverent. We find in the world much that engages our curious attention; we find little that is sublime. Our world becomes clearer; a brilliant, hard, mid-morning light shines upon everything; but this light does not seem to us any longer divine. The deeper beauty of the universe fades out; only facts and problems are left.

Such a stage in human experience is represented, in great part, by the philosophical thinkers who flourish between the time of

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273
Spinoza's death, in 1677, and the appearance of Kant's chief philosophical work, "The Critique of Pure Reason," in 1781. It is the period which has been especially associated, in historical tradition, with the eighteenth century, so that when one speaks of the spirit of the eighteenth century, he is likely to be referring to this skeptical and critical mood, to this hard, mid-morning light of the bare understanding, beneath which most of these thinkers of our period saw all their world lying. When I undertake to describe such a time, I therefore feel in its spirit a strong contrast to that curious but profound sort of piety which we were describing in the last lecture in the case of Spinoza. Spinoza, indeed, was in respect of his piety a man of marked limitations. His world had but one sublime feature in it, one element of religious significance, namely, the perfection of the divine substance. But then this one element was enough, from his point of view, to insure an elevated and untroubled repose of faith and love, which justified us in drawing a parallel between his religious consciousness and that of the author of the "Imitation of Christ." This sort of piety almost disappears from the popular philosophy of the early eighteenth century. What the people of that time want is more light and fewer unproved assumptions.

As against the earlier seventeenth-century thinkers, who, as you remember, also abhorred the occult, and trusted in reason, the thinkers of this new age are characterized by the fact that on the whole they have a great and increasing suspicion of even that rigid mathematical method of research itself upon which men like Spinoza had relied. In other words, whereas the men of the middle of the seventeenth century had trusted to reason alone, the men of the subsequent period began, first hesitatingly, and then more and more seriously, to distrust even human reason itself. After all, can you spin a world, as Spinoza did, out of a few axioms? Can you permanently revere a divine order that is perhaps the mere creature of the assumptions with which your system happened to start? The men of the new age are not ready to answer "Yes" to such questions. They must reflect, they must peer into reason itself. They must ask, Whence arise these axioms, how come we by our knowledge, of what account are our mathematical demonstrations, and of what, after all, does our limited human nature permit us to be sure? Once started upon this career, the thought of the time is driven more and more, as we have already said, to the study
of human nature, as opposed to the exclusive study of the physical universe. The whole range of human passion, so far as the eighteenth century knew about it, is criticised, but for a good while in a cautious, analytical, cruelly scrutinizing way, as if it were all something suspicious, misleading, superstitious. The coldness of the seventeenth century is still in the air; but Spinoza’s sense of sublimity is gone. Spinoza himself, you remember, had altogether rejected, as occult, everything miraculous, marvelous, extra-natural. Not the thunder or the earthquake or the fire could for him contain God; God was in the still small voice that the wise man alone heard. Now the popular philosophy of the eighteenth century more and more approached a position which unconsciously agreed with Spinoza’s in a number of respects. It cordially recognized, for instance, that the earthquake, say the great Lisbon earthquake of 1758, was a fearful thing, but that God was very certainly not in that earthquake. It could readily make out the same thing concerning any amount of thunder, fire, or wind that you might produce for inspection. But it went one step further than Spinoza’s wise man, and was forced to observe, that, after considerable scrutiny, it had as yet been able to detect in the world of reason and experience no still, small voice whatsoever. That at least, as I say, was the outcome of a considerable portion of the thought of the time. It was indeed not the outcome of all the thinking of this age. In Leibnitz, who was a younger contemporary of Spinoza, and who flourished in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, and at the beginning of the new period, philosophical theology found an expositor of the greatest speculative ingenuity and of the most positive tendency. Later, in the ever-fascinating Bishop Berkeley, not merely theological doctrine, but a profoundly spiritual idealism got voice. In Rousseau, a new era of sentimental piety found its beginning, and all this movement led ere long to Kant himself. But for the moment I am speaking of tendencies in a most general way, and this negative, this cautious, skeptical attitude, is the one most observable in the philosophy of our period.

