The Desire and Struggle for Recognition

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ABSTRACT

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In recent decades, the politics of recognition has become an important theme in political and social theorizing about justice and freedom. The desire for recognition, that is to say, the desire to have the approval, esteem, consideration or respect of those around us, whether as individuals or members of social groups, has in fact been described as a vital human need. The distribution of rights and obligations, wealth and resources, all turn on the theme of recognition; failures to recognize the humanity of others or their particular identities as worthy of respect or esteem often result in political and social outcomes that are deeply unjust. The central idea behind these debates is that an individual’s identity – her self-understanding of who she is – and her social and political standing in any organized community – the rights she has and the protections she possesses under the law – are all in part shaped by the recognition or misrecognition of others. As Charles Taylor describes it, a social and political world that reflects back to individuals a demeaning picture of themselves can lead to severe psychic damage and cause real harm; a political society that simply refuses to recognize the identities of certain groups of individuals as having any standing at all can result in radical denials of the basic rights individuals are entitled to as members of a political community. Indeed, many of the major cultural, ethnic, racial, gender and religious movements of the last decade are seen by scholars as organized around the principle of recognition – the struggle to have one’s identity be recognized by others as worthy of respect.
In trying to make sense of the politics of recognition, scholars have, for the most part, turned to Hegel’s account of the struggle for recognition for guidance. His most prominent remarks on this subject occur in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he discusses the struggle for recognition through what is famously known as the master-slave dialectic. While Hegel certainly offers an extremely sophisticated and important account of the subject, and although many have shifted the debate to other areas of Hegel’s corpus, the general neglect of philosophical treatments on this issue by other thinkers in the history of thought is regrettable.

In this dissertation, I examine some of the most important precursors to Hegel on this subject, arguing that they did indeed take the struggle for recognition seriously. Moreover, I hope to show that their reflections on the subject are themselves important and worthy of consideration, not only historically, but also for how we might think about the struggle for recognition today. This dissertation focuses on the social and political thought of Bernard Mandeville, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. It has two main aims. First and most principally, I aim to throw new light on each of their political philosophies by examining their ideas through the lens of the struggle for recognition. Each of them, I will argue, in varying ways set the desire for recognition at the centre of their thought. Second, I attempt to account for the continuities and discontinuities of between their views on the subject.
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Dedication

For Agnes and Beverly,

Natasha, Alyssa and Ruddin
Introduction

‘I am now alone on earth, no longer having any brother, neighbour, friend, or society other than myself. The most sociable and the most loving of humans has been proscribed from society by a unanimous agreement. In the refinements of their hatred, they have sought the torment which would be cruelest to my sensitive soul and have violently broken all the ties which attached me to them. I would have loved men in spite of themselves. Only by ceasing to be humane, have they been able to slip away from my affection. They are now strangers, unknowns, in short, non-entities to me – because this is what they wanted. But I, detached from them and from everything, what am I? This is what remains for me to seek’ (RSW I, 3/ OC I, 995). With those words Rousseau opens the last of his reflections, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker.*

One does not have to read very far in *The Reveries* to become conscious of how important recognition is to the whole energy of one’s being. In the creation of his exile Rousseau
found himself ‘cast into an incomprehensible chaos’, as if having a nightmare in a dreamless state. He was, in his words, passed for ‘a monster, a poisoner, an assassin’, ‘the horror of the human race’, charges of which he felt sure he was innocent, made guilty of only by the sheer number of the enchanted. He spent the years preceding his doubtful but self-described resignation to necessity, his fate of standing forever falsely accused, trying desperately to recover his station by virtue of his sincerity. But every effort in that direction further entangled him in a social temper which saw him only in the light of sin. Although no one can learn about the events of Rousseau’s life without becoming conscious of his complicity in his indictment, yet his insistence of innocence and integrity offers a not inconsiderable or uncertain truth. Turned away from humanity, Rousseau finally claimed tranquility ‘at the bottom of the abyss’ (RSW I, 3, 6/ OC I, 995-996, 999). But the abyss, stared at long enough, always stares back. Tranquility never stayed for too long in Rousseau’s heart before a returning despair took over his sentiments. If his birth was the first of his misfortunes, his expulsion from society would be his last (CI, 6/ OC I, 7).¹

Certainly, ‘despair with its wits about it is very different from despair that is stupid; despair that is an abandonment of illusion is very different from despair which generates tender new cynicisms’ (Trilling, 2008: 6). And it is not always easy to describe the character it takes in Rousseau. But the strict condition imposed upon his being by that distressing sentiment carried him to another extreme. He had to for the sake of survival look upon others as unknowns, or more profoundly, as non-entities. To live amidst utter contempt one had to

¹ See Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil 146.
² Rousseau’s describes his birth in this way because of his mother’s death shortly after: ‘I cost my mother her life, and my birth was the first of my misfortunes’
strip the others’ living intelligence, their emotional essence, away; they had to be reduced to matter in order that they no longer would. This is not the sort of transformation, once described with an earnest brilliance by Simone Weil, of how force animates life and is yet capable of taking from it all of its vitality and meaning. One thing she places before us in her essay on the *Iliad* is how force, indiscriminately applied, turns us, quite literally, into things, corpses. But force, indiscriminately threatened, turns us into something far worse, and perhaps not any less literally, a living thing (Weil, 1965 [1940]: 5-30). On her account recognition and force were, to be sure, intimately bound. But Rousseau tells of something different, not a tale of force and esteem brought together by the strains and imbalances of war, but of how recognition produces its own forces, imperceptible, immaterial, but not the less devastating. Yet if he could have only succeeded in the attempt, he would have gained something they never could by the cant of their contempt. For to hold him in contempt they had to treat him as a being, an entity to whom their reactive attitudes could be read as not unintelligible responses (Strawson, 2008, 1-28; Darwall 2006). But for him they would be nothing. Rousseau would of course fail in that project. Life without human attachments at the seat of its soul cannot be lived well or at all. Imposed solitude gives way rather rapidly to a hostile estrangement from one’s own humanity, one’s own life, and in the end, one’s self.

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3 It cannot be further stressed how this brief statement of Weil’s work does not at all do justice to its brilliance. Second, it might be worth contrasting Weil’s insights with those of Shklar’s, in her fine and wonderful study, of how ‘fear reduces us to mere reactive units of sensation’ (Shklar, 1984: 5).

4 Rousseau admits in the midst of extolling the virtues of solitude that ‘absolute solitude is a state that is sad and contrary to nature: affectionate feelings nourish the soul, communication of ideas enlivens the mind’ (*D II*: 118/ *OC* 1, 813).
Rousseau’s experience of anguish from social contempt is a particular expression and effect of what might be called, as it sometimes is today, a loss of recognition or its failure, or recognition withheld or withdrawn. Such failures or losses, such misrecognitions, admit a wide variety of cases and articulations, modulations and characters, effects and responses. Of this there can be no doubt. The single destiny of humanity lies in the fact of its diversity. But of its psychic disturbances there can be no question either. To find in the mirror of social reality only a disfigured depiction of one’s being – an ugly fragment, a failed artistry, endless falsifications of self-conceptions, images of worthlessness, portraits without colour, without resolute charm – is deeply unsettling. Where the depiction is significantly developed, where it is believed or internalized, the enthusiasms of the mind languish and the spirit slackens. It is to suffer the symptoms Freud once associated with neurosis; misrecognition in its most awful expressions ‘disables [one] for all the important tasks of life’.

There has been much discussion in recent years of the politics of recognition in these and other associated forms. The most influential treatment of this subject appears in an essay by Charles Taylor, which tells of the beautiful and unbearable sights of being and being other. It has certainly played an important role in placing recognition at the centre of our theoretical landscape, and it was written at a time when the politics of identity tightened its grip upon the moral imagination. But its importance continues into the present, and not only for the reason of the heightened pressures identity continues to exert upon political

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5 This is not to say that diversity is the cause of misrecognition. It is to say that the endless ways misrecognitions can occur have to do with human diversity.

life. There he speaks of how ‘our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves’. Misrecognition or even nonrecognition, he goes on to say, ‘can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being’. When we consider the ruinous effects misrecognition can have, we must come to acknowledge that recognition is not just a courtesy we extend or owe to others, nor is it the generous impulse of a large soul. It is, in point of fact, ‘a vital human need’ (Taylor, 1994: 25).

Oddly enough, Taylor tells us, our historical relatives would have been thoroughly baffled by our obsessions with identity and recognition, or rather the heavy associations and connections we draw between them. He surveys our history in search for the things that transpired to raise the revolutions of our present routines, and fixes upon two noteworthy transformations. One involves the ‘collapse of social hierarchies’, the leveling of structures of status and rank, of honour and distinction, into equal respect and dignity, granted to all by a fortunate birth rather than a birth into fortune, to human beings rather than lords or kings (Taylor, 1994: 27; compare Rosen 2012; Waldron 2012; Appiah 2010). The other lies in the emergence of a ‘new understanding of individual identity’ in the final years of the eighteenth century, ‘an individualized identity, one that is particular to me, and that I discover in myself’ (Taylor, 1994, 28). It is the child of sincerity, an ethical value itself of great importance in the modern period, the ‘avoidance of being false to any man through being true to one’s self’ (Trilling, 1972: 5). But in Taylor’s hands it advances out of
something else, the belief in an inner moral sense, that one had to look within rather than above or around to discern the truth of the moral imperative. This seeking within for the moral truth soon displaced its ‘moral accent’, and the notion of authenticity was born.

Two thinkers, Rousseau and Herder, hold for Taylor great significance in moving the change along, or at least in capturing its sentiments and flow. In Rousseau we find the doctrine that one ought to look within to find the true meaning of virtue, untouched by the vagaries and influences of arbitrary opinion. And in doing so we shall discover the self, perhaps our true selves, as well. In Herder we meet with the notion that ‘each of us has an original way of being human’, the great task of life is to find it, discover it, and live it without reservation (Taylor, 1994: 30).” It is by these gradual steps that the notion of an individualized identity caught the imagination and took the spirit. Whitman seizes the sentiment best when he says, ‘There is, in sanest hours, a consciousness, a thought that rises, independent, lifted out from all else, calm, like the stars, shining eternal. This is the thought of identity – yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for me. Miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth’s dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts’ (Whitman, 1882-83: 229-230).

Few would claim exemption to Whitman’s description. There is a problem, however, in speaking of the self in such terms. For our identities, Taylor observes, are not monological

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The notion of an original way of being can be found, in certain forms, in Rousseau’s thought as well: ‘In addition to the constitution common to the species, each individual brings with him at birth a particular temperament which determines his genius and character, and should be neither changed nor constrained, but formed and perfected’. (NH, 461/ OC 2, 563). In Herder, it extends to a people (volk) as well.
but dialogical constructions. We come to know who we are, come to be who we are, through the relations we establish and share with those around us, personally, socially, or politically. This is what the politics of recognition consists in, and, continuing his historical study, he tells us eventually, and perhaps expectedly, that it was Hegel who saw this in greater light than anyone else, who laid particular emphasis upon the intersubjectivity of subjectivity: ‘the topic of recognition is given its most influential early treatment in Hegel’ (Taylor, 1994: 36). What made Hegel an immense figure in this respect was his articulation of something further, the deep contradiction embedded within hierarchical relations of recognition:

The ordinary conception of honor as hierarchical is crucially flawed. It is flawed because it cannot answer the need that sends people after recognition in the first place. Those who fail to win out in the honor stakes remain unrecognized. But even those who do win are more subtly frustrated, because they win recognition from the losers, whose acknowledgment is, by hypothesis, not really valuable, since they are no longer free, self-supporting subjects on the same level with the winners. The struggle for recognition can find only one satisfactory solution, and that is a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals (Taylor, 1994: 50).

And it is on this Hegelian understanding of recognition that Taylor builds his vision of a multicultural and difference friendly liberal politics (Markell, 2003; Rorty, 1994).
The implication of Taylor’s vision of recognition is rather clear. It is open, however, to the objection of essentialism, something he would never of course endorse, since for people to be recognized in his sense is for them to ‘have the right to be acknowledged publicly as what they already are’ (Appiah, 1994: 149; Wolf, 1994: 75-77; Markell, 2003: 40-41). It imprisons the self he wants to free. But a positive image, an all too positive image, can itself feel like a form of entrapment, where one feels nothing like the image but has to live up to it. This is the familiar notion of appearing rather than being but with a difference. It is not that one takes one’s being from appearance, and in this sense loses one’s sense of self. But rather that one’s being is taken from one’s self in having to be as one is expected to appear.

Leaving this aside, there is the further question of whether the struggle for recognition can yield only one satisfactory solution, a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals. This very obviously takes its fire from the famous dialectic of the Bondsman and Lord in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which has received extensive treatment over recent years (Honneth, 2012: 3-19; Markell, 2003: 90-122; Neuhouser, 2009: 37-54; Williams, 1992: 169-180; Williams 1997; Wood, 1990: 86-88). It is certainly an esteemed attitude to take. But it should not lead us to overlook the possibility, or perhaps even the frequency, of how asymmetricity is often required in recognition satisfaction. ‘To say’, as Frederick Neuhouser once observed, ‘that satisfying recognition must go both ways is not to say that recognition must be precisely symmetrical’ (Neuhouser, 2008: 98). It is what the Hegelian dialectic sets out with, I fancy, that produces the incoherence of mastery. I shall not press the point here. Any attempt to do so would require a conscientious working through of

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8 Wolf in challenging Taylor on this front with respect to women falls into the same problem when she speaks of cultures.
Hegel’s text, which is not my subject, and which would take us too far from our present concerns. But the thought involves just this much: while it might be the case that proof of self-stands (Selbständigkeit) by way of establishing mastery over another cannot but fall into a deep muddle insofar as it depends on the recognition of a subjugated and non-self-standing being, recognition of eminence in certain ways and along various dimensions involves no such muddle or contradiction or incoherence, or at least not necessarily so.

