Reflections on Human Nature

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In an earlier lecture I observed that there ran through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a long discussion over the question whether "pride," admittedly a universal and exceedingly potent passion in man, has chiefly benign or chiefly harmful consequences in individual and social life. At the one extreme was the opinion that it is the principal, or even the only, effective psychic source of all that is most needful and most desirable in human behavior whatever its intrinsic nature; at the other extreme was the opinion that it is the principal psychic source of most of the evils and miseries in man's existence. Between the extremes, there are to be found, of course, various intermediate views, in which some of the effects of this motive were regarded as good and some as bad. There were two distinct questions involved in the discussion: first, what are the modes of conduct, or the social phenomena, which are explicable, and explicable only, as consequences of the operation of this motive and would not exist without it; and second, what modes of conduct, or what features of the life of civilized society, are desirable and what undesirable. There could be, and were, differing opinions on both questions; or there might be agreement on the first and disagreement on the second. Two writers might attribute the same effects to "pride," but one of them might regard some or all of these
effects as good, the other might consider them pernicious. The discussion was further complicated by the fact that—as has already been pointed out—it really had to do with the appraisal of more than one “passion” or type of motive, though the same name was often applied to these—approbativeness, self-esteem, and emulation, the craving for “distinction” or superiority. This last, it would appear, was usually regarded as a special form or derivative either of approbativeness or of the desire for self-esteem, or of both; the tendency to confuse them is not surprising, since, though they are analytically distinguishable, they tend in practice to shade off or pass over into one another. Self-esteem tends to lean heavily upon the assurance of the approval of others, and conversely, that assurance begets self-esteem; and thus desires both for self-esteem and for approbation tend to assume the comparative or emulative form.

Our review of this discussion began with the favorable appraisal of “pride,” in terms of its consequences. This, we saw, rested mainly on two premises, one relating to emulation, the other (and more frequently emphasized) to approbativeness. First, “pride,” in the sense of the desire of individuals to gain esteem or distinction by surpassing the achievements of others, is the psychological cause of the progress of the species. Second, “pride,” in the sense of the desire to be approved or admired by others, though it is undeniably a nonrational and a self-regarding desire, nevertheless, by its very nature, leads the individual to act as other individuals, or the community in general, desire him to act—in other words, to subordinate his private desires and interests to the public interest. It is, in fact, the prin-
cipal, or the only dependable, motive for the behavior which is generally described as moral. If it is not a virtue, its overt effects are, in the main, the same as those of virtue; and it is far more potent.

The specific counts in the indictment of "pride," in terms of its concrete effects, were numerous and formidable. Emulative pride—and pride always, it was assumed, tends to be emulative—was declared, by one or another of those who inveighed against it, to be solely or chiefly responsible for the following evils with which human life is afflicted:

1. A multitude of desires for objects which are not needful for man's happiness, which, indeed, he would be far happier and better without.
2. Science and philosophy.
3. Unnatural excess of morality.
4. Inequality of various kinds, especially economic inequalities.
5. The demand for equality.
6. Most of the rivalries, jealousies, and conflicts between individuals and between classes within a society.
8. The pursuit of insubstantial, purely imaginary values.
9. Insincerities and affectations which vitiate the inner integrity and the social intercourse of men.
10. What may be called hedonic parasitism, i.e., the obliteration of the very personality of the individual.

There is not time to examine the arguments advanced on each of these counts; I shall have to confine myself to two or three of them. The first of these charges was connected on the one hand with the theory concerning the motivation
of the acquisition of wealth with which I dealt in Lecture VI
—the theory which Veblen was to revive and elaborate in a
later age, and on the other hand with both the primitivistic
and the Christian traditions. Man in this world has certain
“real” or primary needs; “nature” has implanted in his
constitution desires which demand satisfaction. But these
are few and easily satisfied. A thousand moralists, ancient
and modern, had declared that the secret of happiness lies in
not wanting things, in restricting one’s desires to the ir-
reducible minimum, since the multiplication of desires is
simply the multiplication of dissatisfactions. The only fairly
sure way to be happy is to keep down the number of things
you cannot be happy without, as most of the ancient sages
had agreed. But men, or the vast majority of men, never
limit their desires to their needs; there is, indeed, no deter-
minate sum of goods which mankind, in the mass, ever
regards as sufficient. It is a species—the only species—of
animal which, however much it may have, always wants
more and therefore forever adds contrivance to contrivance,
possession to possession, luxury to luxury. And for this inter-
minable cumulativeness of human desires, there can, it was
argued, be only one explanation: pride. Beyond what is
requisite to satisfy the natural desire for comfort and ease,
things are desired, not for the enjoyment obtainable through
their use, but for the invidious distinction attaching to their
possession, as Mandeville showed. Young again sums up
the point, in lines not among his best:

A decent competence we fully taste;
It strikes our sense, and gives a constant feast:
More, we perceive by dint of thought alone;  
The rich must labour to possess their own,  
To feel their great abundance; and request  
Their humble friends to help them to be blest,  
To see their treasures, hear their glory told,  
And aid the wretched impotence of gold.