I

Those of us, who look to philosophy for positive experiences, rather than for technical instruction, will at first sight regard such a period as this with some natural indifference. The skeptic is not
always an interesting person; but then, you must remember, as skeptic he doesn’t want to be interesting. He only wishes to be honest. He is meanwhile not only to be tolerated; he is also indispensable. Philosophical thought that has never been skeptical is sure not to be deep. The soul that never has doubted does not know whether it believes; and at all events the thinker who has not dwelt long in doubt has no rights to high rank as a reflective person. In fact, a study of history shows that if there is anything that human thought and cultivation have to be deeply thankful for, it is an occasional but truly great and fearless age of doubt. You may rightly say that doubt has no value in itself. Its value is in what it leads to. But then consider what ages of doubt have led to. Such an age in Greece produced that father of every humane sort of philosophizing, Socrates. The same age nourished with doubts the divine thought of Plato. Another and yet sterner age of doubt brought about the beginnings of Christian thought, prepared the Roman empire for the new faith, and saved the world from being ruined by the multitudinous fanatical rivals of Christianity. Yet a third great age of doubt began, at the Renaissance, the history of modern literature, and made the way plain for whatever was soundest about the Reformation. And a fourth age of doubt, the one under our consideration in this present lecture, proved more fruitful for good to humanity than a half dozen centuries of faith had done at another time. For, as we shall see, this eighteenth-century doubting drove thinkers from the study of nature to the study first of human reason, then of human conscience, then of all the human heart and soul, and meanwhile cleared the way for those triumphs of the spirit over great evils which have taken place from the moment of the French Revolution until now. Despise not doubting; it is often the best service thinking men can render to their age. Condemn it not; it is often the truest piety. And when I say this I do not mean merely to repeat cant phrases. I speak with reason. Doubt is never the proper end of thinking, but it is a good beginning. The wealth of truth which our life, our age, our civilization, our religion, our own hearts may contain, is not quite our property until we have won it. And we can win it only when we have first doubted the superficial forms in which at the outset it presents itself to our apprehension. Every true lover has in the beginning of his love grave doubts of his beloved’s affection for him. And such doubts often take on bitter and even cynical forms in his soul in the various bad
quarters of an hour that fall to his lot. Doubt, however, is not the foe, but the very inspirer of his love. It means that the beloved is yet to be won. It means that the simple warmth of his aspiration isn't enough, and that, if the beloved is worth winning, she is worth wooing through doubt and uncertainty for a good while. Moreover, it is not the fashion of the beloved, in the typical case, to be especially forward in quelling such doubts, by making clear her attitude too soon. If it were, love-making might be a simple affair, but would not be so significant an experience as it is. Doubt is the cloud that is needed as a background for love's rainbow. Even so it is, however, in the world of abstracter thought. The more serious faiths of humanity can only be won, if at all, by virtue of much doubting. The divine truth is essentially coy. You woo her, you toil for her, you reflect upon her by night and by day, you search through books, study nature, make experiments, dissect brains, hold learned disputations, take counsel of the wise; in fine, you prepare your own ripest thought, and lay it before your heavenly mistress when you have done your best. Will she be pleased? Will she reward you with a glance of approval? Will she say, Thou hast well spoken concerning me? Who can tell? Her eyes have their own beautiful fashion of looking far off when you want them to be turned upon you; and, after all, perhaps she prefers other suitors for her favor. The knowledge that she is of sufficiently exalted dignity to be indifferent to you, if she chooses, is what constitutes the mood known as philosophical skepticism. You see that, in sound-hearted thinkers, it is like the true lover's doubt whether his unwon mistress regards him kindly or no. It is not, then, a deadening and weakening mood; it is the very soul of philosophical earnestness.

Meanwhile, in describing the skepticism of our period I am far from wishing to trouble you with its endlessly varied technical subtleties. These lectures are throughout selective, and they sacrifice numberless intrinsically important aspects of our various subjects, in order to be able to seize upon a few significant features, and to hold these up to your view. I cannot warn you too much that there is no chance of completeness of treatment anywhere in the course of our brief work together. I spared you, in the last lecture, whole cargoes of problems which are consigned to every special student of Spinoza. I shall omit in this every mention of innumerable significant features in the philosophy of our present
period. All this is a matter of course. I remind you of it only to excuse an immediate and somewhat dry statement of the few features of this eighteenth-century skepticism to which I intend to confine myself in what follows.

II

There are certain philosophic problems of which you are sure, sooner or later, to have heard something in general literature, and for which the time from Spinoza to Kant is at least partially responsible. I want to set forth a little of the growth of these problems, never forgetting, I hope, that they interest us here in their human rather than in their technical aspects, and that we are above all concerned in them as leading to Kant himself, and to those who came after him. And my selection is as follows:

You have all heard about the controversy as to whether man's knowledge of more significant truth is innate, or whether it comes to him from without, through his senses; or, otherwise, as to whether the mind at birth is a *tabula rasa*, a blank white piece of innocent paper, upon which experience writes whatever it will, or whether the soul is endowed from the start with certain inborn rational possessions,—a divine law, for instance, written on the tablets of the heart, a divine wisdom about number and space, registered in some imperishable form in our very structures. You may have met with more or less elaborate arguments upon this topic. I do not know whether it has ever had more than the interest of a curious problem to many of us. I do know that in many styles of treatment it must appear as a sort of hackneyed debating-club question, an apparently excellent one of its sort, but a rather dry bone of contention, after all.

But you now know that philosophic research is no affair of the debating clubs, but a struggle of humanity to make its own deepest interests articulate, and therefore you will not expect me to deal with this question after the forensic fashion. What I want to do is this:

I want to suggest summarily the origin of the controversy about the innate ideas, and to show you what interest first led men to the question. Then, I want to indicate the value of the controversy as bringing about the study of man's inner life which, at the close of the century, bore fruit in the great Romantic movement itself. Fi-
nally, I want to narrate how the problems erelong took form, what skeptical outcome the discussion, upon one side, seemed to have, and what solution, what re-winning of the great spiritual faiths of humanity, it suggested on the other. In this way I shall try to prepare you for that stupendous revolution of philosophic thought which is associated with the name of Kant.

For the first, then, as to the origin of the controversy about the innate ideas. I shall not go back farther in the history of thought than to Descartes, 1596-1650, a predecessor of Spinoza, and the man whose name usually begins the lists of modern philosophers proper, as they are set forth in the text-books of the history of philosophy. Had I been engaged in technical teaching, it would have been my duty, in the last lecture, to describe the highly interesting relation in which Spinoza's doctrine stands to that of his predecessor. As it is, I have so far passed Descartes over. At present I must mention, in a word, one or two features of his doctrine. Descartes had early become dissatisfied with the scholastic philosophy which he had learned at Jesuit hands, and decided to think out a system for himself. He began his reasoning by a formal philosophical doubt about everything that could conceivably be doubted, and then proceeded to examine whether any unassailable certainty was still left him. He found such an absolutely unassailable assurance in his own existence as a thinking being, and accordingly began his positive doctrine with the famous principle, "Cogito, ergo sum," "I think, and so I exist." He proceeded from this beginning to prove the existence of God, and then the existence of two so-called substances, mind and matter, as comprising the whole world of which we mortals know anything. The laws of matter he found to be those of mathematics, and of the elementary physics of his time. Of mind he also studied the constitution as well as he could, and the result appeared in several elaborate works. Now the principle on which Descartes proceeded throughout his investigations was this: "My own existence is the standard assurance of my thought. I know that I at least am. But surely, if, on examining some principle, say an axiom in geometry, I perceive that it is as plain to me, as clear, as distinct, as is my own existence, then indeed it must be as certain a truth as my existence." This, I say, was his way of procedure, whenever he was puzzled about a principle. "Is it as clear to me as my own existence; or can I somehow make it as clear and distinct? Well, then, it is true. Is it less clear? Then I must
THE EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

