BEFORE THE eighteenth century, there had not been wanting defenders of man, who assailed the proponents of his supposed innate wickedness.¹ Socrates had blamed evil on ignorance, and Pelagius had opposed St. Augustine. The early Renaissance was a period of optimism, of confidence in man's intellectual and moral possibilities. A high point was reached in the writings of Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). It was followed by a period (sometimes called the Counter-Renaissance) of intense pessimism. Machiavelli, Luther, Montaigne, and many others deflated man, both in himself and in regard to his position in the universe. More often than not, he was likened to animals, or placed beneath them, his reason and his reasonableness derided. *Hamlet* and *Don Quixote* are the two great expressions in literature of this deep pessimism. The seventeenth century, especially in France, turned its rationalistic bent to analysis of human psychology. The works of Pascal, Boileau, Racine, La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère paint man as irrational, ruled by passions and by egoism, motivated by prejudice, rationalization, vanity, hypocrisy and self-interest. Spinoza contended that we are naturally given to envy

¹ This chapter is not concerned with the view that men are presently evil, in society as it is constituted, but are not necessarily so.
and hatred, and derive pleasure and happiness from the misfortunes of others. One result was the justification of political absolutism, not only in France, but in the influential writings of Hobbes, who in turn reflected Machiavelli. Pufendorf commented on man's inability to live without laws, since harm could only result from his acting according to his whims; men are weak, coarse, and "more wicked than beasts." The political theme was not abandoned in the eighteenth century. Frederick the Great, as might be expected, held quite similar views. Nature produces evil men; "they cover the whole face of the earth; and without laws which repress vice, each individual would give himself up to the instinct of nature, and would think only of himself." Even the so-called "optimists" of human nature, Morelly and Rousseau, betray themselves in their systems, which require rigid control of the individual.

In the eighteenth century discussion, the detractors of man include, in the first place, certain orthodox writers who maintain the traditional attitudes of the Church. It is significant that these are comparatively few in number, doubtless, in large part, because of polemical necessities, especially their opposition to the post-Cartesian, materialistic degradation of man to an animal level. Yet we do find a few Christian writers emphasizing man's defects in the older tradition of the seventeenth century. Thus Deslandes belittles our vaunted reason, limited in power, confused by sensations and desires, naturally borne towards error. Deception, wrath and injustice direct our actions. As a result, laws are designed to take the place of morals, but unfortunately they serve only to corrupt them more. Deslandes' conclusion, however, belongs to an eighteenth century current of thought: everywhere and always, some men will cruelly oppress and exploit others; abuses will always reign. These words sound like a pre-echo of the marquis de Sade. Indeed, as we advance in our

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2 This aspect of evil in man will be treated more fully in Chapter 11. See Ethic, Third Part, Prop. iv, Scholium. Spinoza also affirms that men are naturally good, insofar as they are reasonable; but that they are not essentially reasonable. (Fourth Part, Prop. xxxvii, Schol. 1; Prop. iv, Corollary, etc.)

3 *Le droit de la nature et des gens*, 1, 161–166.

4 Letter to Voltaire, in Voltaire: *Oeuvres*, xxxix, 370 (1737). Frederick admits there are some "happy mortals" who love virtue for its own sake; but the sincerity of the admission is open to question.

5 *Histoire critique de la philosophie* (1737), 1, 272–275.
study, we shall continue to encounter situations in the thought of the apologists, such as we have already had occasion to comment on, that are either unexpected coincidences with the thought of their opponents, or lead unintentionally to their conclusions.