To Burke, apparently to Mandeville, to Voltaire in one of  
his moods, and to many others, this effect of pride seemed  
a good thing; it meant progress not only in wealth but in  
the refinements of life, in inventions which increase man’s  
power over nature, in the sciences and the arts. But to those  
who believed the simple life the best, who saw in this so-  
called progress only an increase in the laboriousness and  
complexity of existence and in the dependence of man’s in-  
ner satisfactions upon outward things, the effect necessarily  
appeared wholly evil; and “pride” stood condemned as the  
source of it all.

This first reason for inveighing against pride was closely  
related to the second. As men are led by that passion to  
multiply material goods beyond the limits of necessity and  
real utility, so are they led by it to seek to increase knowl-  
edge beyond those limits. Is man either happier or morally  
better for knowing so much? If men of science and phil-  
osophers were not actuated by vanity, by the desire for  
esteem and distinction, if they sought only their own happi-  
ness and peace of mind and that of other men, would they  
conceivably engage in their arduous and tormenting labors,  
and all to gain a little sum of useless information about mat-  
ters which it does not particularly behoove man to know?  
And how small and how dubious a sum! added the phil-
osophical skeptic, at this point in the argument; how narrow the limits of the knowledge attainable by our weak faculties, and how shaky and uncertain the little that we fancy we have gained—as is shown by the perpetual disagreements among scholars and philosophers themselves. Some slight additions to man's physical comfort and convenience might perhaps be credited to past investigators of purely practical matters—though in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before the more sensational achievements of modern technology and medicine which were to come, these contributions of science to the improvement of man's estate could hardly have seemed very impressive. And, it was argued, even such contributions were for the most part merely offsets to evils resulting from the increase in luxury and in the complexity of life which science had made possible. It was asked, with no doubt about the answer, were not savages healthier than civilized men, with all their doctors? As for what were called purely speculative inquiries, theoretical science as well as philosophy, their only results were conflicts of opinion, confusions of thought, and the diversion of men's minds from the rational pursuit of happiness.

This anti-intellectualist, antiscientific strain was no oddity of Rousseau's; it too was the continuation of an old tradition—or rather, of several old traditions. It had been conspicuous in the primitivism of classical antiquity, especially is Stoicism; Seneca was one of the principal sources for these arguments in the modern writers, though the connection between science and pride had been less developed by him.¹ And Christian religious motives conspired with classical in-

fluences, with philosophic skepticism, and with simple utilitarian considerations, to lead to the same conclusion: the vanity of philosophizing and of most scientific pursuits, and the consequent perniciousness of the pride that generates them. I need hardly recall the passage in *Paradise Lost* (Book VIII) in which Milton puts into the mouth of no less an authority than an archangel the disparagement and ridicule of the science of astronomy, on the ground that it serves neither to improve man's condition in this world nor to fit him better for the next. Abbadie continues the strain in the 1690's, with the special emphasis upon the rôle of pride in the matter which is pertinent to our theme:

I ask you, of what profit is the greater part of those things in which we instruct a man who is made for Eternity? What do human sciences teach us?—words, etymologies, dates, facts which do not concern us or which serve only to show that we know them; vain or ridiculous or dangerous questions, speculations without end, an infinity of fictions and falsehoods—and almost nothing that is useful to us, and that can give nourishment to our soul. The pursuit of all these things by learned men can be explained only on the supposition that *la vanité soit venue au secours de la science*. For it is an error to imagine that our minds love truth as such (*en tant que vérité*). There are no truths greater or more important than those that everybody knows; yet there are none about which we are more indifferent. Why is this so? It is because truth does not seem to us desirable (*aymable*) for itself, but only in so far as *elle peut nous distinguer.*

Without the religious note, the same derivation of specu-

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2 “The Art of Knowing One-Self,” p. 469.
lative inquires from pride may be found in Voltaire. Though himself a philosophe of a sort, he thought emulative self-esteem the principal cause of the lucubrations of philosophers, or at any rate of the multiplicity of their systems, and the term "philosophers," it is to be remembered, then included scientific theorists:

An ingenious and bold hypothesis, which has at first sight some glimmer of probability, solicits human pride to believe it; the mind finds ground for self-applause in the possession of principles of so subtle a kind, and makes use of all its ingenuity to defend them.3