examine it still further, or lay it aside as doubtful.” By this fashion of procedure, which Descartes regarded as the typically rational one, he managed to collect after a time a very goodly stock of sure and clear principles. Others haven’t always found them all as clear and sure as did Descartes, but that concerns us not now. Well, Descartes had a name, or in fact a brace of names, for these principles of his. He called them “eternal truths,” and he also called them “innate” ideas or truths. We know them because it is of the nature of our reason to know them. We know them whenever we come to look at them squarely, whether we ever saw them in this light before or not. That $2+2=4$, that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, these are examples of such truths. They are as clear to me as that I myself exist. They are clear to me because my reason makes them so, and that is the sort of reason I have. They are innate in me. I don’t see them with my bodily eyes. I just know them, because I do know them, and I know them also to be eternal.

Innate truths then, for Descartes, are of this sort. He isn’t so much interested in finding out how so many truths could be innate in one poor little human soul all at once, as he is interested in singling them out and writing down bookfuls of them. The seventeenth century, you remember, was not much interested in man himself, but was very much interested in eternal truth. Hence Descartes makes light of the problem how all this thought-stuff could somehow be innate in a soul without the poor soul’s ever even guessing the fact until it had studied philosophy. Yet of course if one becomes strongly interested in human nature for its own sake, this problem which Descartes ignored must come to the front.

The true interest of this problem, then, lies in the fact that by reflecting upon it philosophers have been led to some of the deepest undertakings of modern thought. For the moment it comes up as a question of mere idle curiosity. As such, however, the question was rather tauntingly suggested to Descartes himself by certain of his opponents. “How can so many ideas be innate?” they said. “Observe, children don’t know these truths of yours, and couldn’t even grasp them. Much less could infants. And yet you call them innate.” Descartes, thus challenged, replied curtly, but not unskillfully. They may be innate, he said (in substance), as predispositions, which in infants haven’t yet grown to conscious rank. The
thing is simple enough. In certain families, so Descartes further explains (I do not quote his words but give their sense), good-breeding and the gout are innate. Yet of course, as he implies, the children of such families have to be instructed in deportment, and the infants just learning to walk seem happily quite free from gout. Even so, geometry is innate in us, but it doesn’t come to our consciousness without much trouble. With the taunting questions put to Descartes, and his example about the heredity of good-breeding and the gout, the question of the innate ideas enters modern philosophy. It was later to grow much more important.

III

In Locke’s famous “Essay on the Human Understanding,” published in 1689-90, the investigation may be said to have been fairly opened. Locke was born in the same year as Spinoza. Had he died when Spinoza died, the English thinker would never have been heard of in the history of thought. In Locke’s patient devotion to a detailed investigation, we find a quality that reminds us of the most marked characteristic of another great Englishman, the scientific hero of our own day, Darwin. Locke was early busy with philosophy, natural science, and medicine. Later, he was for a short time abroad, in diplomatic service, and then lived long as the intimate friend of Lord Anthony Ashley, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury, whose political fortunes he followed. His whole life was a mingling of study, private teaching, writing and practical politics. His character is thoroughly English. There is that typical clearness in seizing and developing his own chief ideas, and that manly, almost classically finished stubbornness as against all foreign, mystical, and especially Continental ideas, which usually mark the elder English thinkers. Give Locke a profound problem like that of the freedom of the will, and he flounders helplessly. Ask him to look at things from a novel point of view, and he cannot imagine what fancy you can be dreaming of. But leave him to himself, and he shows you within his own range a fine, sensible, wholesome man at work, a thorough man, who has seen the world of business as well as the world of study, and who believes in business-like methods in his philosophy. His style, to be sure, is endlessly diffuse, yet without being precisely wearisome, because, after all, it is itself the diffuse-ness of a man of business, whose accounts cover many and various
transactions, and who has to set down all the items. Nobody can fail to respect Locke, unless, to be sure, his work is employed as a text-book for classes that are too immature to grapple with him. It has too frequently been thus abused, to the great injury of the excellent man's popular fame.

Locke made, as everybody knows, short work of all innate ideas. He found none. Infants, with their rattles, show no sign of being aware that things which are equal to the same things are equal to each other. Locke himself, to be sure, is a poor expert concerning infants, as is evident from many things that he says about them, in the course of his book, but as to this matter he is not only confident but right. As for the hereditary predispositions, similar to good-breeding and the gout, Locke in one or two passages recognizes that there may, indeed must be, such things. But he does not see of what service they could be in forming knowledge, were it not for our senses.

What interests us most in Locke, however, is not this negative part of his argument, but his general view of the nature, powers and scope of human reason, a view which introduces a whole century of research into man's inner life. In the preface to his Essay, Locke describes to us the history of his book. "Were it fit," he says, addressing the reader, "to trouble thee with the history of this essay, I should tell thee that five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course, and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented; and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry. Some hasty and undigested thoughts on a subject I had never before considered, which I set down against our next meeting, gave the first entrance into this discourse; which, having been thus begun by chance, was continued by entreaty; written by incoherent parcels; and, after long intervals of neglect, resumed again, as my humor or occasions permitted, and at last, in a retirement, where an attendance on my
health gave me leisure, it was brought into that order thou now seest it.”