Now, the lines connecting our theoretical understanding of recognition to Hegel run very deep. It has been suggested that the term recognition is that which ‘comes from Hegelian philosophy, specifically the phenomenology of consciousness’, or that ‘philosophical discussion of [recognition] first begins with Fichte and Hegel, where they are discussed under the rubric of Anerkennung’ (Fraser, 2003: 10; Clarke, 2009: 636). It has been further remarked upon by one of the leading figures in the field, Axel Honneth, that ‘in none of the classical writers, of course, with the major exception of Hegel, who in this respect was the solitary standard-setting thinker – was the principle of recognition as such made the cornerstone of ethics; for all the indirect importance it enjoyed in the specifics of [their] models, the concept was always outshone by other conceptual determinations, ones considered more fundamental’ (Honneth, 1997: 16). Honneth will build his own theory of recognition, determinedly, over the years, and in part, on the materials of Hegel’s philosophy, although he goes beyond Taylor’s reliance on the dialectical outcomes of the Lord and Bondsman relationship. His view, very roughly, is that a positive relation-to-self rests on proper forms of recognition in three areas, which may be summarily captured in the following statement:
Taken together, the three forms of recognition – love, rights, and esteem – constitute the social conditions under which human subjects can develop a positive attitude towards themselves. For it is only due to the cumulative acquisition of basic self-confidence, of self-respect, and of self-esteem – provided, one after another, by the experience of those three forms of recognition – that a person can come to see himself or herself, unconditionally, as both an autonomous an individuated being and to identity with his or her goals and desires. (Honneth, 1995: 169).

The trigger that starts the struggle for recognition in Honneth’s work has been taken by many to consist in the feeling of disrespect or the experience of psychic harms. He has been challenged on his views on many fronts, for example, that the psychic harms on which his theory rests are not straightforwardly the concerns of justice; that the account he gives of them commits the great faults of ‘psychological reductionism’ and the ‘essentialization of moral feelings’, that he ‘fails to account for the intermediary social, symbolic, and institutional structures that intervene between emotional reactions and political identities’; and that on his treatment it is ‘unclear how the psyche’, damaged as it is under the effects of an absence of recognition, ‘can rebound to generate the motivation necessary to prompt social conflict and transformation’ (Fraser, 2003: 7-88; Kalyvas, 1999: 102; Rogers, 2009: 184; cf. Honneth, 1999). There are many other criticisms and debates (extending beyond engagement with Honneth’s work solely) which I shall not discuss (McNay, 2008; Zurn, 2003; Margalit, 2001; Kompridis, 2007). But it is perhaps worth mentioning the views of his most longstanding critic and interlocutor, Nancy Fraser. On her view, very roughly, the
problem with Honneth’s account is that it subsumes the different and equally urgent issue of redistribution under the rubric of recognition, which is a problem not only because it submerges the visibility of redistributive justice, but also because it misidentifies the injustices of redistribution as matters of failed recognition (Fraser, 1995; 2000; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Her criticism, to put it in a different way, comes in the end to this: that Honneth’s theory of recognition can recognize nothing other than itself.

As I have suggested, the politics of recognition has been challenged on many fronts. I shall not discuss them all, but I do want to talk about one of the most influential critiques delivered by Patchen Markell. For him, the problem with the politics of recognition lies in its social or political ontology, that is to say, ‘they rest on distorted pictures of [the] basic features of the human world, mistaking the irreducible conditions of social and political life for pathologies that might someday be overcome’. As he goes on to tell us:

The ideal of mutual recognition, while appealing, is also impossible, even incoherent; and that in pursuing it we misunderstand certain crucial conditions of social and political life. Foremost among these conditions is the fact of human finitude, which I interpret not in terms of mortality, but rather in terms of the practical limits imposed upon us by the openness and unpredictability of the future – what Hannah Arendt called the “non-sovereign” character of human action. In this sense, the pursuit of recognition involves a “misrecognition” of a different and deeper kind: not the misrecognition of an identity, either one’s own or someone else’s, but the
misrecognition of one’s own fundamental situation or circumstances (Markell, 2003: 4-5).

Moreover, the politics of recognition fails to recognize, correctly, the underlying ‘structures of desire’ which animate it. Those structures are, Markell claims, ‘not in the first instance about others’, but rather, about ‘ways of patterning and arranging the world that allow some people and groups to enjoy a semblance of sovereign agency at others’ expense’. He is able to come to this view because he sees the ideal of recognition as something that remains ineluctably bound to the notion of sovereignty, not, however, a sovereignty of choice, but a sovereignty fastened to knowledge, ‘the prospect of arriving at a clear understanding of who you are and of the nature of the larger groups and communities to which you belong, and of securing the respectful recognition of these same facts by others’ (Markell, 2003: 5,12). Our preoccupation with such impossible endeavours follow from our failures to acknowledge, or perhaps even our unwillingness to accept, that ‘the existence of others – as yet unspecified, indeterminate others – makes unpredictability and lack of mastery into unavoidable conditions of human agency’ (Markell, 2003: 180). That we share the world with others is simply a fact that cannot be changed, and a shared world renders vulnerability a stalking figure, a haunting condition, of life itself. And to this picture he will add a further refinement, inspired by his reading of Arendt, that identity is only ever disclosed in action, that it is the ‘result of action and speech in public’ rather than an antecedent fact from which action follows, that it is thus not a making visible of ‘a pre-existing identity’ to others, that it is in consequence always open and vulnerable and not at all ‘up to us’, and that it is for all these reasons ‘only ever
available to be recognized in retrospect, by a storyteller or historian’ (Markell, 2003: 13). Markell seems to want to say, and has been read in this way, that the very notion of identity is incoherent and non-existent; it is a fabrication twice removed, a false image of a false god. The entrance to all facts, so it appears, is well and truly shut.

Three things are worth mentioning here. The first, which I shall raise only to set aside, is that there is a real question if Markell’s notion of vulnerability requires for its coherence its other, that it to say, some degree, however slight, however vague, of stability. Second, Arendt’s notion of action and identity is difficult, and the language she deploys is occasionally fraught with ambiguity (Krause, 2015). There are moments where she seems to suggest that it is not that we have no identity to speak of at any moment in time, but that it cannot be spoken of without falling into a categorial error: ‘The moment we want to say who somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying what he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a “character” in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us’. This is not at all to suggest that identity is not contingent for Arendt, nor is it to suggest that it is not vulnerable, or non-sovereign. It is only to suggest that contingency and vulnerability are not straightforwardly to be interpreted as non-existence. She speaks of our unsuccessful attempts to account for identity as frustrating, and goes on to say, ‘the impossibility, as it were, to solidify in words the living essence of the person as it shows itself in the flux of action and speech, has great bearing upon the whole realm of human affairs, where we exist primarily as acting and speaking beings’ (Arendt, 1958: 181); which again does not imply necessarily the complete absence of identity (for
what we are unable to do is solidify in words the living essence of the person), but the improprieties of any effort to describe an acknowledged unique essence (at any given moment, which is nevertheless open to change). And third, Sharon Krause has suggested that Markell’s and Arendt’s account of identity, insofar as they do in fact deny its existence, carry the point too far. While she accepts the notion of non-sovereign agency, she believes, following Bernard Williams, that we do act from a character, a set of dispositions, beliefs and attitudes, that are nevertheless open to revision under the conditions of sociality (Krause, 2015). I am inclined to agree, broadly speaking, with this view. But it may just as well be the case that the only thing one can say about one’s self is, “in deed I am”.

This, then, is very roughly the picture of the politics of recognition I want to emphasize. There are certainly omissions, for example, a familiar theme in the politics of recognition ties the struggle for recognition with the politics of difference and identity in a more substantive manner, yielding for movements that may be read in those ways the rather obvious designation: ‘the struggle for the recognition of difference’ (Fraser, 2000: 7). The politics of identity and difference, it is commonly thought, started at the edges of the modern world. But it came to life in the decades preceding the turn of the century, as social and political movements began organizing around gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture and language in their ‘distinctive demands for justice’ (Markell, 2003: 2; Fraser, 2000: 7-8; Fraser, 1995). Their unique petitions required a different language, and the combination of those elements eventually yielded a large research effort into those issues. From this, debates surrounding multiculturalism, feminism, nationalism, difference politics and their compatibilities and incompatibilities with liberalism, with each other, and within
themselves, arose and dominated political thought for a long time (Kymlicka, 1989; 1995; 2001; Tamir, 1993; Kukathas, 1995; 2003; Benhabib, 2002; Appiah 2005; Carens, 2000; Young, 1990; Okin, 1998; Gooding-Williams, 1998; Kelly, 2002; Parekh, 2000; Song 2007). Those issues, while certainly important, are not centrally related to my subject. I have focused on the broader theoretical themes as they stand in closer connection to my study.

I have begun with these reflections in order to speak about the subject of this dissertation without interruption. I want to begin by saying something about what this dissertation is principally about, before speaking about how it might relate to the issues discussed. Now, as I have suggested, the politics of recognition, insofar as it is discussed in connection with the history of thought, is often remarked upon as proceeding from, or grounded in, Hegelian philosophy. Some of those remarks are not, of course, false. But the suggestion that theoretical efforts to understand the human struggle for recognition really only surfaced in the thought of Hegel (and Fichte) cannot be regarded with unreserved satisfaction. This dissertation is a study of some of the most important precursors to Hegel on this subject. I hope to show that they did take the struggle for recognition seriously, that it stood at the centre, if not very close to the centre, of their political and social reflections, and that their remarks on this issue are interesting, important, and worth considering in their own right. This, then, represents the first and most principal aim of the study. In saying this, it should be made clear that while one of my aims is to show that thinkers prior to Hegel did take the issue of recognition seriously, it is not at all the central thesis of this dissertation to prove Honneth or Taylor or Fraser wrong. That would be a rather silly thing
to attempt, and it would hardly make for a thesis. The central thesis of this dissertation is not a negative enterprise, but rather a positive one: it is the social and political ideas of those thinkers which form the subject of my work. It is the philosophical understanding of their ideas that is important.

This dissertation, then, is a study of the desire, drive, or need for recognition in the social and political thought of Bernard Mandeville, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. By recognition I mean the esteem, admiration, approval, respect or love human beings seek from their fellows. Chiefly, it is a work in the history of political thought which looks to uncover and explain, severally, Mandeville’s, Rousseau’s, and Kant’s understanding of recognition, and the social and political but nevertheless theoretical implications which result from that understanding. In this way, the dissertation will occasionally depart from a direct discussion of recognition as I look to develop and explain the social and political reflections they offer, reflections which nonetheless issue from, or are related to, their views on recognition. In doing so, I hope to throw new light on their social and political thought.

A few things should be mentioned at this point. First, it is impossible to offer a basic summary of their ideas here, for each thinker accounts for and responds to the issue of recognition in similar yet different ways. But a clearer picture of what exactly is involved in this study can be found at the end of this introduction, where I outline the main concerns of each chapter. I have repeatedly called this a study, and that is, in a way, intentional. The dissertation is organized around a theme, recognition, across three thinkers – Mandeville, Rousseau, and Kant – but the specific details of their accounts, and the threads I shall
pursue in them, are not always similar. This is not to say that there are no continuities in their reflections. Rousseau was a careful reader of Mandeville, and Kant of Rousseau (and Kant was certainly familiar with Mandeville as well). And it is indeed a secondary aim of this dissertation to touch upon the theoretical relations between them. But it is impossible to highlight all the continuities and discontinuities in the chapters themselves. Since my principal aim is to explain what each thinker says about the subject, it would be far too intrusive to track all of the convergences and divergences between them. I will however remark upon some of the more important continuities and discontinuities between them over the course of the work. As for the rest, I hope that the reflections offered in each chapter will be clear enough for the reader to draw certain conclusions on his or her own. Lastly, although I have cast my project as a study of recognition in the precursors to Hegel, I am very obviously not searching for his understanding of recognition in their thought. Very real questions can be raised about any such endeavour, and it would hardly be clear what the purpose of such a study might be; perhaps to show that Hegel was unoriginal, or worse, an unoriginal plagiarist. But the endeavour would in any case fail on its own compromised methods. Some of Hegel’s reflections might be anticipated in their thought, but that is only to be expected, since philosophy is irresistibly a discipline with a history.

This said, the discussion that follows yields certain reflections that bear upon the themes of the politics of recognition discussed above. It is important, again, to emphasize that the nature of this project is, as it were, an effort in the history of political philosophy, and I make no attempt to apply the readings offered of Mandeville, Rousseau and Kant directly
to the issues surrounding contemporary debates on recognition. Nevertheless, I want to highlight how the upcoming discussion informs our understanding of the subject.

First, what emerges from this study is that the politics of recognition is, in a very significant way, about others, or more specifically, it is about our need to count in the eyes of others. While I am indeed very sympathetic to Markell’s thesis, and in fact some of the discussion to come will appear to coincide with his argument, the position he holds, that the structures of desire underwriting recognition are not about others at all, is, I think, false. Recognition is foundationally about the need to have standing in relation to others, and about having that standing recognized by them. Why we desire such standing is accounted for differently by our authors. Mandeville, very roughly, takes it, for the most part, as a need for confirmation – we desire the favourable opinion of another in order to confirm the favourable opinions we have of ourselves. Rousseau, by contrast, points out that as social beings we cannot help but desire to count for something in the eyes of those we live with; we desire esteem and love for its own sake, not merely to confirm the opinions we have of ourselves. Of course, as I hope to show, their remarks on this subject are far more complex than what has been mentioned here. But the basic point stands, we desire recognition not because we want to escape the ontological conditions of vulnerability, but because to count for something in the eyes of another is important, whether to reinforce one’s self-esteem, the liking one has for oneself, or for its own sake.