A few professional apologists stand alongside of Deslandes. Duhamel, in his *Lettres flamandes* (1753), argues logically. Since it is admitted by Voltaire, Pope and others that man must be both good and evil (evil resulting necessarily from the laws of motion); and since it is admitted also that self-love and passions must be checked, it is consequently admitted that man is radically evil. If we have a single evil passion, with which we are born, original sin is proven. The abbé Gauchat cries out against those who deny the innate tendencies “to seek one’s own good at the expense of the whole species and of the whole universe.” This is both Gauchat’s reaffirmation of original sin, and part of his refutation of Morelly’s *Code de la nature*. Richard’s *Défense de la religion* (1775) is a page by page refutation of d’Holbach’s *Système social* and *Politique naturelle*. It is important to note that it is in opposition to that detested atheist that Richard asserts man to be “naturally inclined to evil . . . radically vicious and corrupt” (although his free will enables him to resist his own corruption). Finally, these views, and similar ones, are summarized in the verses of the religious poet, Louis Racine.

Pour guérir la nature infirme et languissante,
Ainsi que la Raison la Loi fut impuissante.?

Far more numerous are the *philosophes* or *incrédules* who proclaim evil to be radical in man. Two writers stand at the fount of this eighteenth century “philosophic” view, a Protestant Frenchman, Bayle, and a Protestant Englishman, Mandeville.

In his earlier writings, Bayle establishes the existence in man of a moral reason, through which he knows the right, as a perception free of the taint of self-interest. “Reason dictated to the ancient sages that we should do the good for the love of the good itself, and that virtue should stand as its own reward, and it was

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6 P. 19. Richard was perhaps inclined to Jansenism. In another work, *La Nature en contraste avec la religion et la raison* (1773), he attacks Robinet’s theory of equilibrium, and insists that evil prevails in human nature. Its origin is not a metaphysical necessity, but sin.

7 *La Grâce* (1720), Chant I. Cf. the man-beast controversy, in Chap. 3.
only for a wicked man to abstain from evil out of fear of punishment." 8 But in the same work, *Pensées sur la comète*, Bayle's great thesis is that reason is not the spring of man's actions. He acts rather from his passions, which are evil. Consequently, as Bayle puts it elsewhere, "this proposition, man is incomparably more inclined to evil than to good . . . is as certain as any principle of metaphysics." 9 In spite of all ethical and religious teachings, "ambition, avarice, envy, the desire for vengeance, immodesty, the entire flora of vices flourishes abundantly in all centuries and in all countries." 10 Human nature, despite reason, is morally corrupt, and the disorder of human life stems from this essential corruption. "We are good and enlightened only insofar as we have been able to cure the natural sickness of the soul, and its consequences.11

Bayle's later writings reveal only a strengthened pessimism. In the article "Manichéens," he gives us a sweeping statement:

Man is wicked and unhappy; everyone knows this by what goes on inside himself and by the commerce he is obliged to have with his neighbor . . . [We see] everywhere the monuments of man's unhappiness and wickedness: everywhere, prisons and hospitals; everywhere scaffolds and beggars. . . . History is, properly speaking, only an anthology of the crimes and misfortunes of the human race.12

Bayle's pessimism, which follows the Christian tradition, but deprived of the counterpart of grace, was quickly taken up by sceptical writers. An early philosophe, Baudot de Juilly, writes that we come into life with certain seeds of virtue; but scarcely are we born when we plunge into corruption, and the seeds are stifled. "It seems that we suckle error with our milk, and when from our nurse's breast we pass into the arms of our teachers, our

8 *Oeuvres diverses*, iii, 174.
9 *Nouvelles Lettres critiques, Oeuvres diverses*, ii, 248.
11 *Oeuvres diverses*, iii, 220.
12 "Remarque D." Cassirer has written well of Bayle's despair. "Bayle overcame the theological idea of an original corruption of the reason; but the other belief in the "radical evil" in empirical human nature he kept. . . . Thus the doubt about the reality of reason in Bayle is everywhere only the result and the necessary expression of despair about its empirical-historical realization." (Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit, i, 517.) On the other hand Bayle rehabilitates the independence of critical reason and the faculty of feeling. (Monod, *op. cit.*, p. 327–8.)
mind is already so imbued with false judgments that it is impossible to implant good doctrine in it.”