Rousseau’s passionate voicing of this anti-intellectualist note in the second Discours de Dijon is too familiar to need citation; but it is pertinent to our present topic to recall that if he there represents all the evils of civilized life—luxury, physical deterioration, the loss of man’s original freedom and equality, the insincerities of polite society, the moral corruption of all classes—as consequences of the progress of the arts and sciences, he finds the ultimate psychic source of all of these in turn in pride. Each science and art had, it is true, its beginning in a different, though equally depraved, motive: “astronomy was born of superstition; eloquence, of ambition, hatred, flattery, mendacity; geometry, of avarice; physical science, of vain curiosity;” but “toutes, et la morale même, de l’orgueil humain.” (The inclusion of “morals” here, rather unhappily for Rousseau’s argument, among the progeny of pride, seems an inopportune reminiscence of Mandeville.) All the ills from which we

3 Traité de Metaphysique, ch. III.
suffer are, then, "the punishment of the efforts orgueilleux, the efforts, due to pride, which we have made to transcend the happy ignorance in which the Eternal Wisdom had placed us."

The essay it is to be remembered, did win for Rousseau the prize in the competition in which it was entered; the Academicians of Dijon cannot, therefore, have considered his theses too strange and too contrary to all respectable precedent to deserve consideration. But the Discourse certainly shocked many of his contemporaries; for by the 1750's—and, indeed, a good deal earlier—the disparagement of science, and of the intellectual ambitions which give rise to it, ran counter to the dominant temper of the age. Rousseau, nevertheless, replying to his critics in the preface to his comedy Narcisse (1753), does not retreat from his so-called paradox, but heightens it and brings new arguments to its support. Explaining the meaning of his First Discourse, Rousseau declares that the "moral decline of all peoples in proportion as the taste for study and for letters is diffused among them" is not a mere coincidence, but the consequence of a liaison nécessaire. "For this taste can arise among a people only from two evil forces, which it in turn sustains and augments: viz., indolence, and the desire to distinguish oneself." The science and art begotten of the latter desire produce "evils infinitely more dangerous than all the goods to which it gives rise are useful: it ends by rendering those who are inspired by this desire all too little scrupulous about the means of attaining success." For the itch for literary or philosophical distinction, Rousseau observes, with some justice—and with greater pertinency to
a later age than to his own—inevitably tends to make it seem more important to be original than to be right.

The first philosophers gained a great reputation by teaching men the practice of their duties and the principles of virtue. But soon, these principles having grown common, it became necessary to distinguish oneself by striking out contrary routes. Such is the origin of the absurd systems of Leucippus, of Diogenes, of Pyrrho, of Protagoras, of Lucretius, Hobbes and Mandeville, and a thousand others among us have sought to distinguish themselves by similar means; and their dangerous doctrine has borne fruit to such an extent that one is terrified to see what point our Age of Reasoners has pushed in its maxims the contempt for the duties of man and of the citizen. . . . A taste for philosophy weakens all the bonds of esteem and mutual good will which attach men to society; this, perhaps, is the most dangerous of the evils which it engenders. . . . By force of observing men and reflecting upon humanity, the philosopher learns to appreciate them at their true value; and it is difficult to have a great deal of affection for what one despises. Presently he focusses upon himself all the interests which men of virtue share with their fellows; his contempt for others turns to the profit of his own pride; his amour-propre grows in the same proportion as his indifference for the rest of the world.

What, incidentally, is piquant here is Rousseau's betrayal of the contradictory leanings of his own thought. Philosophy, he assumes, leads to a low opinion of mankind, and this, he implies, is a just opinion. His own appraisal of human nature as it actually is—that is, since l'amour-propre has become dominant in it—is an eminently unfavorable
one; and history, which is the spectacle of human nature in action, is to him (in one of his moods) a long, sad story of follies, miseries, and crimes. Though he sometimes dwells on the natural goodness of man, he could not consistently believe in it. For if pride is an evil motive, and is also the most pervasive and powerful motive, it follows that the nature of man is morally evil; what is clearest about man is his méchanceté naturelle. Philosophy, itself the offspring of this now universal passion, leads to this “true appreciation” of man, to the view which Rousseau, in his more consistent moments, accepted. But this view is mischievous to society; therefore it ought not to be held; therefore philosophers, who, he thinks, are likely to hold it, ought to be abolished!

