

Three Part Being: A discussion on Eugene Halliday's talk *Three Part Man*

Alexander Bain (1818-1903) was writing of "The Senses and the Intellect" (1855) and "The Emotions and the Will" (1859), which became the standard textbooks for 19th Century British psychology. Bain said, "The phenomena of mind are usually comprehended under three heads:

- I. FEELING, which includes, but is not exhausted by, our pleasures and pains. Emotions, passion, affection, sentiment are names of Feeling.
- II. VOLITION, or the Will, embracing the whole of our activity as directed by our feelings.
- III. THOUGHT, intellect, or Cognition."

E.H. *Three Part Man* - 'The word 'idea' is the Greek word for form, and 'form' is the Latin word for shape, and 'shape' is the Saxon word for idea. And if we say that the shapes of things depend entirely on the mode of circumscription; in any shape form or idea we are concerned with some finite – something with a limiting factor, a binding contour. And according to the way this contour wiggles about, you recognise a given form or shape, or idea. It doesn't matter how you bend it. If you get a piece of string, wiggle it about - the two ends tied together. As long as the ends are tied together and there is some space between it there is a binding contour and a contained form. . . . And then every individual recognisably different from another individual, can be considered simply as a distortion of the primary sphere of being. . . . In fact when we say, 'define a term, define an idea, ' we mean indicate the particular, peculiar modes of the shape of the contour, or the contour of the shape.'

'We have mentioned that all three layers of the brain interact. The layers are connected by an extensive two-way network of nerves. On-going communication between the neocortex and the limbic system links thinking and emotions; each influences the other and both direct all voluntary action. This interplay of memory and emotion, thought and action is the foundation of a person's individuality.

The full extent of this interconnectedness is unclear. However, it is entirely incorrect to assume that in any situation one of our three "brains" is working and the others are not. What we can do, tentatively, is assume that at times one particular focus may be dominant while the rest of the brain acts in support and that education can influence which focus dominates. '

Caine, Renate Nummela and Geoffrey Caine. Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain. Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications, 1990.

E.H. *Three Part Man* – 'The abstract idea is powerless. It is powerless because we have abstracted it and it is powerless only because we have abstracted it. Real ideas, not abstract, concrete ideas in the mind are not powerless because they happen to be packets of energy formulated in certain ways. They are behaving and driving about in the mind. They are making their own associations with each other – quite independently of the so-called individuality, which in any case is just a simple complex of ideas.'

'As soon as discomfort arises then the child tries to avoid the negative emotion from the experience. In other words it tries to push it out of consciousness but whilst it is doing so it is also trying to retain in consciousness, the visual image of the form to be avoided. In other words we try to sharpen our formal awareness, and to get rid of negative emotions

associated with the form we are trying to retain. We want to lose the painful part of the experience and have a very clear image of what caused it – so that we can dodge it in the future. . . . But we do this only at the expense of destroying our basic unity and innocence.’

‘In the same way we can suppress the awareness of the urge, we can stop an urge, we can stop the primary power’s tendency to move into the musculature and force action. We can stop it functioning so convincingly that we can deceive ourselves into believing that we have no such urge. There are many urges that are socially unacceptable, and in order to live in society we ordinarily – and it is by order – curb these drives. And because we would be censured if we were to exhibit these drives, in the actual inhibition of them, we also tend to hope that nobody has noticed that we even had a tendency towards it. And to make quite sure they don’t notice, the normal reaction is to declare that we have no such drives, and that we’re not really that kind of person. . . . In the same way we can take a feeling, we can deliberately hide the idea that gave rise to it, and we can suppress the drive that would put it into action.’

Nursery Rhyme - "I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well,
I do not like thee, Doctor Fell." (Tom Brown From Martial)

E.H. – ‘The concrete fact behind these three abstract worlds is the fact of directly experienced power. If therefore we have this idea and we feel its getting a bit abstract what we have to do is say to ourselves, ‘How do I feel about this idea? Do I like it or dislike it?’