But it was an Englishman, Bernard de Mandeville, who was to give Bayle’s doctrine its fullest development—both his theory of man, and his further deductions (which we shall discuss elsewhere) concerning the utility of vice. Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees* (1714–1729) was, in turn, widely influential in France, especially after its translation in 1740. It was written in reaction to the optimism of Shaftesbury, whose works also had deep influence on French thought, above all in the first half of the century. The *Fable of the Bees* provoked a furor among moralists, and a goodly part of their writings for the remainder of the century, especially in England, was but an effort to refute Mandeville. His system, Adam Smith was to say, taught vice “to appear with more effrontery, and to avow the corruption of its motives with a profiligate audaciousness which had never been heard of before.” Mandeville’s thesis consists, then, of two parts. First, men are held to be inherently vicious. We help others only to relieve our own unpleasant feelings of compassion, and all altruistic impulses may be reduced to selfishness. Second, vices are both necessary and productive of good. The “good” implied by Mandeville is not moral good, but the utilitarian good of practical social welfare.

Millions endeavouring to supply
Each other’s Lust and Vanity . . .
Thus every Part was full of Vice,
Yet the whole Mass a Paradise. (1, 18, 24.)

Despite this “good,” the fable relates, all the hypocrites pray for honesty. Jove finally grants their wish, and at once the arts and crafts decline, greatness is lost.

Fraud, Luxury and Pride must live,
While we the Benefits receive. (1, 36–37.)

We must likewise separate the impact of Mandeville’s paradox into two branches. Its main part, the paradox of the utility of vice, became important principally in the controversy over luxury. It led also to the necessity of finding a way to utilize men’s vices, to produce socially desirable, or “virtuous” behavior. We shall later observe how some French writers attempted to found ethical

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13 *Dialogues* (1701), I, 257–259.
values on non-moral motives; Mandeville, however, makes no attempt to go beyond practical utility. But it is the first premise, that of radical evil in man, which influenced moral thinking directly, although it is true that his citation of the benefits of vice could not but predispose some skeptical minds to receiving his dictum with less horror. The editor of the classic edition of The Fable of the Bees\textsuperscript{15} points out Mandeville's strategem in accepting the so-called "rigoristic" definition of virtue. Had he rejected this and merely espoused utilitarianism, that is, virtue as the socially useful, the rigorists could have defended their code. His acceptance of virtue as non-egoism made his display of the benefits of "vice" incontrovertible. There remained only two lines of reaction. One could denounce his description of human nature as false—a tactic adopted by some controversialists. Or else one could modify the rigoristic definition of virtue, admitting emotion and desire, even approaching a utilitarian position. There is some evidence of the second course in William Law and in Warburton's Divine Legation, and it becomes central to Hume's ethical thought. But it was primarily in France that we shall observe this second development.

In France, we find that the adherents of radical evil were mostly members of the atheistic group, although not all were atheists, and not all atheists adhered to this viewpoint. There is a logical association between their extreme ethical views, which deny virtue in a purely moral sense, and their evaluation of man's nature and capacities. To a certain extent, the French writers continue the pessimistic current of the late Renaissance, which had been prolonged by Hobbes. But the national turn of mind gives them a stamp of their own. French opinions tend to follow the seventeenth century tradition of "moral" analysis and find expression in psychological observations, often couched in epigrammatic style.

An early anonymous work that had extensive circulation in ms. form was the Jordanus Brunus redivivus.\textsuperscript{16} Its main theme (de-

\textsuperscript{15}Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits, ed. F. B. Kaye, 1, cxxvi–cxxviii. (Page references are to the original pagination, reproduced in the margin.)