These two tendencies of thought, which provided arguments for the indictment of pride, remained, it need hardly be said, almost wholly without effect, outside of the printed page. While they were still widely manifest in literature and philosophy, scarcely anyone’s practice was influenced by them. A Boswell might occasionally yearn to go and live with the savages, a Chateaubriand might actually do so for a time, with disillusioning results. But natural science, whatever its motivation, went on its way untroubled by the attacks upon it; technology continued to bring forth many devices making the life of, at least, the prosperous classes more luxurious, more complicated, and more cumbered with apparatus; and the philosophers continued to multiply systems disagreeing with one another, if possible, more extensively than before. If “pride” was the chief cause of all these things, then pride proved itself too stubborn and
ubiquitous an element in human nature to be extirpated, or even sensibly weakened, by the preachments of either the Christian or the primitivist moralists.

We come now to the last, which is also the subtletest and, on its face, the gravest, count in the indictment. It is one of those directed, not against what might be held to be the potentially corrigible aberrations or excesses of pride—the exaggerations of self-esteem, or the emulative form either of that passion or of approbativeness—but against approbativeness as such, that is, against that one among the three desires classed under the name of "pride" which to many seemed the most amiable and most benign—the desire for the approval, esteem, regard, or admiration of one's fellows, the "love of fame." By this, as by a deep-seated canker, it was argued long before Rousseau, the very inner life of the individual may be, and tends to be, eaten out. In so far as it has taken possession of a man, he no longer has, so to say, a mind or heart of his own; he subsists upon other men's opinions, upon their praise or blame, or rather, upon his often deceptive fancy about their opinions of him. He ceases to exist in and for himself; the substance of his being has been converted into a more or less illusory image in his own mind of an image of him in other minds; and the standards by which he appraises even this image are not his own standards but theirs.

The thought had long since been concisely expressed by Lucretius, in his description of the type of men who aspire to be _clari et potentes_ (famous and powerful) and therefore push into "the narrow pathway of ambition"; these, he says,
Sapiunt ex ore alieno, petuntque
Res ex auditis potius quam sensibus ipsis:

"they get the taste of things from other men's mouths, and pursuit objects because of what they have heard others say, rather than because of what their own senses tell them." 4

Some of the later expressions of the thought may be echoes or elaborations of this Lucretian theme. In the seventeenth century Pascal's is, so far as I know, the most penetrating statement of this conception of approbativeness as a kind of living-at-second-hand.

We are not content with the life we have in ourselves and with our own existence; we wish to live an imaginary life in the thought of others, and we consequently force ourselves to appear. We labor incessantly to embellish and preserve our imaginary being, and neglect the real one. And if we have tranquillity of mind or generosity or loyalty, we try to have it known, in order to attach these virtues to our other, imaginary being; and we would be willing to detach them from ourselves in order to attach them to the other. We should cheerfully be cowards in order to get the reputation of being brave. 5

La Placette's indictment of pride on this ground is comparable to Pascal's, but was perhaps borrowed from it.

Everyone conceives of what others think of him as a second existence which he has in the public mind, the

4 De rerum natura, VI, 1134-5. The English translators of Lucretius (Munro, Rouse, Leonard) have missed the point of these lines. See Primitivism... in Antiquity, 1935, p. 233, n. 16.
5 Pensées, ed. Giraud, No. 147.
good and evil of which belong to him no less than the
good and evil of the real and veritable being which he
has in himself. Everyone is greatly occupied with adding
all possible perfections to this second being; and this is
the immediate object of all that we do to please [others]
and to make ourselves esteemed. It is this that makes us
so much love praise and manifestations of respect, as so
many proofs of the perfection and the happiness of this
imaginary being outside of us.⁶

Boileau, limited, perhaps, by the exigencies of rhymed
verse, expresses the thought less subtly than these prose
writers, but goes even farther than they by declaring ap­
probativeness to be the source of all our woes:

C'est là de tous nos maux le fatal fondement:
Des jugemens d'autrui nous tremblons follement:
Et chacun l'un de l'autre adorant les caprices,
Nous cherchons hors de nous nos vertus et nos vices.
Misérables jouets de notre vanité,
Faisons au moins l'aveu de notre infirmité.⁷

But Boileau in the end admits that one is not cured of this
malady by becoming conscious of it and of its absurdity
and its unhappy consequences; he concludes the Epistle to
Arnauld from which the lines are taken:

Et, même sur ces vers que je te viens d'écrire,
Je tremble en ce moment de ce que l'on va dire.