Second, the suggestion that equal reciprocal recognition is the only logical solution to the struggle for recognition is incorrect. Eminence is something that can be sought after
coherently, although it very often, and very quickly, goes wrong, and in some rather serious ways. But this does not mean that satisfaction cannot be obtained under asymmetrical conditions. Third, and perhaps in contrast, ‘the standard discussions of the value of recognition do not’, as Cillian McBride points out, address the problem of ‘distinction’. Yet ‘it is such a central feature of social recognition [that] it is very hard to see how it can be avoided’. ‘While contemporary discussions of the ethics of recognition are almost exclusively concerned with remedying perceived recognition deficits, what we learn from traditional discussions of pride, in particular, is that our desire for esteem has often been seen as an ethical problem’. In his view, ‘no discussion of social recognition is complete ... unless it confronts the darker side of recognition’ (McBride, 2013: 72). As it will be seen over the course of this study, Mandeville, Rousseau and Kant all emphasize this darker side of the drive for recognition. Yet, as they also show, most of our greatest achievements are the results of this drive. Moreover, what they, especially, perhaps, Mandeville and Rousseau, reveal is that the desire for esteem is intimately connected to notions of respect. There is a tendency, recently, to draw a sharp distinction between those items. And there is, of course, good reason for this. But it sometimes appears, in our discussions on these matters, as if they stand for two completely separate things, or more precisely, as if they exist in two separate and exclusive realms. But this cannot be right. Very often, the desire for esteem will cause trouble for respect. And very often, it is because we esteem ourselves and others in one way or another that the question of respect, or of how much it can accomplish, arises.
Let me turn now to the chapter outlines. In Chapter One, I examine Mandeville’s psychological picture of human beings, a psychological picture on which he builds his account of sociability and the emergence of political society, moral virtue, and almost everything else. The psychological picture turns, very basically, on the two innate passions of self-love and self-liking (very roughly, the desire for esteem and superiority). I argue that most of the literature on this subject has misinterpreted his account, leading to omissions and errors at a foundational level. I suggest that Mandeville’s picture is a lot more complex than it is often thought to be, and that this complexity has a bearing on his reflections on social relations. In this chapter, I offer a revised account of the two passions, the general features of each passion, and the relations between them. I also offer a further refinement of the passion of self-liking by linking it to Mandeville’s account of the instinct of sovereignty, a connection often ignored in interpretations of his work. I show how this connection has an important bearing on how we might come to understand the desire for esteem in Mandeville’s thought, how, for example, the instinct of sovereignty can lead to the act of dehumanizing others.

In Chapter Two, I begin with the following question: given his account of human nature, how are we to explain the formation of society, sociability and virtue? Part of his answer lies in the use of the conjectural method. In the first section, I explain the radical nature of his conjecture, which I call a genealogy, by drawing a contrast with Nietzsche. In the second section, I offer a reconstruction of Mandeville’s conjectural project, using his account of the origin of politeness to shed greater light on it. I try to explain, further, what he has in mind when he speaks of those practices as emerging spontaneously, without reflection. Following
this, I proceed to offer an account of how Mandeville thinks society and moral virtue might have come about, raising and addressing certain questions in the process. In section four, I offer a philosophical reconstruction of the duel, a scene described in the Second Dialogue, which in my view offers an attempt by Mandeville to prove that we act from self-liking and pride even if we often think that our actions are guided by considerations of right. The duel throws up, in the end, an interesting problem, one avoided by, as far as I am aware, all scholars on Mandeville: while he initially describes the psychological movement as a desire for the esteem of others, he, quite bewilderingly, turns his back on this argument, suggesting that it is the desire for one’s own esteem that explains such conduct. Rather than avoid this, I resolve it by relying on the concept of an ‘internalized other’, which Mandeville takes to be an othered self within the self.

In Chapter Three, I turn my attentions to Rousseau. I begin with a discussion of the distinction between 

amour de soi and amour-propre, focusing on the former, and I suggest that it extends beyond the desire for physical self-preservation. Next I discuss two accounts of what amour-propre entails, and I proceed to explain what it is, how it comes about, and why it often becomes inflamed almost as immediately as it arises. In my last section, I examine in greater detail some of the larger problems associated with inflamed amour-propre. While I do point to some of its potential for good, and while it must be made clear that Rousseau’s solution to the ills of the passion is not to be found in its suppression, I do not discuss in great detail the contours of his solution. My aim in this chapter is to show how the desire for esteem, how the need to count for something in the eyes of another, is basic to the human condition, but often generates most of the ills we see in the world.
In Chapter 4, I turn to Rousseau’s political solutions to the problems arising from the struggle for esteem at both the individual level and at the level of citizenship in a republic. But rather than work through the details of his educational and political plans, my aim in this chapter is to engage with one of the largest problems in Rousseauian scholarship. It is often said that Rousseau offers two ways to deal with the problems arising from *amour-propre*: one, a form of private education that directs its student away from society and from its prevailing customs; the other, a form of public education that leads each individual to lose herself in a collectivity. This is often said to mirror the distinctive forms of education offered in the *Emile* and the *Social Contract*, where the two models are understood as rival enterprises. In this chapter, I offer a revised interpretation of this account. Rather than submit to a two-model solution, I show how the two-model solution can in fact be understood as a two-step solution, where the two forms of education can be made compatible by taking private education as part of the preparatory work that will aid and contribute to public forms of instruction. That is to say, the two forms of education can be made compatible by reading them as proceeding in successive stages: private instruction comes first, to be followed by public education. In fact, I argue that many of the conditions that make public instruction possible are contingent on a successful private education, without which it may be impossible to found a true republic. This chapter will inevitably involve repeating some of the claims made in Chapter 3, which I have found necessary to do in order to move the argument along.
My final chapter looks at Kant’s social, anthropological and historical writings. I begin with the question of radical evil in his work on religion, not to resolve it, but only as a gateway to discuss the themes of unsociable sociability and the passions in his thought. Less attention has been paid to those aspects of his work, and my aim in this chapter will be to outline some of the central features of his diagnosis of our modern ills, ills that are to be “solved” by Kantian right and Kantian ethics. These ills, I show, are again the result of our living in society, of our desire to have standing in the eyes of others, which begins first from a desire to be seen as an equal, but descends very quickly, out of insecurity, into a desire for superior standing. I show further that our passions, which are for Kant always relative to others, stand as the primary ethical problem for him. I compare his ideas to those of Mandeville and Rousseau as a way of closing out the dissertation.
Chapter 1: Mandeville

Self-Love, Self-liking, and The Struggle for Recognition

When Mandeville tried to explain the phenomenon of suicide from the standpoint of his naturalist psychology, he ran into a number of difficulties. The most basic of them was that self-love seemed to pull in different directions in such cases. At one level, the reason for this is fairly obvious. Mandeville had reduced the animating principles of human life and conduct entirely to the innate passion of self-love. Included in this general view was the idea that it inclined individuals always to work for their preservation and happiness. This meant, however, that suicide could ultimately only be explained by self-love; and it meant, moreover, that the principle which inclined always towards self-preservation and happiness inclined towards the self’s destruction as well. This presented him with a problem.

One way of approaching the problem would be to appeal, once again, to self-love. To the extent that this would make any sense at all, it is enough to say that Mandeville did not
pursue it. He looked over his account of human nature and decided, or rather discovered, that the terrain covered by self-love actually consisted of two innate passions: self-love and self-liking. But with the introduction of this distinction, the terrain must of itself shift; the complex of psychological forces standing at the beginning of all action will no longer submit to an explanatory scheme constructed solely out of self-love. Here, it is not merely a matter of acknowledging the newly circumscribed domain of self-love and the existence of a new passion, where the acknowledgement itself permits us to go on saying the same things in different terms. The distinction itself introduces a relation between the two passions, one which limits, alters and shapes in significant ways the various functions each passion has in the broader psychological structure of human beings, and which, in consequence, bears inevitably upon the character of their relationships. The relation that obtains between self-love and self-liking, and the central features of both passions, are the subjects of this chapter.

Since Mandeville is prepared to draw a distinction between self-love and self-liking, it is reasonable to start our inquiry where the contrast first arises. In the Third Dialogue of the Fable’s second part, he has Cleomenes introduce the distinction by saying:

9 The distinction was also drawn, perhaps, in response to the denunciations delivered by Bishop Butler in his eleventh sermon against reductionist views of human conduct, a sermon which appeared in 1726, and which bookmarked the first and second parts of the Fable. This is Kaye’s suggestion. The chief criticism responded to here is that those who rely only on self-love resolve ‘every action and every affection’ into this ‘one principle’ simply because they are all one’s own, eliding the differences in the principles underlying the range of human action (II: 129; n.1). James (1975: 53-54) rejects this suggestion, however. It ‘seems certain’ to him that Mandeville did not ‘get’ the distinction from Butler, and that ‘the distinction of self-liking from self-love remains wide open to Butler’s incisive criticism’. James misunderstands Kaye here, since Kaye does not say that Mandeville ‘gets’ the distinction from Butler’s critique, but only that the distinction was the ‘result’ of the Bishop’s criticisms, which is to say, it was Mandeville’s attempt to respond to them. But James may indeed be correct to say that Mandeville’s response solved nothing, since Butler’s objection ‘is to the use of a single blanket term’, and ‘self-liking is such a term’.
That Self-love was given to all Animals, at least, the most perfect, for Self-Preservation, is not disputed; but as no Creature can love what it dislikes, it is necessary, moreover, that every one should have a real liking to its own Being, superior to what they have to any other. I am of Opinion, begging Pardon for the Novelty, that if this Liking was not always permanent, the Love, which all Creatures have for themselves, could not be so unalterable as we see it is (FB II:129).\(^\text{10}\)

Self-love tends generally towards the care and preservation of the self, where the notion of “self” is to be taken or represented in physical terms. In its most obvious expression, it would make any creature animated by it ‘scrape together everything it wanted for Sustenance, provide against the Injuries of the Air, and do every thing to make itself and young Ones secure” (FB II:133). The connection here between self-love and self-preservation is in its most basic sense a familiar one, but it is not by any means necessary – there are, as we shall see later, certainly occasions where self-love could motivate the taking of the life it ordinarily looks to preserve. For the present, however, we do not have enough to reconstruct an argument in that direction. But the passage does say something about the relation between the two innate passions, one which might be taken as a first step towards just such a reconstruction: self-love, and the impulse to keep alive which follows from it, are in a sense contingent on self-liking. In its absence, a being’s love for herself and the effects of that love, unalterable as they might seem, can both perhaps be brought into question.

\(^{10}\) It is perhaps worth mentioning that Mandeville’s principal target in Part I of the Fable is François de Fénélon, and his wonderful work, *Les aventures de Télémaque* (The Adventures of Telemachus, published in 1699). Part II of the Fable principally targeted the philosophical ideas of Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, and his *Characteristics of Men, Manners Opinions, Times* (1737). See Hont (2015) and Brooke (2012: 153-157)
This implies, further, that self-liking plays a part in carrying out the task of self-preservation, which in turn raises the possibility that self-liking is not just a comparative or relational passion, where this means, broadly speaking, that the passion motivates a concern not only with a being’s standing in relation to other beings, but also with the view they have of her. It is certainly controversial to propose, as I am now proposing, that self-love is not inextricably tied to the work of self-preservation (and may indeed turn us the other way), that self-liking has a considerable share in the matter of simple existence, and that self-liking is not of a completely relational character. For the contrary of these proposals are the views variously assigned to Mandeville by interpreters in their efforts to capture exactly what he meant by the distinction between self-love and self-liking (Branchi 2014; Luban 2015; Sheridan 2007; Heath 1998; Monro 1975). Such ideas are put forward by, for example, Bert Kerkhof, for whom Mandeville’s conception of self-love is to be understood as ‘the immediate orientation towards our self-preservation’. Self-liking, by contrast, is a ‘comparative’ sentiment, that ‘inclination to overrate ourselves in comparison with others’.  

11 Andrea Branchi (2014: 76) describes self-love and self-liking as ‘two constituent parts of self-interest’, where the former ‘is the animal instinct of self-preservation, the self-love for one’s physical being, which makes men eat, sleep and avoid danger’, the latter being ‘that sentiment of overvaluation of one’s self which is constantly reliant on other’s people approval in order to be confirmed and reassured’. Daniel Luban (2015: 11) remarks that ‘both pride and shame are simply manifestations of “self-liking”, an over-valuation of one’s own worth that is implanted in human nature alongside “self-love”, the desire for self-preservation’. In close connection, Eugene Heath (1998: 208) says that ‘self-love, granted to all animals, concerns itself with that which is necessary for self-preservation; self-liking, on the other hand, is each individual’s overestimation of self-worth … Just as self-love stimulates efforts for self-preservation, so self-liking engenders attempts to demonstrate superiority’. For some remarks on Sheridan’s and Monro’s views, see n.9. See also E.G. Hundert (1994: 52-115) for an excellent survey of the topic.

12 The description of self-liking just as an inclination to overrate oneself in comparison with others might be the result of Rousseau’s influence. In the Second Discourse, Rousseau writes, ‘Amour-propre and love of oneself (amour de soi-même), two passions very different in their Nature and their effects, must not be confused. Love of oneself is a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to watch over its own preservation, and which, directed in man by reason and modified by
In viewing self-liking in strictly comparative terms, Kerkhof thinks that the consciousness we have of overrating ourselves prompts us to seek ways to ‘nourish our self-liking’, which on occasion demands that we ‘conquer our “fear of death” (self-love)’. Suicide committed to avoid shame is an example of such a conquest, and he is led from this line of reasoning to the conclusion that ‘in the Mandevillean world committing suicide belongs to the same category of phenomena as brave behaviour during wars and fighting a duel: in all of these cases the “fear of shame” (self-liking) conquers the “fear of death” (self-love)’ (Kerkhof, 1995: 220).

There is certainly something to be said for this account. In the essay *A Search into the Nature of Society*, Mandeville draws attention to a scene in Roman records famously painted by Plutarch, one depicting the hostility felt between Cato and Caesar, which was not, whatever else might said of it, brought to a close even after Cato applied the same effect to his life. The simplicity of the outcome betrays an immensely dark picture of our motivational psychology on Mandeville’s reading of the event, since the refusal of clemency reveals Cato’s revered virtue and admired conduct to be nothing but a sham:

yet it was brought to light in the last Scene of his Life, and by his Suicide it plainly appeared that he was governed by a Tyrannical Power superior to the Love of his Country, and that the implacable Hatred and superlative Envy he bore to the Glory, the real Greatness and Personal Merit of Cæsar, had for a long time sway’d all his Actions.

pity, produces humanity and virtue. Amour-propre is only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in Society, which inclines each individual (qui porte chaque individu) to have a greater esteem for himself than for anyone else, inspires in men all the harm they do to one another, and is the true source of honor’ (*SD*, 91/ *OC* 3, 219).
under the most noble Pretences. Had not this violent Motive over-rul’d his consummate Prudence he might not only have saved himself, but likewise most of his Friends that were ruined by the Loss of him, and would in all probability, if he could have stooped to it, been the Second Man in Rome. But he knew the boundless Mind and unlimited Generosity of the Victor: it was his Clemency he feared, and therefore chose Death because it was less terrible to his Pride than the Thought of giving his mortal Foe so tempting an Opportunity of shewing the Magnanimity of his Soul (FB I: 335-336)

‘Cato, I grudge you your death, as you have grudged me the preservation of your life’ Caesar is reported to have said, upon hearing news of the manner of Cato’s death (Plutarch, 1906: 442).