\textsuperscript{16}See Ira O. Wade: The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France from 1700 to 1750, p. 234. The work was printed in a compilation, Pièces philosophiques, which bears no place or date. The Jordanus Brunus, however, and the preceding piece, have a separate title page with the date 1771.
signed to prove God's non-existence) is man's evil nature. The passage is perhaps not whole-hearted, since it makes some exceptions for savages. “There is no savage, no barbarian, who is not indignant at the sight of a man who, without any motive, attempts to kill a fellow-man. Even brutes show compassion for the pains their little ones show them.” 17 Man has no innate idea of good and evil; he knows only pleasure and pain. A more moderate writer, Le Guay de Prémontval, was also more sweeping in his condemnation. “Men are usually so wicked,” he avers, “and so deceitful, that there would always be a hundred degrees of probability in favor of the guilt of an accused person, were there not just as much probability that his accuser is a liar.” 18

La Mettrie was the most radical and consistent materialist in the middle years of the century. He attempts to discard illusions, treat man as he is, and draw the necessary consequences. The fact, according to La Mettrie, is that our natural disposition to evil is such that “it is easier for the good to become wicked, than for the latter to improve.” We should not condemn man for this “human inclination,” but rather excuse him. After all, we cannot help being what we are. Nor does it really matter; people can be happy in vice, since it is a natural tendency. They can even be happy in being cruel, and tearing their fellow-men like wild beasts. Can we do nothing about this? La Mettrie offers scant hope. Education can make a few people good—but very few. Man seems to follow the impetus of his blood and his passions, rather than the ideas he has received in childhood, which are the basis of natural law and remorse.” 19 La Mettrie merely states these notions as necessary facts; in his mind they are not subject to approval or disapproval. Provided we have pleasure and happiness, nought else matters. The other materialistic philosophes either do not accept his unqualified estimate of man, or else refuse to accept the consequences (at least, in their published writings), and search for a way to the ethical life.

With Diderot, on the other hand, we must always remember that we are dealing with a homo duplex. In his case, as in Voltaire’s, it is not precisely the same as with those who saw man as

17 P. 112–113.
18 Le Diogène d’Alembert (1755), p. 5.
19 Anti-Sénèque, ou Discours sur le bonheur, Oeuvres philosophiques, 11, 118–177.
Man's Detractors

a composite of good and evil. It is rather an alternation, intellectual or emotional, on the part of these writers, between moments of pessimism and of optimism. Diderot's pessimistic moods lead him to statements such as this: "He [man] absolutely insists on being wicked half by his nature and half by his social status." 20 He complains that we know how to hate, but not to love; he paints a frightening picture of how one individual, granted immortality, would treat his fellows.21 His correspondence reveals that he is emotionally upset each time he hears of some instance of infamy. "Nothing shows so well how detestable human nature is as the facility with which people consent to the most wicked acts when suspicion is divided and nobody is personally responsible for the evil that is done." In such cases moral ideals go out of the window, and self-interest rules all.22 In the article "Féroce," Diderot notes that man is the most ferocious animal, and the only cruel one. And he has Rameau say, "All that lives, without excepting man, seeks its welfare at the expense of whoever it may be." Diderot replies, in the dialogue, that this is true of the savage or "natural man," who would "twist his father's neck and sleep with his mother"—were it not for the development of his reason by education.23 Diderot, in the Neveu de Rameau, and before him, Duclos and Rousseau (in the first Discours), were the only ones to point out the sharp cleavage that may obtain between a man's intellectual brilliance and his moral character.24

Voltaire is similarly torn. He will without exception reject the doctrine that man is innately evil. This is part of his quarrel with Pascal. To yield this point would be to accede to a cardinal dogma of Christianity, and that would be most abhorrent to him. He consistently maintains the reality of God-given, universal moral inclinations, and of an innate feeling of sympathy or benevolence. In his periods of philosophic calm, representing his deepest beliefs, he considers man a malleable creature, possessing capacities

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21 Lettres à Sophie Volland, 1, 56, 82.
22 Ibid., 11, 84.
23 Neveu de Rameau, p. 95.
24 Duclos, Considérations sur les moeurs de ce siècle, (1751), p. 298 ff. Duclos even indicates that imagination and boldness in a brilliant man may be in opposition to moral "mediocrity." A like distinction is also implied in Voltaire's Micromégas. The idea recurs later in Laclos' Liaisons dangereuses.
for both great good and great evil. Although, characteristically, he attacks Rousseau's doctrine that society has depraved human nature, his own estimate is close to his enemy's. "Man is not born evil; he becomes it, as we become ill." We lose our goodness in contact with others because of the conflict of interests, because of customs, ways of living and the artificialities of society. Men, says Jacques in Candide, have corrupted nature.