Rousseau, finally, in the Second Discourse, probably bor­
rowing from these precursors, makes this idea concerning

⁶ Traité de l'orgueil, p. 52.
⁷ Épître III, 17-20.
approbativeness the climax of his comparison between the savage and the civilized man.\(^8\) He imagines a Carib Indian visiting Europe (*this*, incidentally, was a borrowing from Montaigne) and observing

the painful and envied labors of a minister of state. How many cruel deaths would not this indolent savage prefer to the horror of such a life, which often is not even rendered more endurable by the pleasure of doing good! But, in order to understand the object of all this toil, it is necessary that these words, *power* and *reputation*, should have a meaning to the savage's mind; that he should learn that there exists a kind of men who *comptent pour quelque chose les regards du reste de l'univers*, who look upon the thoughts of the rest of the world about them as a thing of some consequence—men who are able to be happy and content with themselves upon the testimony of others rather than their own. Such is, in fact, the true cause of all these differences [between the savage and civilized man]: the savage lives in himself, *l'homme sociable*, the socialized man, always outside of himself. He is capable of living only in the opinion of others, and it is, so to say, solely from their judgment that he draws the feeling of his own existence.

Rousseau, it need hardly be said, derived his conceptions of the savage character largely from the primitivistic tradition and partly from his own imagination, though he had read the *Histoire des voyages*, and, recognizing that little careful and competent factual study of the life of primitive

\(^8\) It is of some interest to note that Boileau and Rousseau held precisely the same view concerning the source of all our evils.
peoples had been made, he was one of the earliest prophets of the science of ethnology. But if he had himself lived among savages, he would have found them enduring, when tribal custom required, tortures considerably more strange and pénibles than those of a European minister of state; and he would perhaps have discovered much reason for suspecting that in this they are actuated by the same motives—a fear of tribal reprobation and a fureur de se distinguer. If he had made this discovery, he would have been unable to regard even the savages as exempt from this strange tendency to transfer hors de soi, to the picture of oneself in one's fellows' thoughts, the values which one seeks to realize. It would then have appeared to him a universal human characteristic.

And in fact, in the Preface to Narcisse, with a glaring but apparently unconscious inconsistency, he ascribes to the savages precisely the opposite characteristic to that attributed to them in the Second Discourse: they do consider "the thoughts of the rest of the world about them a thing of some consequence"; their moral superiority, indeed, consists in an extreme degree of approbative.

9 In Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité, note 7. See my Essays in the History of Ideas, "The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality." Rousseau, as this essay points out, was not a chronological primitivist; he did not regard the "state of nature," in the sense of the original condition of mankind, as the ideal state; nor was he a thorough-going cultural primitivist. But he did regard the life of savages in the patriarchal and pastoral stage of the development of culture as better than any of the later stages—though itself by no means ideal. In this sense, and in this sense only, he may be called a "primitivist."
For, he assures us, among savages, "public esteem is the only good to which each of them aspires, and which they all of them merit."10 In short, le bon sauvage lives "outside of himself" more than civilized man does. Nevertheless in Émile Rousseau continues to represent this propensity as the final and consummatory stage of the mental aberrations of mankind:

From the womb of so many diverse passions I perceive opinion [i.e., the opinions of others about oneself] mounting upon an unshakable throne, and stupid mortals, enslaved to its empire, basing their own existence exclusively upon the judgments of others.11

This count in the indictment of approbativeness, it will be observed, precisely reversed the usual argument for the beneficial effect of the operation of this element in human nature. According to that argument, as we have seen, the craving for esteem, or the "love of fame," was held to be a fortunate propensity of man just because it substitutes, within the individual, for his naturally partial judgments of himself and his self-seeking desires, the relatively disinterested and impartial judgments and the desires of other individuals or of the community to which he belongs. It was an ingenious device of the Creator by which men—in so far as this motive was effective in them—were, so to say, emancipated from the egocentric predicament in their valuations of ends and their appraisals of themselves. But just this substitution of others' valuations and appraisals for one's own is now declared to be an intrinsically evil thing, and

approbativeness, therefore, to be the most deplorable of all man's follies.

But some of those, e.g., Pascal, who decried or deplored approbativeness were not chiefly considering whether it is indispensable for the good order of society or for the evocation of human energies which would otherwise be exercised feebly or not at all. Certain of them manifestly felt a sort of repugnance at the very idea of this attitude; it seemed to them a thing intrinsically bad, whatever its results on men's overt behavior. It is worth while, I think, to try to discern why they felt so, to observe or conjecture the underlying grounds or causes of this disapprobation of approbativeness as such.

A. In part it seems to have been a species of quasi-aesthetic dislike of the spectacle which this human trait presented—the spectacle of the individual living and acting, not from inner sources of his own, not as a self-contained entity, but as a kind of parasite upon the thought of him entertained by other mortals, and upon their valuations. This could not, indeed, without absurdity, be supposed to be universally and completely true of men, though some who wrote in this vein seemed to imply that it could. A universal and complete mutual parasitism would be a contradiction in terms; it would be like a universe consisting wholly of mirrors, with nothing to be reflected in them. But the standards and valuations by which men judge one another could not all be second-hand. Somebody must have originated them in the first place. But the suggestion that such a situation was possible may be regarded as a rhetorical exaggeration, not to be taken seriously. For those who were
revolted by approbatives as such, the point was that that propensity made the individual dependent upon other men both for his judgments and his sources of self-satisfaction; and this was felt to be a humiliating and reprehensible condition for a human being to live in.