In this modest way Locke introduces a book whose historical value lies precisely in this insistence upon the importance of knowing our own understandings, as a preliminary to every sort of research. And how great this historical value of the book! Locke and his five or six friends fall to discussing, in club fashion, certain un­named problems. They find themselves in a quandary. Locke pro­poses that they go back on their own track a little and study the structure and powers of the understanding itself. He himself begins the analysis, the entreaty of his friends leads him to continue the research. The result is a big book, sensible, many-sided, influential. It arouses a great controversy, and herefrom springs, first the philosophic movement from Locke through Leibnitz, through the wonderful Berkeley, through the ingenious, fearless, and doubting Hume, to Kant himself, and European thought is transformed. Meanwhile, from the same root grow other inquiries into the mind of man. The great English moralists of the eighteenth century, a stately row, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler, Adam Smith, and Hume once more, set forth the mysteries of the moral conscious­ness. The general public is aroused. A subjective, a humane mode of inquiry becomes everywhere prominent. Much of all this is cold and skeptical in tone. In France it gives us the encyclopedists, such as Diderot. But the same movement also gives us Rousseau. The modern novel, too, that great analyst of the mind and the heart of every man, takes its rise. I think I am not wrong in attributing the novel largely to that interest in analysis for which Locke stood. Yonder mere outer nature is no longer everything. And erelong, lo! almost before they know it, the nations of Europe themselves are once more plunged into the very midst of the great problems of the spirit. For at length the inquiry loses its negative and skepti­cal air altogether. The world glows afresh. Passion, brought by all this out of its hiding-places, grows hot; men have once more found something to die for; and what they learn to die for in the revolutionary period is the inner life. They die for the freedom of the subject; for the sacred rights of humanity; for the destruc­tion of inhuman and despotic restraints. They make, indeed, vast blunders in all this, behead an innocent queen, set up a new despot merely because his rule isn’t traditional, die amid the snows of
Russia for a bare whim, in short sin atrociously, but meanwhile they cleanse Europe of a whole dead world of irrationalisms; they glorify the human nature that can endure and suffer so much for the sake of coming to possess itself; they create our modern world. And all this, I say, because they had rediscovered the inner life.

Do I seem to exaggerate the significance of the mere thinker and his work? I assure you that I do not. My idea of the mission of the philosopher is, I insist, a very moderate one. As I have several times said, he doesn’t create the passions of men; he makes no new ideals. His only mission is to direct the attention of man to the passions and ideals which they already possess. He doubts, analyzes, pries into this and that; and men say, How dry, how repellent, how unpractical, how remote from life. But, after all, he is prying into the secret places of the lightning of Jove; for these thoughts and passions upon which he reflects move the world. He says to his time: This and this hast thou,—this sense of the rights of man, a sword of the spirit, fashioned to slay tyrants;—this love of liberty, an ideal banner bequeathed thee by a sacred past to cherish, as the soldiers of old cherished the standard beneath which they conquered the world. Such things he says always, to be sure, in his own technical way, and for a time nobody finds it out at all or even reads his books. But at length discussion begins to spread, the word of wisdom flies from one book to another, and finally the people hear. They look at the sword and at the banner. No philosopher made these. They are simply humanity’s own treasures. The philosopher had the sole service of calling attention to them, because, in the course of his critical research, he found them. But the rediscovery, how great its significance! I suppose that you have frequently heard it said that the philosophers had much to do with making the French Revolution, and you have wondered how this was. You may also have wondered how this was consistent with our view that philosophers are the mere critics of life. I show you the solution. The critic creates nothing, he only points out. But his pointing may show you powers that were indeed always there, and that were even effective, but that, once afresh seen, suggest to active passion a thousand devices whereby the world is revolutionized.

We return to Locke. By an inquiry of the sort which he has described to us, he had sought to comprehend the nature and the limits of our understanding. He had, as we saw, decided that innate
ideas cannot do anything for knowledge. And the force of this notion of Locke's really was that, according to him, it is useless to assume, as the basis of our human reason, anything occult, mysterious, opaque, hidden away in the recesses of the mind. The real cause of Locke's hatred of innate ideas is his horror of anything mystical. If thought is not to be clear, what shall be clear? Hence, if you pretend to have any knowledge, you must be prepared to tell where it comes from. It won't do to appeal, as Descartes did, to a certain impression of the clearness and distinctness of your ideas. Their origin will decide their value. And what is this origin? Locke puts the question plainly, at the beginning of the second book of his Essay, and answers it in a general way. I quote the whole passage:

“Let us, then, suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, From Experience; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation, employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge from whence all the ideas we have or can naturally have do spring.” “First,” he continues, “our senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them; and thus we come by those ideas we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities; which when I say that the senses convey into the mind, I mean, that they from external objects convey into the mind what produces there those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call Sensation.

“Secondly, the other fountain, from which experience furnisheth the understanding with ideas, is the perception of the operations of our mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got; which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and
consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without; and such are perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actings of our own minds. . . . This source of ideas every man has wholly in himself; and though it be not sense, . . . yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be called internal sense. But as I call the other sensation, so I call this Reflection, the ideas it affords being such only as the mind gets by reflecting on its own operations within itself. . . . These two, I say, namely, external material things, as the objects of sensation, and the operations of our own minds within, as the objects of reflection, are to me the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings."

So much, then, for Locke's notion of how we come by knowledge. I quote him at this length, because his view was of such critical importance in what followed in all European thought.