But time and again, Voltaire rejects his own moderation. Time and again, as he contemplates society or history, he is tempted to renounce the faith of the humanist. His letters and his tales, from Memnon to Candide, abound in pessimistic judgments on man's irreparably evil disposition. As he grows older, and especially after his period of emotional and intellectual crisis (1750–1756), the sphere of pessimism grows, while optimism shrinks. Shaftesbury's moral optimism, which had early influenced him, becomes linked in his mind with the metaphysical optimism he had abjured. When he thinks of human history, he now exclaims, he feels like changing his mind about men not being diabolic; they have an idea of right and wrong, but have ever flattered and worshiped evil. Nor can man be improved. The struggle is hopeless, and foolish. Human nature cannot be changed, and the scene of the world will always be the scene of human folly, cruelty and injustice. Self-interest is to blame, and human stupidity, which prevents us from seeing where our real good lies. "And interest, that vile king of the earth," runs a verse in La Pucelle (c.1730); similarly another verse in the still earlier poem, La Henriade: "And interest, finally, father of all crimes." Like the cynics and materialists, Voltaire declares that even voluntary sacrifice, suffering and maceration arise from no other motive. In another passage, he pictures the physical ugliness and grotesqueness of the human male and female, that animal who dared make God in his image. In another he writes, "To know the character of a man

25 Voltaire's Notebooks, 1, 402; Histoire de Jenni (1775).
26 Oeuvres, xix, 378 ff.
27 Oeuvres, xix, 381–383; xx, 85–86; xxvii, 332; Notebooks, 1, 382.
29 "Intérêt," Dictionnaire philosophique, xix, 490. See the explanatory note, developing this theory, xxiii, 531. Elsewhere (e.g. Les Questions de Zapata), Voltaire recognizes that self-love has been given to us for our preservation. The two views are, of course, entirely consonant.
is to know to what point he is capable of evil. Every heir wishes
the death of his testateur; but not every heir will poison him." 31
But he adds, "nobody is always evil, or always good." 31

In the last analysis, there is probably no more crucial test than
Voltaire's stand in the fundamental polemic on the values of
truth versus deceit, falsehood and prejudice. "This is a touch­
stone for faith in man. Although his works abound with abstract
defenses of truth, although he himself attacked prejudices, he
none the less declared time and again that the cause of truth was
hopeless. The deficiencies of human nature and the needs of so­
ciety both make deceit, prejudice and superstition inevitable, and
properly controlled, useful factors in governing men." 32 Yes, con­
cedes Voltaire, shortly before his death, "the world improves a
little; yes, the thinking world, but the masses (le monde brut)
will long be a composite of bears and of monkeys, and the canaille
will always be a hundred to one." 33 As with the problems dis­
cussed in the first chapter, we see in Voltaire a man divided be­
tween opposing intellectual commitments. He veers from a doc­
trinal opposition to pessimism about human nature, through a
middle span of realistic balance, to the other extreme of bitter
disappointment and defeat. He would love man and exalt him—
did man only this allow!

Returning now to the philosophes who were committed to a
radical materialism, we find that Helvétius, like La Mettrie, de­
clares man to be evil. (We shall later see that he is not always
consistent.) Man is a carnivore, vicious, cruel and bloodthirsty.
"Self-preservation depends on the destruction of others . . . Ha­
bilituated to murder, he must be deaf to the cry of pity." To the
ears of the Inquisitor, cries of pain are sweet music. The closer
we get to the state of nature the easier it is to murder.34 Helvétius'
picture of mankind is essentially similar to La Mettrie's, only it
goes even further. The essential difference lies in the purpose of