B. Yet this very feeling, evidently, arose in part from another kind of pride. It was a revulsion of self-esteem against approbatives. To conceive of ourselves as thus dependent upon others, and of our actions as subservient to their praise or blame, is not flattering to our amour-propre. There is an element of humility in approbatives; it is an implicit recognition of the limitation of our own competence as judges of values and of ourselves. The proudest souls have therefore always wished to think of themselves as immune from it—though it is improbable that they ever have been wholly immune.

C. Another ground for the adverse judgment of this attitude is evident in Boileau's lines already cited. The opinions of others before which we tremble, he implies, have no rational validity. They are but the "caprices" of other mortals no less foolish than ourselves; why, then, should we be concerned about them? Approbatives—at least an approbatives that is unselective, which it often is—is a ridiculous thing because it is self-contradictory. Abbadie observed that we commonly wish for the approbation or admiration even of those whom we despise. But if another man is an object of contempt,

why should we be solicitous for his esteem; or if his esteem is worthy of being the strongest passion of our
souls, how can we hold him in contempt? Is not our scorn of our neighbor more affected than genuine? We confusedly recognize his greatness, inasmuch as his esteem appears to us of so great value; but we make every effort to conceal our recognition of it from ourselves in order to honor ourselves the more.12

D. There was, however, a deeper ground than any of these for the feeling of an inherent moral evil in approbativesness. It is evident in Pascal. He points to the undeniable fact that the imaginary, the public self, to which we desire favorable adjectives to attach in the minds of other men, need not correspond to the real self. The desire of approbation is not intrinsically and primarily a desire to be, but to appear. To derive one's satisfaction simply from the pleasing image of the public self is to be content with the appearance, the phantasm, of virtue or excellence, without concern for the qualities of the actual self without which there is no virtue or excellence. To love your neighbor, that is, to desire his happiness, is one thing; to love to think of yourself as loving your neighbor is another thing; and to love to be thought of as one who loves his neighbor is yet another thing. Moral worth—so the reasoning runs—belongs only to the first of these desires; the others, even though they may help to cause you actually to make sacrifices for your neighbor's happiness, are morally bad motives, because they are, at best, substitutes for or diversions from the real thing, and at worst falsifications. And men's universal consciousness of this, numerous other writers remarked, is shown by the

12 L'art de se connnoistre so-y-méme, p. 464.
fact that approbativeness always seeks to hide itself. Young writes, when declaiming on this side of the case,

To shew the strength and infamy of pride,
   By all 'tis follow'd, and by all denied.
What numbers are there, which at once pursue
Praise, and the glory to contemn it, too!
Vincenna knows self-praise betrays to shame,
And therefore lays a stratagem for fame;
Makes his approach in modesty's disguise
To win applause, and takes it by surprise.
'To err,' says he, 'in small things is my fate.'
You know your answer, 'He's exact in great.'
'My style,' says he 'is rude and full of faults.'
'But oh! what sense! what energy of thoughts.'

Men said La Bruyère, wish in their hearts "to be esteemed, and they carefully conceal this desire, because they wish to pass for virtuous; and to wish to obtain from virtue any advantage other than virtue itself—that is to say, to obtain esteem and praise—would not be to be virtuous, but to love esteem and praise—in other words, to be vain. Men are very vain, and they hate nothing so much as to be regarded as vain."\(^{14}\)

Now, that there is much truth in these last reflections upon approbativeness is not open to question. It is a desire which can be satisfied with the appearance of merit rather than the reality; and it is the trait in human nature which makes possible many of the subjective states and attitudes in men

\(^{13}\) *The Love of Fame*; in Young, *Works*, 1767, I, p. 105.

\(^{14}\) *Les Charactères: De l'homme* (1696), 1, 24.
which all men most dislike—which, in short, are generally disapproved. It makes them possible, but not necessary; and even upon this last count, therefore, the indictment cannot be fully sustained; no general condemnation of this element in our affective make-up follows from the facts about it which Pascal and the rest have pointed out. It would in any case, of course, be a futile and silly thing to pronounce a general condemnation upon a human characteristic which is universal and inexpugnable.