The psychological picture Mandeville wants us to accept is the peculiar picture not of some men who suffer from their own unique pathologies, but of men generally. From this and Caesar’s reported response, his depiction of Caesar is certainly more than a little exaggerated. There is a very real question, however, which we shall come back to in the next chapter, of whether and how Cato’s defiance, his refusal to yield even to being the second man in Rome, offers evidence to reconsider the motivations governing his past conduct, his sacrifices for the republic, to the extent that they are all to be thought of, now, as expressions of pride. Nevertheless, Mandeville’s gloss on Cato’s suicide suggests Kerkhof’s account is right; it accurately describes Mandeville’s view of the two passions, one aspect of their relationship, and how suicide might be explained.
This account, along with the general views held by interpreters mentioned earlier, is wrong. They are not, however, wrong in the sense that they have nothing to show for them, or that they get things wrong all the way down, but they each contain a number of important omissions and errors which have led to some rather misleading remarks about Mandeville’s thought. In order to see this, and to account for the alternative proposals suggested, we need to go back to where we left off, and work through the process by which Mandeville developed the distinction in greater detail.

After Cleomenes draws the distinction between the two innate passions for the first time, Horatio enquires after the reason for drawing any distinction at all, since ‘one plainly comprehends the other’ (FB II:129). Cleomenes attempts to clarify the difference by saying:

to encrease the Care in Creatures to preserve themselves, Nature has given them an Instinct, by which every Individual values itself above its real Worth; this in us, I mean, in Man, seems to be accompany’d with a Diffidence, arising from a Consciousness, or at least an Apprehension, that we do over-value ourselves: It is this that makes us so fond of the Approbation, Liking and Assent of others; because they strengthen and confirm us in the good Opinion we have of ourselves (FB II:130).

It is not immediately obvious why the act of valuing itself above its real worth should increase the care an individual takes to preserve itself. Nor is it clear what exactly is meant
by the idea of an individual’s ‘real worth’. Perhaps the answer to this second question is to be found in Mandeville’s observation of how human life is of no special relevance in the natural scheme of things, of how, that is to say, it holds no greater cosmic significance than anything else the world might hold. Certainly, Mandeville found it ‘ridiculous to think that the Universe was made for our sake’; it is only ‘owing to the Principle of Pride we are born with, and the high Value we all, for the Sake of one, have for our Species, that Men imagine the whole Universe to be principally made for their use’ (FB II: 260-261; 243). The truth, instead, is that ‘all Actions in Nature, abstractly consider’d, are equally indifferent; and whatever it may be to individual Creatures’, it is neither ‘a greater Evil to this Earth, or the whole Universe’ to die ‘than it is to be born’, nor ‘a greater Cruelty, or more unnatural in a Wolf to eat a piece of a Man, than it is in a Man to eat part of a Lamb or a Chicken’ (FB II: 251-252; 243-244). Even appeals to a benevolent God will not do, for two reasons. First, they assume knowledge of the inner workings of God’s mind. Second, the suggestion that God would be cruel if she left us equally exposed to the adversities of nature, as suffered by the rest of her creations, presumes precisely the point of contest. For expressions of cruelty make sense only ‘in relation to our species’, that is, indifference is cruel only if we already think ourselves special (FB II: 251).

These reflections, which must strike the modern ear in familiar tones or perhaps even as sound, are not without their difficulties; for example, they seem to suppose a cosmic point of view from which one may judge the significance of things, or, given the existence of such a view, it is one we should be able to take up. I shall not discuss the extent to which Mandeville’s arguments fall into such difficulties, if indeed they do, or if these difficulties
present serious problems at all. It is enough to say that for Mandeville, we accord, from pride, a higher value to ourselves, a value above the real worth we actually have as beings that belong in nature. But there is a different way to take the point. In discussing a subject’s overvaluation of his self, Mandeville sometimes gives the impression that his real worth is just what would be determined by the reckoning of an impartial judge. As he says in the opening lines of Remark M, ‘Pride is that Natural Faculty by which every Mortal that has any Understanding over-values, and imagines better Things of himself than any impartial Judge, thoroughly acquainted with all his Qualities and Circumstances, could allow him’ (FB I: 124). This formulation lacks, of course, a determinate sense. Yet we must resist the temptation, urged by the idea of impartiality, to think any judge so placed would unambiguously ascribe equal worth to all human beings. Equality does not necessarily follow from impartiality; much of what is determined in judgments of these sorts depends on the criteria of evaluation employed.

Are we to take these accounts together? We are not told that we should, and perhaps the silence is telling enough. But how might we proceed if we were to try? One way, which recommends itself, is to assimilate one view to the other, and to do so by drawing an equivalence between them. In this view of things, the perspective of the impartial judge just is what I have been calling the cosmic point of view. But if these accounts simply fold together, it becomes very unclear why the impartial judge should care about, or consider, all of a subject’s qualities and circumstances in determining his real worth, why, in other words, she should have to be thoroughly acquainted with these things at all. Overvaluations of the self are very often expressed in more local terms - ‘I am wildly intelligent’, ‘I am a
virtuous citizen’, ‘I am a great philosopher’, or even extensionally, ‘I am a great man because I am a great philosopher’. Such expressions draw on specific qualities and rely on a social world and a measure (which may itself be formed from elements in that world). An impartial judge could very well decide, to go back to Cato, that he had overvalued himself, that he was not a virtuous citizen since he acted from pride; or if he considered himself the most virtuous of citizens, that he was not so, for there was another of purer heart. These are the kinds of pronouncements we expect Mandeville’s impartial judge to deliver. Moreover, it would hardly make sense to speak of the great philosopher as having overvalued himself because it made no difference whether, from some abstract standpoint, he consumed lamb or was himself consumed by a ravenous wolf. It is surely more sensible to say that he has overvalued himself because a great philosopher does not make a great man, or because he was not a very good philosopher at all.

Replies of these sorts appear more natural for a reason. They reveal and respond to what is at stake in the overvaluation; the problem is not resolved by, as it were, evading its main features, by going around the details of the case. Of course, this does not render the cosmic account useless. Rather, the point is that it cannot be radically applied to judgments of value without reservation, or used as a general means to short circuit more specific and false pronouncements of value. The cosmic argument, leaving aside whatever difficulties it may face on its own plane, is itself a restricted dimension along which corrections of overvaluations can be offered, where these overvaluations take, again, more specific forms. The conversation between Cleomenes and Horatio in the Fifth Dialogue about man’s belief in his distinctive standing in nature, which comes to the view that he stands above it,
is just such an example. The rulings of an impartial judge can be more or less general, or more or less specific. Much depends on the details of the case, and the question being asked.

Now, the being and being alive of any creature is of no significant import or consequence. Whether it lives and matures or expires at birth is irrelevant. But the living thing in nature does not share this indifference. Its place and existence matter (to it), and in the case of the human being (and many other animals), they matter because nature has put into her frame the two innate passions of self-liking and self-love. She works for her preservation out of a love of self; her efforts are redoubled out of an extraordinary concern for the self she loves. She feels special in her being and feels her being special. But this affirmation of the self is without merit, for if she were to perish tomorrow, it would certainly be of no consequence, even less so an evil or a loss.

This, I take it, is Mandeville’s answer to the question of how self-overvaluation increases the care we take to preserve ourselves, an answer which helpfully brings together the

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13 In a remarkable passage (FB I: 180-181) on the felt impressions of a bullock falling to the violence of man, Mandeville assails Descartes for his view ‘that animals are feelingless automata’, as Kaye puts it. Malebranche’s description that animals ‘eat without pleasure, cry without pain, grow without knowing it; they desire nothing, fear nothing, know nothing; and if they act in a manner that demonstrates intelligence, it is because God, having made them in order to preserve them, made their bodies in such a way that they mechanically avoid what is capable of destroying them’ represents Descartes’s position on this issue more expressly than, perhaps, Descartes himself (Malebranche, 1997: 494-495). As Kaye points out, Mandeville had taken the Cartesian line in both his dissertation, Disputatio Philosophica De Brutorum Operationibus (1689) and his Disputatio Medica de Chylosi Vitiata (1691), but changed his mind radically after, taking up Gassendi’s view instead (see Kaye’s note at FB I: 181). John Cottingham has suggested, however, that, if looked at closely, it is ‘by no means clear that [Descartes] holds the monstrous view [that animals are totally without feeling]’. Descartes does hold that animals are machines and automata, that they do not think and have no language, and that they do not have self-consciousness, but these views do not necessarily commit him to the thesis that animals are without feeling, given his philosophical outlook. I shall not pursue the matter here, but see Cottingham (1978) for a clever discussion.
various elements presented in the passage. But the answer appears to have altered the connection between the two passions. It was said earlier that they were connected by contingency. Self-love and the drive to survive which follows from it were said to be contingent on the presence of self-liking. Under the current account, however, self-love is not so much contingent upon self-liking as it is increased by it. Both of these relations could of course be true of Mandeville’s view, but it is not clear at this point how the relationship between the two passions are to be rightly understood. Moreover, the connection between self-liking and physical preservation suffers from an incriminating paradox, one Horatio continually presses Cleomenes to address as the conversation proceeds, since self-liking as it first manifests in a social context makes men insufferable to one another (FB II: 134):

Self-liking would make it [untaught man] seek for Opportunities, by Gestures, Looks, and Sounds, to display the Value it has for itself, superior to what it has for others; an untaught Man would desire every body that came near him, to agree with him in the Opinion of his superior Worth, and be angry, as far as his Fear would let him, with all that should refuse it: He would be highly delighted with, and love every body, whom he thought to have a good Opinion of him, especially those, that by Words or Gestures should own it to his Face: Whenever he met with any visible Marks in others of Inferiority to himself, he would laugh, and do the same at their Misfortunes, as far as
his own Pity would give him Leave, and he would insult every body that would let him

\textit{(FB II: 133-134).}^{14}

The behaviours described in this passage are plainly unhelpful to the project of survival. If self-liking were given to us as an aid to the activity of physical preservation, directly or otherwise, we cannot but wonder, along with Horatio, how the intimated aspiration is supposed to manifest. Or, to put the point in a different way: since self-liking under a relativized description stirs us to all sorts of mischief and misadventure, any proposal that understands self-liking only under a relativized description will face very real difficulties demonstrating its contribution to self-preservation. There is, in addition, something deeply unsettling about the view that self-liking is a straightforwardly comparative passion given its ties to physical care. For this would imply that our drive to preserve ourselves physically is somehow tied to our standing in relation to other beings, to our own views on the matter and theirs, as if the passion would become inoperative, and the work of self-preservation would cease or lapse or dwindle, if there were no one else around.\(^{15}\)

Whether or not this is in fact the case, there is enough in Mandeville’s description of self-liking for us to revisit the strictly comparativist account. For he does not always speak of comparative esteem as essential to the passion of self-liking; in some of his attempts at a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{14} Hundert, a most astute Mandeville interpreter, quotes this same passage but leaves out the final sentence (he ends his quote with “own it to his Face”). What is puzzling about Hundert’s (1994: 53) use of the quote is that he follows it by saying, “Self-liking serves as a regulating principle of individual action which promotes social stability by directing men to seek the approval of their fellows”. While Mandeville does think self-liking can serve as a regulative principle in some way, this passage does not at all show that, and in fact suggests the opposite.
\item \textbf{15} This of course depends on the nature of the relationship between the two passions of self-liking and self-love. If self-love is contingent on self-liking, and self-liking is operative only in its relative sense, self-love might cease or lapse. If it is just about increase of care, then self-love would dwindle.
\end{itemize}
definition, the comparative element is omitted. In *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honor* the point is made in the clearest possible fashion, with Cleomenes saying: ‘Self-liking I have call’d that great Value, which all Individuals set upon their own Persons; that high Esteem, which I take all Men to be born with for themselves’ (*EOH I*: 3). Horatio, not unreasonably, responds to this statement by asking:

When what you call Self-liking, that just Esteem which Men have naturally for themselves, is moderate, and spurs them on to good Actions, it is very laudable, and is call’d the Love of Praise or a Desire of the Applause of others. Why can’t you take up with either of these Names?’

Cleomenes replies:

Because I would not confound the Effect with the Cause. That Men are desirous of Praise, and love to be applauded by others, is the Result, a palpable Consequence, of that Self-liking which reigns in Human Nature, and is felt in everyone’s Breast before we have Time or Capacity to reflect and think of Any body else (*EOH I*: 4; Emphasis added).

Self-liking is a passion that expresses, in very basic terms, the esteem each individual has for himself and the value he sets upon his being. This passion he has innately and experiences before any consideration of other subjects. It is perhaps worth mentioning that Mandeville associates the liking we have for ourselves with esteem, and esteem with valuation; the three terms are more or less definitional equivalents. Setting aside potential objections to these
rather casual associations, the essential idea contained here is that self-liking is not first and most principally the inclination to hold ourselves in greater esteem in contrast to others, but rather the vast and high esteem we have for ourselves, an esteem already present, one already felt, before either the time or capacity to consider others emerges. It is not therefore a thoroughly comparative sentiment. But even with these remarks, the ties that bind self-liking to self-preservation remain somewhat imperceptible. Horatio’s question still stands in need of an answer.