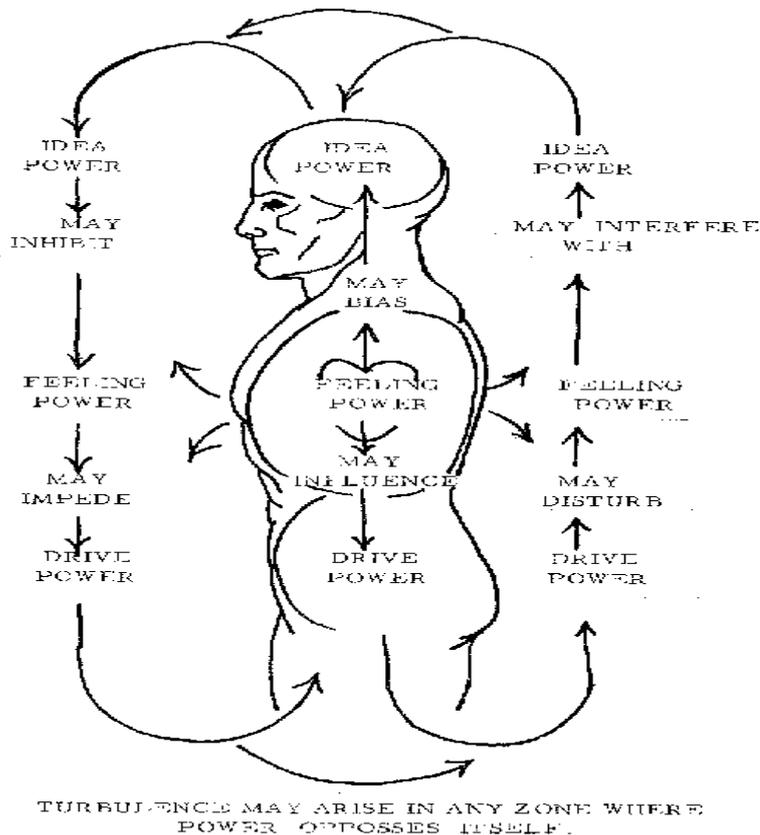
John Locke (1632 – 1704) ‘Volition or willing is an act of the mind directing it through to the production of any action, and thereby exerting its power to produce it... He that shall turn his thoughts inward upon what passes in his mind when he wills, shall see that the will or power of volition is conversant about nothing but our own actions; terminates there; and reaches no further; and that volition is nothing but that particular determination of the mind, whereby, barely by a thought, the mind endeavors to give rise, continuation, or stop, to any action which it takes to be in its power’

‘Will, then, is nothing but such a power. Liberty, on the other side, is the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the mind.’
An Essay on Human Understanding, Bk II

E.H. - ‘So you cannot have an idea without a conative urge, or a certain amount of field force involving itself in the idea. When we examine the feeling, if we have a feeling of pleasure, or displeasure and we can’t find an idea to account for it, it simply means we are not looking properly. There is one there. And the funny thing is, because feeling is the direct awareness of the state of power in the organism, if we have a feeling, and quietly say to ourselves, ‘What is causing this feeling?’. That is, ‘What is the invariable sequence that leads up to this feeling?’. There always appears in the mind, after a little waiting, if we don’t hammer too hard, a series of ideas or images - the ideational process.’

‘And the law of the eternal recurrence states that everything is going on all the time and therefore we know that every form of idea is eternal. Every feeling of liking or disliking is an eternal correspondence, and every conative drive is an eternal power

correspondent with that idea'. . . . 'So you see that we have these three levels of being, we see that the danger is of suppressing two and abstracting one and then assuming that this one has an independent existence of its own. And thus becoming unconscious of the other two elements., which does not eliminate the other two elements but leaves us in the dark about their activities. In fact the basis of modern psychology for the past sixty years is just a restatement of this elementary principle. And where you are unconscious about this threefold activity, you are at the mercy of this activity.'



E.H. – 'Now if we do this threefold exercise we are making ourselves more concrete, more whole, more grown together; concrete means – 'grown together', and its another way of saying integrated. And of course integration of being is the same thing as the substantialisation of the self, and the growth of the awareness of the possibility of immortality. That is, integration, resistance to breaking, resistance to being dis-integrated. And if we can get hold of this threefoldness of our being we have the power, if we wish, to resist disintegration to a remarkable degree.

In fact if we get hold of it properly, we have absolute power to become immortal. The things against this are of course, the mass inertia of the mnemic [*sic*] traces, all the things that have happened and been grammed into us, we can call them [*unclear word suggest* – 'pattern grammed'] if we wanted. The experiences of our ancestors passed through the continuity of the protoplasm. To us all these experiences are driving us to believe in death, driving us to believe that we must disintegrate when we've done our 'three score years and ten' – misquote. And this kind of inertia is causing our conative urge to give up, at a certain point; and it is causing our feeling level to become negative where it could become positive. '