One therefore cannot but wonder what practical result the denouncers of pride hoped to accomplish. One might lament the existence in man of the passions going under that name, but if—as many who decried them held—they constituted the psychic differentiae of the species, one could hardly expect to eliminate them. Numerous writers, nevertheless, had the air of seeking to eliminate them by dilating upon both their intrinsic absurdities and their unhappy consequences. There were others who seem to have sometimes believed it possible and needful for men to free themselves from these passions and therefore exhorted them to do so; yet at other times they became mindful both of the enormous difficulty, if not the absolute impossibility, of extirpating pride and shame from the human mind, and also of their value to society—and therefore in the end gave them a place among the permissible springs of action. Spinoza, I think, must classed among these waverers—these perhaps judicious waverers. "Glory and shame," he writes in the *Short Treatise*,¹⁵ "are not only of no advantage, . . . but they are perni-

¹⁵ "Glory" is defined by Spinoza as "pleasure associated with the idea of some action of our own which we imagine to be
cious and must be rejected.” They are to be rejected not only for practical but for metaphysical reasons. For they “by their definitions” presuppose praise and blame—or praiseworthiness and blameworthiness; and praise and blame (Spinoza assumes) presuppose the freedom of the will, which is for him an illusion. We should never praise or blame one another’s actions if we realized that they are not “caused” by ourselves as separate individuals, but by the necessary implications of the eternally necessary attributes of God or Substance. Spinoza sometimes, it is true, applies the logic of his determinism only to shame, and not to pride; a man may legitimately be pleased with himself, and accept credit for his virtue, if his conduct is in fact good, but it is irrational of him to feel remorse if his conduct is evil, for “he may rest assured that it was necessary and unavoidable.”16 But this distinction seems inconsistent with Spinoza’s doctrine as a whole which implies that a man’s good and bad deeds are equally inevitable; if blame for the bad is irrational, so is praise for the good.

Meanwhile, lest I leave an erroneous conception of the position of Pascal on the question with which this lecture has been concerned, I must add that he does not in the end conclude that man’s approbativeness is merely a thing to be deplored or condemned. For such a mind as his it was hardly praised by others,” “shame” (pudor) as “grief associated with the idea of some action of our own which we imagine to be blamed or ill spoken of (oituperari) by others.”

16 Cf. David A. Bidney’s illuminating exposition of these points, The Ethics and Psychology of Spinoza, pp. 208-9, 321-2, 328.
possible to adopt either simple alternative—that this passion of glory is essentially an evil or that it is essentially a good; he must show it to be both. For his constant aim, as he himself tells us, when writing of human nature, was both to lower and to raise man in his own eyes; and he finds means of doing both at once in this one attribute of approbative-ness. "The recherche de la gloire is the basest thing in man (la plus grande bassesse); but it is just this which is also the greatest mark of his excellence." For, Pascal thinks, this craving is a sort of involuntary and irrepressible recognition both of the authority of reason and of its presence in some degree in other men; and it is also the unconscious disclosure of a desire to conform to it oneself.

[Men] rate so high the reason of man, that, whatever advantages they may have on the earth, they are not content unless they also have a favorable position in man's reason. C'est la plus belle place du monde. . . . Even those who despise men and place them on the same level as the brutes, still wish to be admired and beloved by them; and they contradict themselves by virtue of their own feeling (sentiment, i.e., the desire for esteem)—their nature, which is stronger than anything else, convincing them more powerfully of the greatness of man than their reason convinces them of their baseness.  

Nothing could be more Pascalesque than the ingenious and seemingly contradictory involution of the thought here: approbatively is an ignoble and irrational desire; it is, nevertheless, an implicit appeal to reason, on the part of those who

17 Pensées, ed. Giraud, No. 404; italics mine.
feel it; as such, it is the crowning evidence of a fundamental rationality in themselves and in all men; and it therefore confutes the reason itself which declares it to be ignoble and irrational! But what, behind the paradoxicality of his way of putting things, Pascal was evidently asserting was that to seek approbation implies the recognition of the existence of some publicly valid, impersonal standard of the approvable —of which the judgment of other men, or of the generality of men, is (even though often mistakenly) taken as the expression.

The assumption of the intrinsic evil of pride as a motive of human behavior presented especial difficulties for those who theorized about the education of the young. William Law, in this respect, was a precursor of Rousseau. In a chapter of his *Serious Call* Law is discussing the method of moral education. If anything was to be done about "pride," if the evils said to result from it were to be stopped at the source, it was obviously necessary to prevent this emotion and desire from arising in the mind during the formative period of childhood, or if it could not be prevented altogether, to repress it as much as possible. But the actual practice in education was, as Mandeville had pointed out, not to repress but to intensify this passion; it was found to be the most effective motive to which to appeal in training the child to conform to the standards of behavior desired and approved by the social group; and, according to Mandeville, that result could be attained in no other way. Law agrees with Mandeville as to the actual practice of parents and teachers of their time; but he sees in just this feature of "our modern education" the prime cause of the disorders of society.
The first temper that we try to awake in children is pride; ... we stir them up to action from principles of strife and ambition, from glory, envy, and a desire of distinction, that they may excel others, and shine in the eyes of the world. ... And when we have taught them to scorn to be outdone by any, to hear no rival, to thirst after every instance of applause, to be content with nothing but the highest distinctions; then we begin to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty things from youths of such glorious spirit.\textsuperscript{18}