There should be no doubts about the seriousness of the question, or about how seriously Mandeville took self-liking to be of importance to self-preservation. He has Horatio raise the issue on no less than three occasions, revealing a mind not only applied to clarification, but also one deeply dissatisfied with its first answers. When Cleomenes says in his opening reply that by self-liking the many virtues ‘may be counterfeited to gain Applause’, or that ‘by the sole Help and Instigation of his Pride’ a ‘Man of Sense in great Fortune may acquire’ an array of good qualities, Horatio reacts the only way he can, by noting the incongruity of the response with the sought after ends of the inquiry: ‘I beg your Pardon; yet what you say only regards Man in the Society, and after he has been perfectly well educated: What Advantage is it to him as a single Creature? Self-love I can plainly see induces him to labour for his Maintenance and Safety, and makes him fond of every thing which he imagines to tend to his Preservation: But what good does the Self-liking to him?’ (FB II: 134).
Cleomenes embarks, naturally enough, on a second attempt. I shall pass over the details of this argument, since they are of no immediate relevance to our present concern; what matters is that he is met, once again, with a similar response: “Still I can see no Advantage accruing from this Self-liking to Man, consider’d as a single Creature, which can induce me to believe, that Nature should have given it us for Self-preservation” (*FB* II: 135). Horatio’s refusal to let the matter rest indicates, once again, both its importance and Mandeville’s own awareness of his struggles to adequately address it. However, it is from this context that we arrive at a passage of thought which contains much of Cleomenes’ final statement on the problem. Mandeville writes that the passion:

continually furnishes us with that Relish we have for Life, even when it is not worth having. Whilst Men are pleas’d, Self-liking has every Moment a considerable Share, tho’ unknown, in procuring the Satisfaction they enjoy. It is so necessary to the well-being of those that have been used to indulge it; that they can taste no Pleasure without it, and such is the deference, and the submissive Veneration they pay to it, that they are deaf to the loudest Calls of Nature, and will rebuke the strongest Appetites that should pretend to be gratify’d at the Expence of that Passion. It doubles our Happiness in Prosperity, and buoys us up against the Frowns of adverse Fortune. It is the Mother of Hopes, and the End as well as the Foundation of our best Wishes: It is the strongest Armour against Despair, and as long as we can like any ways our Situation, either in regard to present Circumstances, or the Prospect before us, we take care of ourselves; and no Man can resolve upon Suicide, whilst Self-liking lasts: but as soon as that is over, all our Hopes are extinct, and we can form no Wishes but for the Dissolution of
our Frame: till at last our Being becomes so intollerable to us, that Self-love prompts us to make an end of it, and seek Refuge in Death (FB II:135-136).

The enthusiasm for life, the raptures of existence, the taste of pleasure itself; all are thought by Mandeville to be the work of self-liking. At the limit, its presence conditions the having of desires, the want to have them satisfied, and the experience of pleasure in their satisfaction. It is to the esteemed self that our hopes and wishes are tied, it is the self that is their object, but it is from the feeling of esteem that they arise or come to light at all. Life may indeed be troubled or unsettling, it may on occasion or with cruel frequency spring the worst ills and miseries upon us, but it is not met with despair nor envelops us in anguish. For self-liking shields us from collapsing under the weight of life’s excess and pushes us to go on. Strength, fortitude, and resilience are the noticeable qualities self-liking offers us in the face of adversity, tragedy, and suffering. This is how it contributes to the work of self-preservation.

Resilience and fortitude do not always guarantee victory over adversity, however. They weaken under relentless or intense pressure, and on rare occasions, yield entirely. With these thoughts we are ushered back to the very beginning, back, that is, to the issue of suicide. As I suggested earlier, the position that takes suicide to be, in Mandeville’s philosophical project, just the result of a fear of shame winning out over a fear of death, or self-liking conquering self-love, is not one we could possibly take seriously. In the closing lines of the passage, Mandeville re-imagines the relationship between the two innate passions by expressing the act as a choice which presents itself when self-liking vanishes
from the scene. So long as an individual is able to like her situation in any way whatsoever, whether presently or prospectively, she will not entertain thoughts of taking her own life. Indeed, so long as these elemental conditions are in place, the question of whether or not she should go on living does not actually come up as a question for her at all. But when self-liking dissipates completely, which may happen for a number of reasons, not all of which necessarily follow from shame, the fear of it, or a comparative loss of standing, being becomes unbearable and life itself insufferable. Yet even if it were because of shame or the fear of it, suicide as a result of these psychological pressures is not to be properly understood as the drives of one passion vanquishing those of another. Rather, it is the unworthiness wrought by shame that breaks in upon the liking we have for ourselves, which then compels us, out of a love of self, to halt of the oppression of existence, to ‘seek refuge in death’.

We might well ask why suicide should be thought of as an act of self-love, rather than one which emerges from a hatred of the self. Certainly, this seems a more natural way to draw the measure, or to speak of the relation between the two passions, especially since Mandeville ties the two passions together through contingency. This is, as it turns out, exactly Horatio’s response to Cleomenes’s remarks: ‘You mean Self-hatred; for you have

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16 Hundert (1994: 53) argues that ‘in the animal kingdom self-love remained ascendant ... The reverse was the case in formally organized human communities, for in the social realm self-liking rather than self-love governed human behavior. The operations of self-liking would in time enable men to over-ride and control their basic passions of fear and anger. As dramatized by the suicides of Cato and Lucretia in the ancient world ... even the instinct of self-preservation could be socially disciplined’. Based on the psychological picture drawn above, I do not think self-love is ascendant in the animal world (with regard to the human species, or even the higher animals), and if Hundert’s use of the examples of Cato and Lucretia are meant to suggest that self-liking conquers self-love in cases of suicide, then this is incorrect as well.
said your self, that a Creature cannot love what it dislikes’ (FB II:136). If the love we have for ourselves depends on the liking we have for ourselves, and if the former is only unalterable because of the latter, then surely the dissolution of the second will result in the dissolution of the first: self-love ends when self-liking runs out. But having put the point in this way, it now looks as though the transition to self-hatred was something too hastily accomplished, for it might be thought to involve a further step: losing love might leave us helplessly unhappy, to borrow a phrase from Freud, but it is not yet to step into the waters of hatred, or at least not necessarily so.

This last concern is not Horatio’s. Nevertheless, Cleomenes has an answer for it and Horatio’s suggestion, which is only to be expected. ‘If you turn the Prospect’, he tells Horatio, ‘you are in the right; but this only proves to us what I have often hinted at, that Man is made up of Contrarieties’. Here, Cleomenes appears willing to concede the point. But the concession, if it is indeed one, is still conditional: Horatio is right only if the prospect is turned, and turned in that way. Despite this, he goes on to observe that there is no forced or greater certainty ‘than that whoever kills himself by Choice, must do it to avoid something, which he dreads more than that Death which he chuses. Therefore, how absurd soever a Person’s Reasoning may be, there is in all Suicide a palpable Intention of Kindness to one’s self’ (FB II:136). Mandeville now appears unwilling to give up the language of self-love being at the root of the act. How, then, are we supposed to understand the psychological picture he has in mind given these seemingly disparate thoughts? There are certainly several difficulties here, but the picture appears to be this: self-liking is in the first instance the esteem one has for her own being. It plays an important part in the work
of self-preservation, and does so in the various ways I have already mentioned, and which I shall not rehearse here. Self-love is indeed contingent on self-liking, but not in the way we might think. It is not contingent in an existential sense, where the evaporation of self-liking, for whatever reason, produces a similar effect on self-love. Rather, it is contingent in a directional sense, where this means, quite uncharacteristically, that self-love inclines towards self-preservation only in the felt presence of self-liking, taking us in the opposite direction on those occasions where self-liking is irrevocably lost. This, I take it, is what Mandeville means to suggest when he speaks of self-love as appearing to be ‘unalterable’ in the presence of self-liking. The notion of ‘being unalterable’ itself expresses not an existential dependency, but the possibility, or in this case impossibility, of modification under certain conditions. When self-liking is extinguished, self-love continues but in an altered state. It does not, however, simply turn into its contrary; that would mark a rather plain transformation of self-love into self-hatred. By insisting on the language of kindness to the self which falls more readily into a broader conception of love as opposed to hate, the idea of self-love altering in the absence of self-liking should be taken as a change in its applied effects rather than in its formal structure. Self-love, then, is only very imperfectly understood as a drive towards self-preservation.\footnote{Monro (1975; 116) writes that in Mandeville’s distinction between self-love and self-liking, ‘the assumption here is the teleological one that self-love has as its purpose self-preservation’. This, as my remarks show, is incorrect. James (1975: 53) notes correctly that it is when self-liking ceases that self-love ‘impels us to kill ourselves’, but goes on to say that ‘perhaps we can conclude that the distinction between self-love and self-liking is roughly that between self-protective and self-assertive tendencies’. This conclusion is puzzling, since James himself notes that it is self-love that drives us to take our own lives. It therefore cannot be self-protective in a straightforward sense. Nevertheless, his description does not offer a comprehensive account of both passions and of how they relate. Sheridan (2007: 379) writes that ‘the passion that is strongest in humans, and all other animals, is self-love, which Mandeville identifies as the desire for self-preservation and self-gratification ... self-liking operates in a somewhat more subtle way. This passion, which is found only in ‘higher’ animals, is described as the opinion the individual has of itself ... self-liking is a passion aimed at}
as a general kindness to the self, which could, and does for the most part, incline towards life (doing so, again, because of self-liking). But it can motivate the taking of the life it generally looks to preserve as well. Should that happen, it is still to be recognized as an expression of self-love, and not, as Horatio thinks, self-hatred. And all of this means, further, that suicide does not belong to the same category of phenomena as courage, whether in dueling or war.

II

Now, while Mandeville considers self-liking to be an innate passion that is of, to an extent, a non-relational character, he repeatedly emphasizes that the liking we have for ourselves is superior to the liking we have for any other being, ‘that in our own Species every individual Person likes himself better than he does any other’ (FB II: 129, 137). Why? Because from observation we see that ‘Man centers every thing in himself, and neither loves nor hates, but for his own Sake. Every Individual is a little World by itself, and all Creatures, as far as their Understanding and Abilities will let them, endeavour to make that Self happy: This in all of them is the continual Labour, and seems to be the whole Design of Life’ (FB II: 178). Nothing is closer to us than our selves: ‘it is that Self we are in love with’, ‘it is that Self we wish well to’ (FB II: 304, 137). Self-liking is not, when considered in this way, simply to be self-preservation, but one that encourages the individual to seek, in addition, its own promotion’. While Sheridan does point out self-liking’s connection to self-preservation, she does not say much more. Her account of how self-love is tied to self-preservation and self-gratification is also, to an extent, mistaken, since self-love can take us the other way, and gratification has an inextricable link to self-liking, as I have shown above. Moreover, it is false to speak of self-love as the strongest passion in humans, or of self-liking as a passion which works in more subtle ways.
understood in terms of the vast esteem we have for ourselves, but the vast esteem we have for ourselves from which valuing ourselves more than anyone else follows.

This brings into play, in a rudimentary way, the relational and comparative aspects of self-liking. But this does not at all rescind the passion’s non-relational side. Anyone abstracted from all society would still be in possession of it, and would still be moved by it in some of the ways already mentioned, since it is innate and felt regardless of others." The passion does, however, naturally take up a comparative stance in the direction of partiality to the self whenever a subject comes into contact with other like subjects. From this, and because every subject naturally esteems himself more than everyone else, the first interactions between men would appear in a desire for superiority by each and a recognition of that superiority by all." It is important to see here that the desire for recognition, the desire to have some standing in relation to other subjects, while always comparative, does not by itself require or demand recognition of superior standing. As Neuhouser (2008: 32-33) remarks in his study of *amour-propre* in Rousseau’s philosophy, the desire for equal standing in relation to others is indeed an expression of the more general good of having relative or comparative standing with respect to others. Since however, Mandeville begins

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18 Philoctetes, famed archer and son of King Poeas, called upon to join in the Greek expedition against Troy, left behind on the island of Lemnos because of a wounded foot which gave off a terrible odor, persisted in preserving his life despite the great pains of injury and solitude. On a Mandevillean scheme, he did so because of the passions of self-liking and self-love. In drawing attention to this example, I am merely attempting to demonstrate how we can understand self-liking as more than just a comparative inclination. This is not a statement of how we must in fact understand the event.

19 Elster points out correctly that ‘A desire for superiority may be satisfied by a comparison between oneself and another, or by interaction with another in which one shows oneself to be superior’. They could, of course, proceed simultaneously. This expresses a distinction he makes regarding the social emotions, which, at one level, can be divided ‘into emotions of comparison’ and ‘emotions of interaction’ (Elster, 1999: 141). There is here in Mandeville’s thought the (added) element of recognition.
with the passion of self-liking, which involves not merely self-esteem but a self-esteem that ascribes greater worth to the individual subject in contrast to all others, the desire for recognition under such circumstances will take the form of a desire for recognition of that superior worth. The result of this initial interaction between all beings similarly moved is open hostility, contention and war:

Man himself in a savage State, feeding on Nuts and Acorns, and destitute of all outward Ornaments, would have infinitely less Temptation, as well as Opportunity, of shewing this Liking of himself, than he has when civiliz’d; yet if a hundred Males of the first, all equally free, were together, within less than half an Hour, this Liking in question, though their Bellies were full, would appear in the Desire of Superiority, that would be shewn among them; and the most vigorous, either in Strength or Understanding, or both, would be the first, that would display it: If, as suppos’d, they were all untaught, this would breed Contention, and there would certainly be War before there could be any Agreement among them; unless one of them had some one or more visible Excellencies above the rest. I said Males, and their Bellies full; because if they had Women among them, or wanted Food, their Quarrel might begin on another Account (FB II: 132).