31 Notebooks, 1, 402. In certain of Voltaire's plays, however, we find characters who
reject the interest motive in favor of virtue and compassion (Oeuvres, III, 470, IV,
126-127). See vi, 67, iv, 210, vi, 427 for variations of opinion in other plays.
32 L. G. Crocker, "Voltaire's Struggle for Humanism," p. 162. For a fuller discus­
sion, see also my article, "The Problem of Truth and Falsehood in the Age of
33 Oeuvres, xxx, 549 (1777).
34 De l'homme (1776), p. 275 ff. Later in the work he defends Hobbes, and under­
scores the natural cruelty of children. Because men are social, that does not mean
they are good: wolves are social, too. (P. 224-225 n., 228.)
the two materialists. Whereas La Mettrie blithely accepts his sketch and finds it not incompatible with happiness (which alone matters), Helvétius' aim is to develop a utilitarian ethics. To do this, he wishes to demonstrate the all-powerful effect of education. And so his theme is, "goodness and humaneness cannot be the work of nature, but solely that of education." Evil is the preliminary to good; the knowledge of it, the way to its conquest or limitation. The materialistic view does not see man's evil as a corruption of freedom, but rather, in accordance with the theory of determinism, as a natural necessity, one with which social forces must reckon, and on which they can also count, as on any physical datum.

Once more we find in the marquis de Sade the ruthlessly logical exploitation of radical views which had given their very proponents pause. A man of widest philosophical culture, Sade was thoroughly familiar with the writings of his century and of earlier times. He seems to unite the statements of Deslandes, La Mettrie and Helvétius: men will always oppress and exploit others; pleasure is most exquisite when it derives from cruelty; murder (preferably by torture) is the greatest source of pleasurable excitement. This is a law of nature, and man is incapable of extirpating it.

The weak is then right when, trying to recover his usurped possessions, he purposely attacks the strong and obliges him to make restitution; the only wrong he can have is to depart from the character of weakness that nature imprinted in him: she created him to be poor and a slave, he doesn't want to submit to it, that is his wrong; and the strong, lacking this wrong, since he preserves his character and acts only according to it, is equally right when he tries to despoil the weak and obtain pleasure at his expense. Let both now look for a moment into their hearts; the weak, in deciding to attack the strong, whatever his rights may be, will experience a slight struggle; and this resistance to satisfying himself comes from his trespassing against the laws of nature by assuming a character which is not his; the strong, on the contrary, in despoiling the weak, that is to say in enjoying all the rights he has received from nature, in giving them the greatest possible extension, finds pleasure in proportion to this extension. The more atrociously he harms the weak, the more voluptuously he is thrilled; injustice is his delectation, he enjoys the tears that his oppression snatches from the unfortunate
wretch; the more he grieves him, the more he oppresses him, the happier he is. . . . Besides, this necessary gratification which is born from the comparison that the happy man makes between the wretch and himself, this truly delicious gratification never establishes itself better for the fortunate man than when the misery he produces is complete. The more he crushes that wretch, the more he intensifies the comparison and consequently the more he nourishes his voluptuousness. He has then two very real pleasures in the wrongs he inflicts upon the weak: both the increase of his physical resources, and the moral enjoyment of the comparisons which he makes all the more voluptuous in proportion as his injuries weaken the unfortunate wretch. Let him pillage then, let him burn, let him ravage, let him not leave the wretch more than the breath to prolong a life whose existence is necessary for the oppressor to establish his laws of comparison; whatever he does will be in nature, whatever he invents will be only the active use of the forces which he has received from her, and the more he exercises his forces, the more he will experience pleasure, the better he will use his faculties, and the better, consequently, he will have served nature.  

In fact, all a man needs is power, to make him more wicked than a tiger. This is nothing but the straining to godhood in him. To be like God is to be completely free, to act without limit. In man, action without limit can only be what is known as crime. Everything that emanates from the womb of nature, “that is to say, from that of evil,” is evil. “There exists no good being.” The “good” man is only weak, and weakness itself is evil. Consequently, the more vicious men are, the more they are in harmony with nature, and the more virtuous.