That this is the nature of our \textit{best education} is too plain to need any proof. ... And after all this, we complain of the effects of pride; we wonder to see grown men acted and governed by ambition, envy, scorn, and a desire of glory; not considering that they were all the time of their youth called upon to [base] all their action and industry upon the same principles. You teach a child to scorn to be outdone, to thirst for distinction and applause; and is it any wonder that he continues to act all his life in the same manner?\textsuperscript{19}

The consequences of this sort of education are evil because, Law (with dubious truth) argues, so-called “emulation” is, at best, “nothing else but a refinement upon envy, or rather the most plausible part of that ... passion. ... For envy is not an original temper, but the natural, necessary and unavoidable effect of emulation, or a desire of glory; and there is no other possible way of destroying emulation, or a desire of glory.” And envy is an emotion evil in itself, and produc-

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Serious Call} (1729) in \textit{Works}, 1892-3, IV, p. 182.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 183.
tive only of discord and antisocial behavior. The model father, then, who is introduced to sum up Law's educational ideas, exhorts his son:

Above all, mark this, never do anything through strife, or envy, or emulation or vainglory. Never do anything in order to excel other people, but in order to please God, and because it is his will that you should do everything in the best manner that you can. ... Hate and despise all human glory, for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the greatest snare, and the greatest betrayer, that you can possibly admit to your heart.

Nearly all of this might appropriately have found a place in the Second or Third Book of Rousseau's Émile, which dealt with preadolescent education. This species of passions—pride and vanity—Rousseau opined, "do not have their germ in the heart of the child, and cannot arise in it of themselves. It is we who introduce them into it, and it is only through our fault that they ever take root there." Émile's tutor, accordingly, avoids even suggesting the possibility of such a motive, so long as his pupil is a child. But it is otherwise, Rousseau finds, with the heart of the adolescent; "whatever we may do, these passions will arise in it in spite of us;" and it is for this reason that the problem of adolescent education is radically different from that of the education of children. When the youth first becomes interested in the other sex, he begins to desire also their admiration, and that of his fellows in general; he becomes intensely concerned about what others are thinking about him. This preoccupation naturally assumes the form of a comparison between
himself and his like and generates a desire to be recognized as a superior kind of fellow. And so “emulation, rivalries, and jealousy” are born in him. Such, in brief, is Rousseau’s account of the genesis of pride in the individual—and of all the evils which flow from it in society. But even though it originates spontaneously and inevitably at this stage of individual development, a prime object even in adolescent education must be to bring the youth to recognize and avoid its dangers.

There was a current—or a perennial—objection to the proposal to dispense with pride as a motive in education, namely (as Law puts it) that “ambition, and a desire of glory, are necessary to excite young people to industry; and that if we press upon them the duty of humility, we should deject their minds, and sink them into dulness and idleness.” Law’s reply to this, unfortunately, is indirect and evasive of the empirical question: can the maximal energy be excited, especially in the young, without appeal to the motivation which he wished to abolish? Pascal’s principles also required him to deplore no less earnestly than Law any appeal to pride in education, and he had, in fact, done so much more briefly. But he had had an opportunity to see the experiment of eliminating that appeal tried at the famous school at Port Royal; and he was constrained to admit that it had been an unsuccessful experiment. “Admiration,” he writes in one of the Pensées, spoils everything, beginning in childhood; [people say in the child’s hearing] ‘Oh, how well he speaks! Oh, how well he did that! What a good boy he is!’ etc.” Pascal immediately adds: “The children of Port Royal, to whom this spur of envy and glory is not applied,
fall into listlessness, *tombent dans la nonchalance.*"\(^{20}\) If this bit of empirical evidence was typical, it seemed to follow that it is a dangerous error to make no use in education of motives so deeply rooted in human nature as self-esteem, approbativeness, and emulation. It was, perhaps, a special case of the common error of the perfectionist, who, feeling deeply that men *ought* to act only from the loftiest and most impersonal motives, has done a good deal of mischief in this imperfect world by proceeding on the assumption that human beings can be dealt with as if they *were* universally capable of habitually acting from such motives.

\(^{20}\) *Pensées*, ed. Giraud, 151.