There are at least four things worth mentioning about this description. First, the beings in question are males who have their ‘bellies full’. In saying this, Mandeville narrows the focus of the discussion, fastening the emergent quarrels directly upon contests over esteem
between subjects rather than contests over the necessities of life or even potential partners. Or, generalizing further, he excludes other potential reasons for conflict—like the competition for material things, objects or resources—from the discussion, in order to show how self-liking and the desire for recognition itself breeds contention. I shall return to this point later, for it is indeed a part of Mandeville’s philosophy that self-liking is involved in such pursuits, and that such pursuits hold implications for relations of esteem. The second involves the view that conflict is not an inescapable outcome. Clearly, this is not a description of how talents and skills can be converted into the things through which victory is obtained in contention, thereby settling the dispute which gave rise to the contest. The point is rather that contention might itself be altogether avoided if excellences were visible (and presumably exceeded in considerable measure the excellences others enjoyed). This implies, further, that we are in spite of self-liking able to perceive, recognize and acknowledge (however grudgingly perhaps) the superior qualities of others when confronted with overwhelming evidence of their veracity. Third, the beings in question are supposed to be ‘untaught’. Mandeville means to suggest by this that they have not yet acquired, by art and education, the knowledge or skill required to conceal certain barefaced expressions of pride. The expression of superiority by one reveals in that very expression a corresponding contempt for, or a lesser valuation of, those around him, and

20 I have put the point delicately, although it may not be so. In the state of nature, males could see females as part of their dominion, as objects to which and over which they may stake a claim. Or males may quarrel over females as they act in accordance with their instincts to procreate. Whichever the case, Mandeville wanted to close off these possibilities as potential sources of reasons for quarrel, not because they were not, but because he wanted to demonstrate that intersubjective esteem, the desire to have standing in the eyes of another, would by itself be sufficient to cause war amongst men each possessed of self-liking. Mandeville, it should be noted, held progressive views about women and their place in society, and did not think them inferior to men. That they had an inferior standing in society was very much down to the tyranny of the male species. See for example, The Female Tatler Nos. 86-92, pp.162-192
given their own views on the matter, their own views about their superior standing, any act of lesser valuation is apprehended as an intolerable undervaluation, leading – although not necessarily – to contention. 21 There is, finally, the idea that the jostling for esteem in the way of superiority is not just a phenomenon of a more primitive past – that in the historical distance which separates our savage beginnings from our civilized present we have shed the weight of such desires and the consequences which follow from them. The desire and struggle for superior standing continues, even if they no longer take similar forms.

But why should anyone desire the esteem of others at all? After all, if each encountered other is from the very beginning cast into the shade, that is to say, if we are all of us already given over to self-ascriptions of value that eclipse whatever value others might be thought to be in possession of, why do we seem to need, or want, their esteem? One answer to the question, which is not very far from Mandeville’s own, is that the desire for esteem has something to do with getting sure one has not made a mistake. So while I do think better things of myself than those around me, I am nevertheless conscious of the fact that I might be mistaken in thinking such things; and what I want is proof that I have not in my judgment fallen into error. But this does not quite get things right, or come close enough to

21 Mandeville’s remarks share, up to a point, certain resemblances with some of Hobbes’s remarks on the subject: ‘For every man looketh that his companion should value him, at the same rate he sets upon himself; and upon all signs of contempt, or undervaluing, naturally endeavours, as far as he dares (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet, is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example’ (LNXIII, 83). In addition, the phrase, ‘as far as he dares’, is similar, for example, to the following italicized phrase in Mandeville’s statement that ‘an untaught Man would desire every body that came near him, to agree with him in the Opinion of his superiour Worth, and be angry, as far as his Fear would let him, with all that should refuse it’ (FB II: 133-134). Mandeville certainly read Hobbes, and was clearly influenced by some of his philosophical reflections. Nevertheless, there are differences between Hobbes and Mandeville on this subject, which cannot, unfortunately, be accounted for here.

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the ground. For one thing, it does not tell us why the question should even come up for a being possessed of self-loving. A man could certainly look around him with the view that ‘all are inferior to me’ and think nothing more of it. For another, there is a sense in which the language of getting things right or avoiding error turns the desire for esteem into a search for truth. But if my concern is primarily about getting at the truth, then it remains an open question if I should, or perhaps would, in the first place look to the views of others for the answer, since they could all be wrong, and I could certainly think that of their opinions, whether they agree with my assessment or not.

Mandeville’s clearest answer to the question avoids the language of getting things right and the complex of issues surrounding it. He employs, instead, the notion of confirmation. In a passage we have already encountered, where the answer is most forthcoming, he says:

to encrease the Care in Creatures to preserve themselves, Nature has given them an Instinct, by which every Individual values itself above its real Worth; this in us, I mean, in Man, seems to be accompany’d with a Diffidence, arising from a Consciousness, or at least an Apprehension, that we do over-value ourselves: It is this that makes us so fond of the Approbation, Liking and Assent of others; because they strengthen and confirm us in the good Opinion we have of ourselves (FB II:130).

The activity of self-valuation in human beings is accompanied by a feeling of distrust of – or a want of confidence in – precisely that valuation; a feeling which arises, as it were, from a sense that one has ascribed too much value to oneself, beyond what is fitting or proper. It is
to this diffidence that we chiefly owe our desire for esteem, it is what stirs our fondness for the approbation, liking and assent of others. Strictly speaking, then, self-liking is not the well from which the desire for esteem swells; it is rather the diffidence occasioned by it, and the sense we have of its excess. The esteem of others is desired because it serves as a device to confirm the sense we have of our own self-worth, it is a palliative to the diffidence we feel about the vastness of our self-regard. Yet above the function of value confirmation, external sources of esteem strengthen internal value judgments. These functions can be considered separately or in connection with one another – the value I set upon myself is strengthened as it is confirmed in the opinions of those around me. This extends in effect to two views: either the value I ascribe to myself grows in strength – gets larger – as I receive confirmation of its supposed veracity; or the confidence I have in the value I ascribe to myself grows, although the valuation itself does not. Perhaps both of these things are meant to follow, but Mandeville does not give us enough to settle the question.

If what is sought after is principally the confirmation of the picture we have of ourselves, this picture must first be painted for other beings; in the absence of that there is nothing for them to confirm, so to speak. This explains Mandeville’s insistence that our initial interactions are marked by the seeking out of opportunities, on the part of each individual, to display the value each has for himself, either by demonstrating the finer embellishments of qualities commonly possessed, or by flaunting qualities absent in the general run of men (FB II: 133). Of course, the display of value strikes the senses of all others in rather offensive ways, even if in varying degrees, because of the self-conceptions they too possess:
from the Nature of that Passion it must follow, that all untaught Men will ever be hateful to one another in Conversation, where neither Interest nor Superiority are consider’d: for if of two Equals one only values himself more by half, than he does the other; tho’ that other should value the first equally with himself, they would both be dissatisfied, if their Thoughts were known to each other: but if both valued themselves more by half, than they did each other, the difference between them would still be greater, and a Declaration of their Sentiments would render them both insufferable to each other; which among unciviliz’d Men would happen every Moment, because without a Mixture of Art and Trouble, the outward Symptoms of that Passion are not to be stifled (FB II: 138).

Mandeville’s illustration of the problem is generally consistent, although he does allow for the possibility of equal valuation in this passage despite his remarks elsewhere. And once again, he stresses how the outward expressions of pride are never to be stifled without a mixture of art and trouble, or education. It must be said, however, that the desire for esteem as he describes it here is, for the most part if not entirely, a desire to confirm the vast regard we have for ourselves rather than a desire for esteem for its own sake, that is to say, apart from the role it plays in confirming or strengthening the esteem we have for ourselves. This distinguishes, in a special way, the passion of self-liking from the passion of amour-propre in Rousseau’s thought, since beings moved by the latter do aspire to have standing in the eyes of others independently of its contribution to self-esteem (Neuhouser,

22 Mandeville also says, ‘all Human Creatures, before they are yet polish’d, receive an extraordinary Pleasure in hearing themselves prais’d: this we are all conscious of, and therefore when we see a Man openly enjoy and feast on this Delight, in which we have no share, it rouses our Selfishness, and immediately we begin to Envy and Hate him’ (FB I:77).
Now, Mandeville’s social philosophy undeniably suffers from a misguided reductionism – any naturalistic psychology that places a pervasive and consuming concern for the self at the beginning of all our thoughts is simply a mistake. It is important, still, to recognize that we can nevertheless draw something from it, and not just in the way of that tired cliché of learning from a mistake. When Mandeville says that we desire the esteem of others to confirm the esteem we have for ourselves, he is, I think, advancing the much stronger thesis that we could not in fact desire the esteem of others, and could not possibly make sense of that desire, unless we first have, and posit, a liking for the self. As he puts it, ‘that we have such an extraordinary Concern in what others think of us, can proceed from nothing but the vast Esteem we have for our selves’ (FB I: 67, Emphasis added). The notion that we could not possibly desire esteem without first liking ourselves was not, then, just some dull thought, or the result of a blundering philosophical treatment of human nature. If our concern for what others think of us can proceed only from a prior liking of the self, and if that means that we value having standing in the eyes of others only because of, and after, self-liking and its presence are felt, then what comes out on the other side may not just be an unpersuasive reductionism, but a deeper psychological point – being thought well of by others, or having standing in their eyes, would carry no meaning for us unless we first felt ourselves worthy of having some standing. This in turn suggests that all the esteem in the world would mean nothing to a being who felt no sense of self-liking within. This hardly excuses Mandeville from the excesses of a psychology centered completely on the self. But it does raise questions for those who would defend a contrary proposition, specifically in reference to his account of esteem. On this matter, an answer is needed to explain why a
being without self-liking would value having standing in the eyes of others. I shall take up this line of inquiry again in the chapter on Rousseau.23

There is, however, a clear objection to Mandeville’s present portrayal of the desire for esteem. The objection is that while the desire arises from the diffidence we feel about our self-valuations, from the sense that we have ascribed to ourselves a value beyond our real worth, much of his discussion turns on one’s desire for superiority over other individuals, and the recognition of that superiority on their part. But it is not at all obvious how these items are connected. If the diffidence felt concerns the prospect of valuing the self beyond one’s real worth, it is not clear why the recognition of one’s superiority over others by those others should be desired and, if obtained, settle the concern, especially since one’s real worth, it might be said, is a value that can only be authoritatively established through the verdict of an impartial judge. Conversely, if a desire for superiority were indeed one’s concern, then winning esteem beyond one’s true worth would hardly be satisfying, unless,

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23 There are two points worth mentioning in relation to this discussion. First, the discussion here leads back to the issue of suicide. Not all suicides proceed from the same reason, of course, but the discussion picks up on the instances where suicide is committed despite the individual being in an environment where he is loved and esteemed by his family and peers. This is part of a broader phenomenon, that peculiar instance of the human condition where individuals may feel a deep sense of meaninglessness despite having external recognition in its various forms. Tolstoy’s opening remarks in Chapter 4 of his Confessions offer such an example. This does not mean that Mandeville’s account provides a thorough, or even a genuine, explanation. But it can help throw light on it, or raise the issue in a unique way. Second, the discussion shifts the focus away from the confirmatory function of esteem, to the more basic question of whether a being without self-liking would even value, or care, about her standing in the eyes of others. This is not, of course, unrelated to the issue of confirmation, but neither is it just the same thing. The question is not ‘why does a being with self-liking desire esteem’ but ‘would a being without self-liking be concerned about what others think of her’? For Mandeville, the answer to this question, I want to suggest, is no. For a being without self-liking, recognition has no value. This, if true, would have implications worthy of consideration in relation to those who would think otherwise. In saying that it puts pressure on those who would argue otherwise, I mean only to suggest that some account must be given as to why having standing in the eyes of others is valuable to a being without that innate passion, or liking for the self.
of course, the two positions converged. Or to put the objection in a different way, if one experiences diffidence over one’s vast self-regard, which involves valuing oneself beyond all others, and understands this diffidence as uncertainty over whether an impartial judge would allow it, then what one ought to seek is the validation, not of those over whom one feels superior, but that of an impartial judge. The problem, to use a helpful phrase of Mandeville’s own, is that it is not manifestly evident that ‘the one plainly comprehends the other’.

Expressed in these terms, the objection surely goes too far. It substitutes the terms of philosophical diagnosis for those of subjective experience; and as Mandeville often reminds us, a philosophical account of some form of human activity is not to be seen as straightforwardly descriptive of how the activity is in fact understood from within. In order to make sense of Mandeville’s account, only this much is required: the subject, we might say, has a vast esteem for himself, which naturally involves attaching greater value to his being than he does others. He has, further, a diffidence about this esteem, arising from a vague consciousness or sense that he has perhaps thought too well of himself. If the diffidence he feels is attached in a very basic way to his self-esteem, then it will almost certainly attach itself to the perception he has of his superior standing in relation to others, since this is implied in the self-valuating act. What he seeks then, is a confirmation of this self-conception, an acknowledgement on the part of others that his understanding of their relational status is indeed as he conceives it. Mandeville’s reliance on the notion of one’s “real worth” in his discussion of diffidence raises no difficulty for this general view of things, in the sense that it does not, despite its conceptual connections to impartial
judgment, render incoherent the subject’s concern for superiority. This has much to do with the fact that the terms of subjective experience are not similar to the terms used in the diagnostic and explanatory scheme of a philosopher.

The point deserves mentioning, if only to avoid the draw of reading a basic moralism into Mandeville’s thought. The three elements - that we value ourselves beyond our real worth, that this overvaluation involves thinking ourselves better than others, and that this is not what an impartial judge would allow - lend themselves easily to the conclusion, under the shadow of Rousseau and Kant, that we are indeed (moral) equals. Moreover, it recommends the possibility that the individuals in question can be led to see and recognize that very basic relational equality. Neither of these conclusions follow from Mandeville’s diagnosis, and it would be an error to think that they do.

III

Is this all of it? If esteem is desired out of the diffidence occasioned by self-liking, does this not reduce the struggle for recognition to insecurities about the self? Are we to suppose that nothing more can be said about the passion and its nature or its character, about its complexions or its effects, in its relative form? These are the things I shall now consider. In particular, I shall be concerned with an expression of self-liking Mandeville calls the instinct of sovereignty. The treatment he gives of it opens the possibility of a deeper account, where the desire for recognition may be seen as extending beyond diffidence. This comes out in the fact that the instinct represents not just a desire for sovereignty, but also the desires of
sovereignty, which readily have the character not just of wanting the world to bend to my will, but of thinking that it simply ought to or should. We shall come back to the details of the instinct shortly. But first, we need to say something about whether the instinct is in fact an expression of self-liking.