The first movements of nature are never anything but crimes; those which impel us to virtues are only secondary and never anything but the fruit of education, of weakness or of fear.

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In a note, Sade adds:

The first movements of nature are never anything but crimes; those which impel us to virtues are only secondary and never anything but the fruit of education, of weakness or of fear.

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36 Histoire de Juliette, 1, 160–163. See also vi, 231, and Les Infortunes de la vertu, p. 154–155. It is to be noted that Sade, contrary to his own doctrines, is obliged to use words that have moral implications.

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“‘Yes,’ says the powerful and corrupt Saint-Fond, “we are gods; is it not enough for us, like them, to form desires only to have them satisfied immediately. Ah! who doubts that among men there is a class superior enough [to the weakest species] for them to be what the poets used to call divinities?” (n, 47). The analogy with Nietzsche, and with the Nazis, will be obvious. Compare also a modern recreation of this doctrine, in Albert Camus’ Caligula. We shall refer later to Helvétius’ theory of the power drive.

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An individual who would come out of the hands of nature to be a king, who would consequently have received no education and would become, in his new position, the strongest of men and immune to all fear, that man, I say, would bathe himself daily in the blood of his subjects and yet would be the man of nature.  

It is of more than passing interest that this striking last thought coincides with what Diderot had said about the behavior of a man who possessed the immunity of immortality. The coincidence is particularly significant because Sade was not merely echoing Diderot's idea, since he could not have read it. It indicates clearly that the climate of moral speculation about man, abetted by the materialistic view of the universe, was logically bound eventually to produce this nihilism.

Drawing the ultimate conclusions from Condillac's psychology, Sade reduces the motive and goal of action to physical sensation —no other pleasure is admitted. Deliberately, he submerges man among the animals, and completes the integration of man into nature. Sade's characters carry out his philosophy with most gruesome and repulsive efficacy, and with infallible good fortune. As we read his works, we shudder at the potentialities of hatred and destructiveness which lie dormant in the depth of every one of us.

Once more, Sabatier de Castres turns out to be an interesting figure in the history of this discussion. In his earlier period, when he was somewhat attracted to the "philosophic" positions, he had defended self-love, in a rather conventional fashion. "It is permissible to love oneself as much as one wishes, when it is done right." We should desire, without limit, "the sovereign felicity";

38 Ibid., v, 238 n.
39 Ibid., i, 165, 227.
40 Perhaps it should also be said, once and for all in our discussions of Sade, that many would excoriate and damn him (as indeed many have done) for attributing to all men pathological states that are not general. But others, including modern psychiatrists, would argue that, quite to the contrary, he has succeeded in his project of unmasking man; all that he says about us is true, even if we repress our instincts and urges in response to pressures. In this study, however, we are far less concerned with the merits or errors of Sade's psychology than with his place and significance in the history of Western culture and ethical thought. For the same reason, the assertion that Sade was a psychotic is not really of concern to us. If he was, we can only say that his mental pathology led to a philosophical statement of historic importance.
excess is only in the object of our desires, not in the desiring.\textsuperscript{41} Later, as we have noted, Sabatier was to develop out of his hatred for the French Revolution a reactionary conservatism that was less akin to Christian conservatism than to a pagan proto-fascism. In 1794, he is in exile in Vienna. There he writes that man cannot be qualified either as good or as evil, nature being morally indifferent. Egoism is the only characteristic he is born with. If a babe had teeth, writes Sabatier tersely, he would bite off and eat the nipple he sucks. All other passions are merely modifications of this self-love. Life is "a search for pleasure and utility." Yet, continues Sabatier, a man seems really to be more evil than good, as the necessity and ineffectiveness of laws prove. The Biblical story of the first man and woman, and of their first-born, confirms this conclusion in his mind. Furthermore, as social relations grow more complex, man becomes worse. Here Sabatier, writing during the same years as Sade, adumbrates ideas that have an interesting similarity. One person's happiness, he says, is obtained only at the cost of another's unhappiness. "Civilization leads men to hating each other, to harming each other reciprocally." Because of wealth, for instance, children wish for the death of their parents.\textsuperscript{42}

This radical anti-moralism is developed still further in Sabatier's later \textit{Lettres critiques}.\textsuperscript{43} Men have needs and passions, he there states, which they cannot satisfy except by tormenting and devouring each other. They are not to be blamed for this:

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Dictionnaire des passions} (1769), 1, 68–69.