You will ask at once, What sort of a real world did Locke manage to make out of this material of bare sensations and reflections? We see, touch, smell, taste this our world, and then we reflectively observe of ourselves that we are doubting, willing, hoping, loving, hating, thinking, and thus we get all our knowledge. That is all the mind we have. That is the human understanding. Such at least is Locke's view. But what does it all come to? Is the result a materialism pure and simple, or is it a skepticism? Not so. Locke was an Englishman; he saw, heard, smelt, tasted, what his fellow-countrymen also did; and he reflected upon all this after much their fashion. His world, therefore, is the world of the liberal English thinker of his day. He believes in matter and its laws, in God also, and in revelation, in duty and in the human rights of the British freeman, and in the Essay he tries to show how just such things can be known to us through bare seeing, hearing, tasting, and the rest, coupled with reflection upon what we are doing. There is nothing revolutionary about Locke's own view of his world, great as was the revolution that he prepared. By touch we learn that there are substances about us, solid, space-occupying, numerous, movable. By all our senses we learn that these substances have many curious properties, how or why brought about, we cannot discover. Sugar is sweet; gold is yellow; various drugs have specific effects in curing diseases; water flows; iron is rigid; every substance is as God wills it to be. These things
are so, because we find them so. Meanwhile, being reflective Englishmen, we can't help observing that all these things require God to create them what they are, because, as one sees, things always have adequate causes; and our minds, too, being realities, must have been made by a thinker. Moreover, a fair study of the evidence of revelation will convince any reasonable person of the essential truths of the Christian religion, and that is enough.

You will not find this world of Locke an exciting one. But remember, after all, what it is that he has done for us. He has tried hard to remove every mystery from the nature of human reason. Because innate ideas, the eternal truths of Descartes, were mysterious, he has thrown them overboard. Experience it is that writes everything on the blank tablet of the mind. But thus viewing things, Locke has only given us a new mystery. Can experience, mere smelling, tasting, seeing, together with bare reflection, do all this for us,—give us God, religion, reality, our whole English world? Then surely what a marvelous treasure-house is this experience itself! Surely ages will be needed to comprehend it. Locke cannot have finished it off thus in one essay.

And indeed he has not done so. His book is the mere beginning both of the psychology of experience, and of discussions about the nature and limit of consciousness. The truly important argument over Locke's problems was opened by Leibnitz, the great Continental thinker, whose views I must entirely pass over, vastly important as they are, and that the less unwillingly just now because his answer to Locke, written about 1700, was not published until many years after his own death. I must, however, ask you to examine the next step forward in English philosophical reflection, the one taken by the admirable and fascinating Berkeley.

IV

The world that Locke found with his senses is at once too poor and too much encumbered for Berkeley's young enthusiasm. Berkeley is a born child of Plato, a lineal descendant of a race whose origin is never very far off, and is divine. Men of Berkeley's type are born to see God face to face; and when they see him, they do so without fear, without mystical trembling, without being driven to dark and lofty speech. They take the whole thing as a matter of course. They tell you of it frankly, gently, simply, and
with a beautiful childlike surprise that your eyes are not always as open as their own. Meanwhile, they are true philosophers, keen in dialectic, skillful in the thrust and parry of debate, a little loquacious, but never wearisome. Of the physical world they know comparatively little, but what they know they love very much. A very few lines of philosophical research they pursue eagerly, minutely, fruitfully; concerning others they can make nothing but the most superficial remarks. They produce books young, and with marvelous facility. They have a full-fledged system ready by the time they are twenty-five. They will write an immortal work, as it were, over night. They are, for the rest, through and through poetical. Each one of their essays will be as crisp and delicate as a good sonnet. Yet what they lack is elaboration, williness, and architectural massiveness of research. They take after Plato, their father, as to grace and ingenuity. His life-long patience and mature productiveness they never reach. The world finds them paradoxical; refutes them again and again with a certain Philistine ferocity; makes naught of them in hundreds of learned volumes; but returns ever afresh to the hopeless task of keeping them permanently naught. In the heaven of reflection, amongst the philosophical angels who contemplate the beatific vision of the divine essence, such spirits occupy neither the place of the archangels, nor of those who speed o'er land and sea, nor yet of those who only stand and wait. Their office is a less serious one. They cast glances now and then at this inspiring aspect or at that of the divine essence, sing quite their own song in its praise, find little in most of the other angels that can entertain them, and spend their time for the most part in gentle private musings, many of which (for so Berkeley's own portrait suggests to me) they apparently find far too pretty to be uttered at all. We admire them, we may even love them; yet no one would call them precisely heroes of contemplation. They themselves shed no tears, but they also begin no revolutions, are apostles of no world-wide movements.

Berkeley's grandly simple accomplishment, as you know, lay in his observation that in the world of the senses, in the world of experience, as Locke knew it, there was properly no such thing as material substance discoverable at all. The world of sense-experience, said Berkeley, is a world of ideas. I have an idea, say of this fruit. It is a complex idea. The fruit is round, soft, pleasant to the taste, orange-colored, and the rest. But then, as you see, all these
things that I know about the fruit are just my ideas. Were I in the
dark, the fruit would have no color. Do I refuse to bite it, the
taste of it remains a bare possibility, not a fact. And so as to all
the other properties of the fruit. All these exist for me in so far as
I have ideas of them. Have I no idea of a thing, then it exists not
for me. This is Berkeley's fundamental thought, but he does not
leave it in such absolute and crude simplicity as this.