There are two problems with the association. The first, very evidently, is that sovereignty is described as an instinct, whereas self-liking is on numerous occasions referred to as a passion. Yet the problem is not an insurmountable one; Mandeville is hardly faultless on the matter of exactness or consistency in the use of terms. (This is not to say that he was careless, only that he was not as exacting or rigorous as those preoccupied with formal distinctions or definitions). In a passage of thought we have already come across on two occasions, he does in fact describe self-liking as an instinct: ‘to encrease the Care in Creatures to preserve themselves, Nature has given them an Instinct, by which every Individual values itself above its real Worth’ (FB II: 130). Elsewhere, the three terms are drawn together in a single sentence: ‘The Instinct of high Value, which every Individual has for himself, is a very useful Passion’ (FB II: 91).24 Of course, the link established between these terms is hardly strong enough to deliver the sought after conclusion. But an obstacle has at the very least been overcome. It would be a mistake, on the basis of the frequent portrayals of self-liking as a passion, to dismiss all links between self-liking and the instinct of sovereignty. The second problem comes to the question of whether Mandeville ever draws a connection between the two items explicitly. This he does near the beginning of the Fifth Dialogue, where he says: ‘there is no Species but ours, that are so conceited of

24 To complicate matters further, Mandeville sometimes refers to pride, a consequence of self-liking, as a ‘faculty’ (FB I: 124).
themselves, as to imagine every thing to be theirs. The Desire of Dominion is a never-failing Consequence of the Pride, that is common to all Men; and which the Brat of a Savage is as much born with, as the Son of an Emperour’ (FB II: 204). As we shall soon see, the desire of dominion, the construal by each that all things belong to them severally, is in large measure what makes up the instinct of sovereignty. Here, Mandeville delineates how this is an ineradicable consequence of innate pride, a passion that is, in its barest elements, the sentiment of self-liking raised to excess.

The natural ‘Instinct of Sovereignty’, which Mandeville also calls a ‘domineering Spirit, and a Principle of Selfishness’, is not just ‘the Desire of uncontroul’d Liberty, and Impatience of Restraint’, but also that ‘which teaches Man to look upon every thing as centring in himself, and prompts him to put in a Claim to every thing, he can lay his Hands on’ (it is thus selfish because in being moved by it we claim everything we can for ourselves; domineering because in being moved by it we claim everything as ours) (FB II: 270-271). I take it that there are in these remarks two central organizing ideas, ideas that may be captured, if only roughly, by the notions of claim and consequence. Now, the impatience of restraint and the desire for uncontrolled liberty express, at a very basic level, a ‘primitive conception of freedom’, which is ‘freedom as power, action unimpeded, in particular, by other people’ (Williams, 1995: 136). To speak of freedom in this way is not yet to say very much. In particular, it is not yet to say much about freedom as a political, or even a social, value, since those expressions imply ‘a social space in which that value can be intelligibly claimed, and to claim freedom must always involve more than simply claiming power’
But Mandeville’s observation is precisely that freedom and power go undifferentiated when conduct is animated by the instinct of sovereignty. In addition, the instinct drives each to stake out a claim to anything he desires. These thoughts, when pulled together, come to the view that any individual motivated by the instinct will not simply look to do whatever pleases him and acquire all that he desires, but think that he should be unimpeded whether he should decide to do or acquire one thing or another, or satisfy one desire or another.

It follows that the human being ‘would have every thing he likes, without considering, whether he has any Right to it or not; and he would do every thing he has a mind to do, without regard to the Consequence it would be of to others’ (FB II: 270-271). The final clause in this statement is pervasively vague. It admits a variety of distinctions, some of which are harder to summarize than others. At one level, it could stand for something rather innocuous: one’s action simply changes the world in such a way as to leave another at the impoverished end of existence, but those consequences were never intended, still less maliciously so (this does not, it should be said, deny the possibility of ascribing responsibility). A critic might complain that this still represents a stronger recognition failure of sorts. In failing to consider the consequences one’s actions might have on others, one reveals a failure to consider others as relevant and important items in the broader deliberative item-set leading up to the act. This, as a general statement, is false. There are many reasons why such a failure might occur: ignorance that an action carries with it certain

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* Williams goes on to say, ‘It is no news to anyone ever that people want the means to do what they want to do. If I make a claim in the name of freedom, then I must do more than say I want power. I must provide some reason why specifically I should be able to do some certain thing to you, or you should not be able to do some certain thing to me’ (Williams, 1995: 137).
effects, or a rather unimaginative mind, are good examples (to take just one point, the problem of ignorance comes in at an earlier stage in the deliberative process. If I do not see the effects of an action, then the question of what those effects might mean for the well-being of others cannot come up for me at all. This might represent a failure of sorts, but it does not reveal a failure to recognize the relevance or standing of others). But as a general remark on the issue, it is not plainly false, although it is still somewhat unhelpful. It says very little about the various ways in which the problem might be understood. Neither is it clear that the failure to consider others captures what is at issue when one acts without regard to the consequences of her actions, for one can certainly consider others without thinking that the adverse effects they would suffer from her doing something should in the end prevail in her decision to act or not.

And so it seems we are faced with the problem once more. If we are to sketch an answer to this question, we shall have to begin by saying something about what the word ‘regard’ meant in the eighteenth century.26 ‘Regard’ derives from the Old French ‘regarder’, itself a patchwork of ‘re’, which carried with it an intensive force and meant ‘back’, and ‘garder’, ‘to guard’, to watch over. In its English usage, it stood, in basic terms, for attention or observation or notice; to regard meant to pay attention to, to take notice of. One spoke of regard in relation to persons or things, and even circumstances or consequences. In this sense, acting without regard to something meant acting without paying attention to it, without taking notice of it, or without looking at it. But its usage was not confined to this;

very often it expressed an idea cut deeper. To regard, or to have regard, for something,
signified that that something was worthy of having attention paid to it, or that it was
something worthy of notice. It contained a valuation of the item to which it was applied.
Used in connection with persons, regard was sometimes spelt out in the language of esteem
or respect, but we must not, it need scarcely be said, load the last of these terms with a
Kantian heritage, as the excited Kantian is so often inclined to do. In this second sense, to
act without regard to something was not simply to ignore it or to fail to take notice of it; it
was to say that the thing in question was not something worthy of notice, that in lacking
value it was not something which required, or was worth, our attention.

Returning now to the question posed of Mandeville’s position, sense can be made of it by
going back, as an opening statement, to a suitably revised version of what I have called the
innocuous reading. On this first view, doing something ‘without regard to the Consequence
it would be of to others’ stems from a thoroughly consuming concern with the self, and a
particularly narrow field of vision. If there is a lack of regard, it is just because one does not
notice or think about others. There is nothing necessarily malicious about this, nor does it
require that I take others to be, as it were, objects or things instead of agents. Rather, the
relevant point here is that I simply spare no effort or time directing my thoughts elsewhere
as I work to satisfy my desires (others are not objects or things in this account since they
are, in a way, absent from all my thoughts). This, I think, is somewhat imperfectly captured
in Mandeville’s remark that ‘ALL untaught Animals are only sollicitous of pleasing
themselves, and naturally follow the bent of their own Inclinations, without considering the
good or harm that from their being pleased will accrue to others’ (FB I: 41). It should be
noticed how the lack of consideration here extends to both harm and good, a point which reinforces the argument against malicious intent. A close relative of this outlook, which emphasizes a different aspect of lacking regard, finds expression not in the denial that others enter one’s thoughts, but in the view that consequences as it relates to others do not enter one’s thoughts. Again, self-concern stands at the centre of all things. But while others may be noticed in some ready or rough way, the next step of reasoning about the consequences of one’s actions in their direction is not taken, but remains entirely directed inwards. The difference between the two views comes to this: in the first, I do not think about others; in the second, I do not think about consequences beyond those that might affect me.

As we move along from these starting positions, pictures of disregard with which we are more familiar begin to materialize. I shall leave aside the issue of beneficial effects, since it might distract us or involve us in unnecessary complications. And I shall leave out, further, instances which include personal considerations of the nature or degree of the harm an agent might do by acting in certain ways, for this can be taken to imply that she is not in the end acting without regard. Within these limits, a third view comes to light. It involves disregarding altogether the more or less remote consequences of our actions on those around us, consequences we either know of or about. The arc of this account is most evident in certain cases, as when, for example, one does not generally care about the known consequences of his actions, or does not care to know about the consequences of his actions (but even here, he must know that there are grim effects, even if he does not care to know what they are; this distinction is what sits below the contrast mentioned
between knowing of, and knowing about). In more precise terms, the agent does not admit into his consciousness the dreadful image of another’s ruined condition – a condition brought about no less by his assistance – as something worthy of notice, and in searching for an explanation as to why he does not, the answer arrived at is just that he does not consider others as worthy of notice. This is usually taken to mean, if he habitually acts in those ways with such recognized effects, that the affected do not carry any or very much weight with him. If they did, his resolutions would change on the strength of that fact, and he would find some other way to get what he wanted, or give up what he wanted altogether.

Now of course these remarks do not describe the necessary relations between the regard for consequences and the regard for persons. In different historical environments, and given certain psychological elaborations which undoubtedly have much to do with the cultural contexts within which they develop, adversaries can, for instance, very often be seen as holding great worth. Indeed, only the deserving are mentioned under that title. They can certainly be a nuisance, and they are surely enemies, but they are not merely a nuisance, and they are not merely enemies. To esteem an adversary is not to say that one does not desire that bad things should happen to him. Indeed, I may wish for his defeat, his destruction, his death and so on; in short, I may desire that he should suffer. In fact, it might be very important to me that he should not merely happen to suffer, but that I should make him suffer, that his suffering should be the rather direct result of my efforts. Differently, one could hold little regard for persons but decide nonetheless that no damaging outcomes should follow from her doing anything. The firmness of her ethical convictions, or a certain religiosity, may be enough to render her sympathetic to
consequences (Mandeville thinks that human beings have a natural tendency to believe in divine beings, moving from what appears at first as an unexplainable evil to a lurking intelligent and invisible cause, out of fear and ignorance. Desperate times call, after all, for desperate superstitions. Religious belief leans on these pillars, just as religious obedience usually leans on the pillar of a vengeful or just god, where vengeance and justice could of course flow from the same source, and run in the same eternal waters). Certainly, such prospects could be reversed or countered. Different connections may be cited, and other distinctions drawn. The point of these remarks, however, is simply to show that Mandeville’s treatment of the ties between regard for consequences and persons are neither necessary nor exhaustive. But neither are they, it is perhaps worth mentioning, for this reason false.

The final view I shall be concerned with is an extension of the last. This further description emphasizes a transformative process by which a human being becomes something of an object to another, and is looked upon as a thing. So undervalued is he that he becomes for another a crude implement or, perhaps, even a refined instrument, to be used in the service of, to borrow from Wordsworth a lovely phrase without relaying what he necessarily meant by it, ‘the grand elementary principle of pleasure’ (Wordsworth, 2008 [1802]: 605). If he is not strictly seen as a thing, he is at least contrived to be a lesser being, one of a different nature or belonging to a different species. For this human other he is less than human. And if he is indeed recognizably human, then the other must take himself to be something else, perched somewhere between the human and the divine, or, if he were bold

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27 Wordsworth, I take it, did not mean for the phrase to cover the rather crude or bland gratification of the appetites but something more significant and elevated.
enough, amongst the celestials themselves. From the character of Bocchoris, son of the late Egyptian King Sesostris in François Fénelon’s *Telecmachus*, we may learn something of such a personality. Bocchoris, Fénelon tells us, ‘had been nourished in effeminacy and brutal pride: he counted men as nothing, believing that they were only made for him, and that he was of another nature than they’. In thought he was consumed by his passions along with the means to satisfy them. He believed, further and in consequence, ‘that all things ought to yield to his impetuous desires’ and ‘was inflamed to rage by the least shadow of opposition’. His perverse outlook was not to be blamed on a weakness of mind; he was not ‘destitute of genius: his capacity was equal to his courage’. The problem was that ‘he had never been taught by ill fortune’. In Fénelon’s masterpiece, Bocchoris would at last be neither a man nor a king nor a god. He would, in the end, be a ‘monster’ (Fénelon, 1994: 26-28).

Similar ideas prevail in Mandeville’s thought. They receive, however, a different inflexion, a result no doubt of the darker and dimmer view of nature he takes human beings to have. In Remark P, he asks: ‘But if a Man had a real Value for his kind, how is it possible that often Ten Thousand of them, and sometimes Ten times as many, should be destroy’d in few Hours for the Caprice of two?’ This, he goes on to say, reveals that ‘All degrees of Men despise those that are inferior to them, and if you could enter into the Hearts of Kings and Princes, you would hardly find any but what have less Value for the greatest Part of the Multitudes they rule over, than those have for the Cattle that belong to them’. That kings and princes are described as valuing their subjects less than the common do their cattle

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28 The elements of this idea would be tremendously important for Rousseau.
must surely supply a fresh sense of horror at what human nature polished by privilege can do. The inspection into the evaluative stance human beings take with respect to those around them is then brought to a resounding close, candidly if not contemptuously, with the following announcement: ‘Why should so many pretend to derive their Race, tho’ but spuriously, from the immortal Gods; why should all of them suffer others to kneel down before them, and more or less take delight in having Divine Honours pay’d them, but to insinuate that themselves are of a more exalted Nature, and a Species superior to that of their Subjects?’ (FB I:178). Here we see clearly how lesser valuation can involve seeing others as belonging to a different species altogether, where the scale shifts from degrees of valuation, greater or less, to one of kind. But we should not neglect the thought Mandeville begins with. There he speaks of how men are dispatched to their deaths at the caprice of one as tools of war, all for the sake of his glory and pride. The message of taking men as objects to be used for one’s purposes is stated ever more strikingly in his remarks on Louis XIV, which appears in an earlier dialogue between the figures of Lucinda and Antonia:

Can any one love Liberty, and not abhor that harden’d Monster of Ambition? To whom the greatest Losses and Calamities of his Friends, are not unwelcome, if they can but advance his Glory. That arbitrary Fiend, that knowing himself to be the Cause of War and Famine, beholds the Miseries of his own People with less Concern than you can see a Play; the Bane of Mankind, that can draw whole Schemes of the Destruction and Devastation of flourishing Cities and plentiful Countries, with the same Tranquility as I can play a Game at Chess; and if it but contributes to his gigantick Aim, esteeming the Lives of a Hundred Thousand of the most faithful of his
Subjects, no more than I value the losing of a single Pawn, if it forwards my Design upon your Game (VM: 168-169)

The argument here takes a special turn, for there are, in effect, no human consequences for such an agent to consider. If I see another as an object, then the question of acting without regard to him cannot make any straightforwardly meaningful sense to me, since there is no real other to take note of, no real other to weigh on the conscience. The tyrant is, of course, an unquestionably unique specimen. He exemplifies the idea and carries it to, perhaps, its furthest extent. But the application of the idea as it is established in this account should be perceptible even as we downshift from its greater heights. Not only kings or princes but persons generally can look upon others as objects or instruments, or beings of a different species. In these moments, one looks at human life and recognizes nothing human in it at all.