\textsuperscript{42} While I have reserved discussion of Rousseau for two of the ensuing chapters, it should be noted here that his criticism of man in society exercised a powerful influence in support of this moral nihilism. Although Rousseau was speaking only of man in society, his abstraction of man in the state of nature was not a deterrent to the conclusions of a Sade or a Sabatier.

Primitivism, however, was also a persistent force in the eighteenth century. Consequently, we are not entirely surprised to find Sabatier, at one point, at least, affirming that Rousseau was right. Savage man has fewer needs, he desires only the things he knows, and these, his only real needs, can be satisfied without hurting others. "He knows neither the goods nor the ills of opinion [reputation]." He has the natural \textit{amour de soi-même}, but not \textit{amour-propre}, and the former is not egocentric, but may place its good in the happiness of others. It produces the good and natural feelings of humanity, tenderness, virtue. Needless to say, these remarks are not consistent with the descriptions of man given above and below. \textit{(Pensees et observations morales et politiques} (1794), p. 18–25.)

\textsuperscript{43} 1802, p. 86–92.
species and individuals, all are the children of necessity, that is to say, of those eternal laws which, because we are ignorant of their causes, are called Chance or Fatality by some, Providence or God by others, and Nature by most; in a word, beings destined to life are tigers or lambs, doves or vultures, monkeys or men, as they are placed by Fatality, Nature or Providence, in the chain of causes and effects, whose principle is beyond human penetration. . . . The nature of man is such, then, like that of all other animals, that he will love self above all, satisfy his needs at the expense of other animals, even of his species, as do certain savages who feed on human flesh.

There is no good or evil, Sabatier concludes, except pleasure and pain.44

We must remark on the fact that in proclaiming man and the universe to be evil, the moral nihilist was, in a sense, stepping outside the circumference of his proper universe of discourse. Where there are no moral values, there can be no evil. But this was obviously only a way of speaking, a way of referring and comparing their ideas to the generally held system of concepts, or a translation into those concepts. In other words, they considered man from the viewpoint of what others called evil, but which they could not properly call evil. And it should be emphasized, too, that extreme views, like those of Sade, were not typical. Indeed they would have been indignantly rejected by most of those who were their spiritual fathers. The value and importance of these extreme theories, however, is not diminished thereby, inasmuch as they are not unrelated to the premises of the others. They illustrate certain potentialities in those premises, which earlier authors (except, perhaps, La Mettrie) sought to fend off, and of which Christian apologists had warned. These potentialities are of special interest to our own age, in which they have been amplified in the theoretical world, and carried into concrete realization in the political world.

The case of Sabatier de Castres is a remarkable one, and a significant one. On the surface an anti-philosophe and a defender of the established order, religious and political, he ends by expressing the most radical conclusions of the atheistic materialists, and by condemning the philosophes for being too moralistic! He

44 Rousseau, Sabatier now declares, was wrong. Men are not naturally good. All is necessary, and nature knows no moral distinctions.
is an outstanding example of the penetration of the new attitudes, and of their extreme implications. The beliefs that are central to Christianity (that man is an exception, a favorite creature of God, etc.) are discarded. By accepting the philosophes' view of man as a slightly differentiated, insignificant item in nature, Sabatier wrecks the whole inherited structure. But he fights with bitterness against their humanitarian, liberal conclusions in the realms of politics and human relations. It is a truth not sufficiently recognized, perhaps, that the philosophes' view of man and the world could, by a slight turn of logic, lead to anarchism, to the cruelest totalitarianism, or to humanitarian democracy.