His deeper significance lies in the fact that he carries out in a
new field an analysis of our inner life, namely, of a portion of the
process of knowledge. His grandly simple idea, here applied, leads
to very engaging results; but they are results which no other
philosopher would be likely to accept without at once carrying
them further than did Berkeley. The young student of Trinity
College early became fascinated with the problem of the theory
of vision. We seem to see objects about us in a space of three
dimensions. These objects look solid, move about, stand in space
relations to one another. But now, after all, how can we possibly
see distance? Distance runs directly outward from my eyes; my
eyes are at the surface of my body, and a distant object is not;
my eyes are affected where they are, and, for the rest, not the
distance of the opposite wall as such affects me, but the wall in
so far as rays of light come from it. All this even Locke's man of
plain sense has to admit. How, then, if distance itself is not one of
my visual sensations, if distance isn't itself color or light, how can
I still see distance? For all that I see is after all not even the object,
but only the color and light of the object. This is Berkeley's prob­
lem about vision. His answer was early this: I don't really see
distance. What I see is something about the color or shape of the
distant object, or better still about the feelings that accompany in
me the act of sight,—something which is to me a sign of distance.
A distant orange isn't as big as a near one. That is one sign of dis­
tance then, namely, the size for me of my idea of a patch of color
which I see when I look at the orange. Again, very distant objects,
such as mountains, are known to be distant because they look to
me blue. In short, to sum up, my apparent seeing of distance isn't
any direct seeing of distance at all. It is a reading of the language
of sight, as this is exhibited to my eyes by the colors and forms of
things. A certain look of things, a certain group of signs, which I
have learned, by long experience, to interpret, tells me how far
off these things about me are. Distance isn't known directly. It is
read as we read a language, read by interpreting the signs of the sense of sight. And as with distance, so with solidity. I don’t really see things as solid. The solid things don’t wander in through my eyes to my soul. But there are signs of solidity about the look of the things, signs that you learn to copy when you learn to draw in perspective, and to imitate the relief of objects; these signs are the language of the sense of sight. You learn, when you come to comprehend this language, that if a thing looks in a certain way, has a certain relief of colors, a certain perspective arrangement of its outlines, that then, I say, it will feel solid if you go up to it and touch it. Infants don’t know all this until they have learned to read the language of vision. Hence they don’t see things as solid for a good while, don’t judge distances accurately, have no eye for a space of three dimensions.

Seeing, then, is reading, is interpreting a world-language, is anticipating how things will feel to your touch by virtue of the signs given by the color, light, relief, perspective, of things. Such is Berkeley’s view, and as far as it goes, it is obviously true. But he is not content to leave his thought here. He goes further. What is all my life of experience, my seeing, feeling, touching, moving about, examining my world? Isn’t it from first to last a learning to read the language of things? Isn’t it a learning to anticipate one thing by virtue of the signs that are given of its presence by another? Yes, all experience is after all learning to read. And this reading, what is it? It is merely rightly and rationally putting together the ideas which my world gives me. These ideas come in certain orders, follow certain laws. I learn these laws, and thus I read my world. I have one idea, say the glow of a fire. It suggests to me another idea, namely, that in case I go near the fire I shall feel warm. All experience, then, is a learning how my ideas ought to go together; it is a learning that upon one idea another will follow under certain circumstances. What, then, is this world of my experience? Is it anything but the world of ideas and of their laws? What existence has my world for me apart from my ideas of it? What existence can any world have apart from the thought of some thinker for whom it exists? Whose language, then, am I reading in this world before me? Whose ideas are these that experience impresses upon me? Are they not God’s ideas? Is it not his language that I read in nature? Is not all my life a talking with God?
"Some truths there are," says Berkeley, "so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without mind; that their being is, to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind, or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit."

This is Berkeley's interpretation and extension of Locke's thought. I don't ask you to accept or to reject it, I only ask you to see once more how it holds together. Let us review it. My experience is a learning to read my world. What is my world? Merely the sum total of my ideas, of my thoughts, feelings, sights, sounds, colors, tastes. I read these when one of them becomes sign to me of another, when the idea of a glow tells me of the yet unfelt warmth that a fire will arouse in me if I approach it, when the ideas of forms and shadows warn me how a solid thing will feel if I touch it. My ideas and their laws, this is all my reality. But then surely I am not the only existence there is. No, indeed. The things about me are indeed only my ideas; but I am not the author of these ideas. This language of experience, those signs of the senses, which I decipher—I did not produce them. Who writes, then, this language? Who forces on my mind the succession of my ideas? Who spreads out the scroll of those experiences before me which in their totality constitute the choir of heaven and the furniture of earth? Berkeley responds readily. The sources of my ideas are two: my fellow-beings, who speak to me with the natural voice, and God, who talks to me in the language of the sense. "When," says Berkeley, "I deny sensible things an existence out of the mind, I do not mean my mind in particular, but all minds. Now it is plain they have an existence exterior to my mind, since I find them by experience to be independent of it. There is some other mind wherein they exist, during the intervals between the time of my perceiving them, as likewise they did before my birth, and would do after my supposed annihilation. And as the same is true with regard to all other finite created spirits, it necessarily follows, there is an omnipresent eternal mind, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a
manner, and according to such rules, as He himself hath ordained, and are by us termed the *laws of nature*.

Here is the famous idealism of Berkeley. Never was philosophical idealism more simply stated. Nowhere is there a better introduction to a doctrine at once paradoxical and plausible, namely, the idealistic scheme of things, than in Berkeley's early essays. They are favorites—these essays—of all young students of philosophy. As you read them, unprepared, you first say, How wild a paradox! How absurdly opposed to common sense! Then you read further and say, How plausible this Berkeley is! How charming his style! How clear he makes his paradoxes! Perhaps, after all, they aren't paradoxes, but mere rewordings of what we all mean. He knows a real world of facts, too. Nobody is surer of the truths of experience, nobody is firmer in his convictions of an outer reality, than Berkeley. Only this outer reality—what is it but God directly talking to us, directly impressing upon us these ideas of the "choir of heaven and furniture of earth?" In sense, in experience, we have God. He is in matter. Matter, in fact, is a part of his own self: it is his manifested will, his plan for our education, his voice speaking to us, warning, instructing, amusing, disciplining, blessing us, with a series of orderly and significant experiences. Well, I say, as you read further, the beauty of Berkeley's statement impresses you, you are half persuaded that you might come to believe this; and lo! suddenly, as you read, you *do* believe it, if only for an hour, and then, in a curious fashion, the whole thing comes to look almost commonplace. It is so obvious, you say, this notion that we only know our own ideas, so obvious that it was hardly worth while to write it down. After all, everybody believes that! As for the notion of God talking to us, through all our senses, that is very pretty and poetical, but is there anything very novel about the notion? It is the old design argument over again.

So I say, your mood alters as you read Berkeley. The value of his doctrine, for our present purposes, lies in its place in this history of the rediscovery of the inner life which we are following in this lecture. Of the truth of Berkeley's doctrine I have just now nothing to say. I am simply narrating to you Berkeley's experience of spiritual things. And his experience was this: that our consciousness of outer reality is a more subtle and complex thing than the previous age had suspected, so that the real world must be very
different from the assumed substantial and mathematical world of the seventeenth century, and so that our inner life of sense and of reason needs yet a new and a deeper analysis. Everything in this whole period makes, you see, for the study of this inner life. It is no matter whether you are a philosopher, and write essays on the "Principles of Human Knowledge," or whether you are a heroine in an eighteenth-century novel, and write sentimental letters to a friend; you are part of the same movement. The spirit is dissatisfied with the mathematical order, and feels friendless among the eternities of the seventeenth-century thought. The spirit wants to be at home with itself, well-friend in the comprehension of its inner processes. It loves to be confidential in its heart outpourings, keen in its analysis, humane in its attitude towards life. And to be part of this new process is Berkeley's significance.

V

But now, if you are to enjoy the inner life, you must bear also its burdens and its doubts. To become sure of yourself, you must first doubt yourself. And this doubt, this skepticism, which self-analysis always involves, who could express it better than the great Scotchman, David Hume? Hume is, I think, next to Hobbes, the greatest of British speculative thinkers, Berkeley occupying the third place in order of rank. I cannot undertake to describe to you in this place the real historical significance of Hume, his subtlety, his fearlessness, his fine analysis of certain of the deepest problems, his place as the inspirer of Kant's thought, his whole value as metaphysical teacher of his time. What you will see in him is merely the merciless skeptic, and, in this superficial sketch of the rediscovery of the inner consciousness, I don't ask you to see more. Hume accepted Locke's belief that reason is merely the recorder of experience. He carries out this view to its remotest consequences. Our minds consist, as he says, of impressions and ideas. By impressions he means the experiences of sense; by ideas he means the remembered copies of these experiences. You see, feel, smell, taste; and you remember having seen, felt, tasted or smelt. This is all. You have no other knowledge. Upon some of your ideas, namely those of quantity and number, you can reason, and can even discover novel and necessary truth about them. This is owing to the peculiarity of these ideas and of the impressions on which
they are founded. For these ideas, also, even all the subtleties of mathematical science, are faded and blurred impressions of sense. And, as it chances, on just these faded impressions you can reason. But Berkeley was wrong in thinking that you can by searching find out God, or anything else supersensual. Science concerns matters of fact, as the senses give them, and ends with these.

With this general view in mind, let us examine, in Hume's fashion, certain of the most familiar conceptions of human reason. Hume is afraid of nothing, not even of the presumptions at the basis of physical science. Matters of fact he respects, but not universal principles. "There are," says Hume, "no ideas . . . more obscure than those of power, force, or necessary connection." Let us look a little more closely at these ideas. Let us clear them up if we can. How useful they seem. How much we hear in exact science about something called the law of causation, which says that there is a necessary connection between causes and effects, that given natural conditions have a "power" to bring to pass certain results, that the forces of nature must work as they do. Well, apply to such sublime and far-reaching ideas,—just such ideas, you will remember, as seemed to Spinoza so significant,—apply to them Hume's simple criterion. Ideas, in order to have a good basis, must, Hume declares, stand for matters of fact, given to us in the senses. "It is impossible for us to think of anything which we have not antecedently felt, either by our external or internal senses." "By what invention, then," says Hume, "can we throw light" upon ideas that, being simple, still pretend to be authoritative, "and render them altogether precise and determinate to our intellectual view?" Answer: "Produce the impressions or original sentiments from which the ideas are copied." These impressions will "admit of no ambiguity." So, then, let us produce the original impression from which the idea of causation, of necessary connection, or of power derived. You say that in nature there is and must be necessity. Very well, let us ask ourselves afresh the questions that we asked of Locke. Did you ever see necessity? Did you ever hear or touch causation? Did you ever taste or smell necessary connection? Name us the original impression whence comes your idea. "When," says Hume, "we look about us towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in any single instance, to discover any power or necessary connection, any quality which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. We only find that the one
does actually in fact follow the other. The impulse of one billiard ball is attended with motion in the second. That is the whole that appears to the outward senses.” “In reality, there is no part of matter that does ever by its sensible qualities discover any power or energy, or give us ground to imagine that it could produce anything,” until we have found out by experience what happens in consequence of its presence. Thus outer sense gives us facts, but no necessary laws, no true causation, no real connection of events.

We must, then, get our idea of power, of necessary connection, from within. And so, in fact, many have thought that we do. If in outer nature I am only impressed by matters of fact about billiard balls and other such things, and if there I never learn of causation, do I not, perchance, directly feel my own true power, my own causal efficacy, my own will, making acts result in a necessary way from my purposes? No, answers Hume. If I examine carefully I find that my own deeds also are merely matters of fact, with nothing causally efficacious about my own conscious nature to make them obviously necessary. After all, “is there any principle in nature more mysterious than the union of soul with body?” “Were we empowered,” adds Hume, “to remove mountains, or control the planets in their orbit, this extensive authority would not be more extraordinary, or more beyond our comprehension,” than is the bare matter of fact that we now can control our bodies by our will. In inner experience, then, just as in outer, we get no direct impression of how causes produce effects. We only see that things do often happen in regular ways. In experience, then, “all events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected. But as we can have no idea of anything which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion seems to be, that we have no idea of connection or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning.” From this seeming conclusion, Hume makes, indeed, an escape, but one that is, in fact, not less skeptical than his result as first reached. The true original of our idea of power, and so of causation, he says, is simply this, that “after a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried, by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist.” “The first time a man saw the communication of motion by impulse, as by the shock of the two billiard balls, he could not pronounce that the one event was connected, but only that it was con-
joined, with the other. After he has observed several instances of this nature, he then pronounces them to be connected. What alteration has happened to give rise to this new idea of connection? Nothing but that now he feels these two events to be connected in his imagination. Custom, then, mere habit of mind, is the origin of the idea of causation. We see no necessity in the world. We only feel it there, because that is our habit of mind, our fashion of mentally regarding an often-repeated experience of similar successions.

The importance of all this skepticism lies, as you of course see, in its removal from our fact-world of just the principles that the seventeenth century had found so inspiring. “It is of the nature of reason” Spinoza had said, “to regard things as necessary.” Upon that rock he had built his faith. His wisdom had reposed secure in God, in whom were all things, just because God’s nature was the highest form of necessity, the law of laws. And now comes Hume, and calls this “nature of reason” a mere feeling, founded on habit, a product of our imagination, no matter of fact at all. What becomes, then, of Spinoza’s divine order? Has philosophy fallen by its own hands? Is the eternal in which we had trusted really, after all, but the mass of the flying and disconnected impressions of sense? All crumbles at the touch of this criticism of Hume’s. All becomes but the aggregate of the disconnected sense-impressions. Nay, if we find the Holy Grail itself, it, too, will fade and crumble into dust. Hume is aware of some such result. He skillfully and playfully veils the extreme consequences at times by the arts of his beautiful dialectic. But he none the less rejoices in it, with all the fine joy of the merciless foe of delusions:—matters of fact, relations of ideas,—these are all that his doctrine leaves us. “When,” he once says, “we run through libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask. Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”

VI

Hume represents thus, indeed, the extreme of purely philosophical skepticism in the eighteenth century. Others, to be sure, outside of
the ranks of the philosophers, went further in many ways, and were rebels or scoffers in their own fashion, far more aggressive than his. But Hume’s thought is in its result as fruitful as in its content it is negative. The spirit, you see, has become anxious to know its own nature. After all, can we live by merely assuming the innate ideas? Can even Spinoza’s wisdom save us from doubt? And yet this doubt doesn’t mean mere waywardness. It means longing for self-consciousness. And in the last third of the century this longing took, as we shall next time learn, new and positive forms. The inner life, to be sure, has appeared so far as a very capricious thing, after all. Study it by mere analysis of its experiences, as Hume did, and in this its capriciousness it will seem to shrivel to nothing under your hands. Where you expected it to be wealthiest, it turns out to be poorest. It is mere sense, mere feeling, mere sophistry and illusion. But is this the end? No, it is rather but the beginning of a new and a higher philosophy. The spirit is more than mere experience. Locke’s account of the inner life is only half the truth. And what the other half is, Kant and his successors shall teach us. The age of poetry and of history—of a new natural science, also, yes, even this our own century—shall take up afresh the task that Hume rejected as impossible. The revolutionary period shall first rediscover passion, shall produce Goethe’s “Faust,” and shall regenerate Europe. Historical research, reviving, shall prove to the spirit the significance of his own earthly past. Science, entering upon new realms, shall formulate the idea of cosmical evolution. No longer Spinoza’s world, but a changing, a gloriously passionate and tragic world, of moral endeavor, of strife, of growth, and of freedom, shall be conceived by men; and meanwhile, in Kant and in his successors, as we shall find, a more fitting philosophy will arise to formulate with all of Hume’s keen dialectic, with all of Locke’s love of human nature, and still with all of Spinoza’s reverence for an absolute rationality in things, something of the significance of our modern life.

Remember, however, finally, that if the skepticism of the eighteenth century is to be gotten rid of, this will only be by transcending it, living through and beyond it, not by neglecting or by simply refuting it, from without. Philosophical insight, however partial, is never to be refuted. You can transcend it, you can make it part of a larger life, but it always remains as such a part. The genuine spirit includes all that was true and earnest in the doubting
spirit. The only way to get rid of a philosophic doubt, in its discouraging aspect, is to see that, such as it is, it already implies a larger truth. The great spirit says to us, like Emerson’s “Brahma,”—

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt.

And this, namely, the inevitableness and the true spirituality of genuine doubting, is the great lesson that the eighteenth century, in its transition to Kant, teaches us. It is a lesson well to be remembered in our own day, when, notwithstanding the vast accomplishments of recent research, there is a sense in which we, too, live in a world of doubt, but live there only that we may learn to conquer and possess it, all its doubts and its certainties, all its truth. In doubt we come to see our illusion; the phantoms of the night of thought vanish; but the new light comes. The old world dies, but only to rise again to the immortality of a higher existence. The spirit destroys its former creations, shatters its idols, and laments their loss. But, as in “Faust,” the chorus still sings:—

Thou hast it destroyed,
The beautiful world,
With powerful fist:
In ruin ’t is hurled,
By the blow of a demigod shattered!
The scattered
Fragments into the Void we carry,
Deploring
The beauty perished beyond restoring.
Mightier
For the children of men,
Brightlier
Build it again,
In thine own bosom build it anew!
Bid the new career
Commence,
With clearer sense,
And the new songs of cheer
Be sung thereto!

Such a building anew of the lost universe in the bosom of the human spirit, it was the mission of Kant to begin.