Before moving on to the next stage of the argument, it is important to mention two things. First, I have said that the fourth view is an extension of the third. In saying this, I mean to suggest that they can be distinguished. One way of making this clear is to note the following: the point Mandeville pursues is that our valuations of our selves far exceeds those we give

29 Avishai Margalit (2001: 127) would consider such ways of looking at others as instances of humiliation: ‘There is, on my account, more urgency to dealing with humiliation than to dealing with recognition and respect. Moreover, it is much clearer what counts as humiliation, namely treating humans as non-humans – e.g. as animals, as instruments, as mere statistics, as sub-humans – than what counts as respecting them’. This he thinks marks the difference between his position and that of Honneth’s. Margalit describes his position as advocating ‘negative politics’, and Honneth’s as advocating ‘positive politics’.

30 A clear example of these ideas can be seen in the treatment of local populations by the Spaniards in their discovery of the New World (they of course discovered nothing that was not already known). For an excellent treatment of this issue, which draws on the views of Montaigne and Montesquieu, see Shklar (1984: 10-13).
to others, and there is nothing built into that report which necessitates designating the
case of others at null. To radically undervalue another is not necessarily to take this other
as an object (or a being of another species). Moreover, to take another as an object is not
necessarily to take him as an instrument. How we are to draw a line around the variety of
cases is of course a matter of fact and interpretation, which would require looking more
closely at their details. Second, Mandeville certainly discusses other forms of recognition
that may not fall into these views, or categories, neatly. One example of this can be found
in the figure of the ‘conceited Coxcomb’, who, ‘displaying an Air of Sufficiency, is wholly
taken up with the Contemplation of his own Perfections, and in Publick Places discovers
such a disregard to others, that the Ignorant must imagine, he thinks himself to be alone’
(FB I: 131). The implied message is that those around him are, so it seems, invisible to
him.31 The picture is complicated, however, by the fact that it is not strictly the coxcomb
who thinks himself alone but rather the ignorant who imagines it. That he is, having
imagined it, ‘ignorant’, suggests something else and quite different – although the behaviour
of the coxcomb leaves those around him feeling invisible, they are quite clearly present to
him, and it is their presence and the evaluative distance he sets between his person and
theirs that makes all the difference. The distance constructed from conceit is perceived by
others as a complete failure of acknowledgement, although it is really a pronouncement of
their complete insignificance.32 It is not entirely obvious if the example of the coxcomb falls
within any of the four views discussed (if it does, it would probably come under the third).

31 For contemporary discussions of invisibility and its relation to recognition, see Honneth (2001),
32 This might be an example of what Macalester Bell calls ‘passive contempt’, which ‘involves being
aware of the existence of the contemned in a very limited way, and to experience this sort of
contempt is to notice and attend to a person just enough to ascertain that he is of no importance’
(Bell, 2013: 49)
Nevertheless, my aim in presenting those views in such a manner has been to offer, and should only be seen as offering, a rough schematic sketch of the more significant ways in which Mandeville takes acting without regard to the effects of one’s action to mean.

If from the instinct of sovereignty an agent desires uncontrolled liberty, and would have everything he likes without concern for right or consequence, then it must invoke a certain kind of reaction in the instances where the will is challenged. It is no mere coincidence but an unfortunate fact that everyone he encounters works from the same drives, and the problem for him is not just that they do, but that it involves something far more unpleasant: his unique standing appears so only from one perspective, and that perspective is, unhappily or perhaps even embarrassingly enough, *his own*. Seen as he sees others, he is in their eyes of little worth or value; he is a hindrance or an obstacle, potentially a tool or an instrument, to be made subject to their will or dispatched for their whims. He claims a right to everything he desires, but the right is refused and the claim denied if the desire is shared, or perhaps even when it is not. But such refusals or denials are not merely refusals or denials as such; they come across as radical denials of the individual’s self-understanding, denials, that is to say, of his conception of his sovereign agency, however vague or pronounced that awareness of agency may be. He is a sovereign without recognition, and so no sovereign at all. Of course, this reversal can hardly be regarded with any satisfaction. And so it seems he cannot but at the same time ‘dislike every Body, that, acting from the same Principle, have in all their Behaviour not a special Regard to him’ (*FB II*: 270-271).\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\) Or as Mandeville says elsewhere, ‘ALL untaught Animals are only sollicitous of pleasing themselves, and naturally follow the bent of their own Inclinations, without considering the good or harm that from their being pleased will accrue to others’ (*FB I*: 41).
Dislike might seem a muted or, given the stakes, measured enough response, but this is to think too innocently about the possibilities Mandeville takes it to have. Indeed as he explores the subject further, he detects just

how immensely we undervalue every thing, when it comes in Competition with ourselves; for, tho’ our greatest Dread be Destruction, and we know no other Calamity, equal to the Dissolution of our Being, yet such unequitable Judges this Instinct of Sovereignty is able to make us, that rather than not have our Will, which we count our Happiness, we chuse to inflict this Calamity on others, and bring total Ruin on such, as we think to be Obstacles to the Gratification of our Appetites; and this Men do, not only for Hindrances that are present, or apprehended as to come, but likewise for former Offences, and Things that are past redress (FB II: 274).

So large are the effects of the sovereign instinct upon us that any opposition to its satisfaction must suffer replies of retribution and revenge. The great fault in any such reply lies in its pretensions to a sovereign status, ‘for whoever pretends to revenge himself, must claim a Right to a Judicature within, and an Authority to punish: Which, being destructive to the mutual Peace of all Multitudes, are for that Reason the first things, that in every civil Society are snatch’d away out of every Man’s Hands, as dangerous Tools, and vested in the governing part, the Supreme Power only’ (FB II: 275).” Yet the reverberations of sovereign vengeance, however false and lacking in foundations they may be, do not solely apply

34 Mandeville condemns the claims of the sovereign instinct in both the state of nature and in the civil state. I shall say something about how he challenges its claims in both these arenas in what follows. At this point, however, I am mainly trying to extract from his remarks the nature of the instinct itself.
retrospectively. They traverse the present and range over the future. Present obstacles are to be demolished, future ones deterred or eradicated before they become insurmountable or perhaps even obstacles at all.

By its nature, the desire to have our wills extends beyond the mere appropriation of things. It encompasses anything the heart sets upon, and it includes, in ways already familiar, spirited demands for esteem and recognition. ‘In Moses, the first natural Man, the first that was born of a Woman, by envying and slaying his Brother, gives an ample Evidence of the domineering Spirit, and the Principle of Sovereignty, which I have asserted to belong to our Nature’ (FB II: 309-310). The significance of this episode lies in Mandeville’s treatment of its elements and the connections he makes of them: impelled by the sovereign instinct, Cain ruthlessly and remorselessly took the life of his brother, angered as he was after the most impartial of judges, God himself, delivered generous praise to one and denied commendation to the other. The domineering spirit, as it appears here, was itself focused on winning, or perhaps more awkwardly, conquering, esteem. And such were its demands that even when its claims were denied by an impartial judge, by the true sovereign of all things, the judgment was itself rejected, the decision dismissed, and out in search of revenge it went. Mandeville’s association of the sovereign instinct to recognition in this account further frees us from taking self-liking and the instinct as two distinct items in an individual’s psychological configuration. It strengthens instead the position that they are inescapably connected, that the sovereign instinct is indeed an expression of self-liking understood in more general terms.
The sum of the foregoing reflections leads to two thoughts. One is that the sovereign instinct is responsible for the vast array of human conflict and destruction witnessed in the world. In fact, Mandeville holds self-liking and the instinct of sovereignty responsible for most of the conflicts, whatever their scale, which arise between individuals and the groups they compose: ‘We know from History, and daily Experience teaches us, that almost all the Wars and private Quarrels, that have at any time disturbed Mankind, have had their Rise from the Differences about Superiority, and the meum & tuum’ (FB II: 309). These conflicts, very importantly, are not the result of scarcity. As Mandeville describes it, ‘it is inconsistent with the Nature of human Creatures, that any Number of them should ever live together in tolerable Concord, without Laws or Government, let the Soil, the Climate, and their Plenty be whatever the most luxuriant Imagination shall be pleas’d to fancy them’ (FB II: 309). It is not implausible to say that, even under conditions of scarcity, self-liking would demand not only that one be the recipient of the sought after item ahead of others, but that others ought to agree, as it were, to such a distribution, for one is to be held in the highest regard by all. The second is that the quarrels between persons are not just occasioned by the injuries they cause one another, but by the deeper implications of such injuries, that is to say, the expression of contempt or disregard which stands behind the offence. And it is through such relations of disregard that we may account for the ferocity behind contestations over superiority and claims of right. In this way, Mandeville’s observations anticipate, if they do not already express, ideas Rousseau and Hegel would later make famous. In Rousseau, it involves the idea where ‘any intentional wrong became an affront, because along with the harm that resulted from the injury, the offended man saw in it contempt for his person that was
often more unbearable than the harm itself. It was thus that ... vengeances became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel' (*DI* 166/, *OC* 3 170). In Hegel, it is the thought that “the man who desires a thing humanly acts not so much to possess the thing as to make another recognize his right ... to that thing, to make another recognize him as the owner of the thing. And he does this – in the final analysis – in order to make the other recognize his superiority over the other’ (Kojève, 1980: 40).

It is important that the instinct of sovereignty describes an innate psychological force or disposition of individuals, one so deeply rooted as to render it almost ineradicable despite the best efforts of social education. In this way, it speaks not of a condition where men may be said to have a natural right, or liberty, to do all that is deemed necessary for their preservation in the absence of government, civil laws, or public regulation. Nor does it speak to what is implied by that liberty, that men suffer no obligation to desist from some particular act or another in the pursuit of such ends. The observation that one has a desire for uncontrolled liberty, and would ‘put in a claim to everything he can lay his hands on’ at the encouragement of the sovereign instinct, is not to be understood as meaning that he has a ‘right to all things’ in the sense specified by Hobbes (*LN XIV*: 86-87).” Mandeville does on occasion make a direct appeal to the notion of ‘right’ in his exposition, as when, for

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35 Hobbes does place certain restrictions on this. Gratuitous cruelty, for example, would not count as a proper exercise of this right. I have mentioned Hobbes here to avoid a possible confusion regarding Mandeville’s account, given his language and the influence of Hobbes on his thought. For one might confuse this with Hobbes’s statement that in the state of nature, ‘every man has a right to every thing’, or, as mentioned, that each has a ‘right to all things’ (*LN XIV*: 86-87). It is certainly possible to construct an argument where Mandeville can be said to be making such a claim, or at least to be in agreement with Hobbes. However, this is not Mandeville’s claim, at least not here. At this point in the discussion, he is talking about the effects of the instinct of sovereignty. To connect Hobbes’s right and Mandeville’s instinct would involve, in fact, a double misunderstanding of Hobbes’s account.
example, he speaks of ‘the Right, Men naturally claim to every thing they can get’ (FB II: 201). But ‘right’ as it is used in this context specifies a claim of (private) dominion rather than a designation of liberty (it should, of course, be perfectly clear that Hobbes would agree with this general account, insofar as the statement concerns a first-personal attitude rather than a state of affairs description of the state of nature). If the instinct, and perhaps self-liking in its comparative guise more generally, relates to something in Hobbes’s thought, which it certainly does, it is his portrayal of the vainglorious nature of men and the insatiability of their appetites, although it is not, it must be said, simply reducible to these items (EL I.7.7: 45; I.14.3-4: 78; LN VI: 38; VIII: 49; Johnston, 1986: 32-35). Yet at the same time the Hobbesian account of a natural right to all things is not straightforwardly incompatible with Mandeville’s general outlook. In fact, it might be seen as implicit in his description of the state of nature. But not even this much is clear, since Cleomenes tells us later that all human beings have an equal right to the earth prior to the establishment of societies, a point he uses to condemn the sovereign instinct as a ‘false principle’. ‘Nothing’, he says, ‘likewise seems more true to all, that have made any tolerable use of their Faculty of Thinking, than that out of the Society, before any Division was made, either by contract or otherwise, all Men would have an equal Right to the Earth’ (FB II: 222). If this

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36 How seriously, and in what manner, we are to take Mandeville’s word here is certainly a matter of contention. Part of the problem is his insistence that thinking the earth and animals as made for us is a folly of human pride. I have suggested taking the Hobbesian route above (it would make greater sense to read this through a Hobbesian rather than a Lockean lens). But the statement should certainly be read in comparison with Locke’s treatment of property. Locke famously challenged Filmer’s suggestion that the earth was under the private dominion of Adam (and his heirs, by grant or permission or succession from him), and thus his property exclusively, arguing instead that ‘by this Grant God gave him [Adam] not Private Dominion over the Inferior Creatures, but right in common with all Mankind ... upon the account of Property here given him’ (TT I:23-24, 157). Later, Locke says that ‘the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men’ and speaks of God as having ‘given the World to Men in common’ (TT II:27-26, 287-286). Mandeville would have probably disagreed with the dominion of humans over animals, however. And if we
represents a claim right (very roughly, as Locke would understand it), then it appears that
men in the state of nature could indeed have obligations to restrain their appropriative
conduct. However, it is more likely that Mandeville means to suggest something closer to
Hobbes’s position, which holds that ‘Until a commonwealth is instituted all things belong to
all men and there is nothing a man can call his own that any other man cannot claim by the
same right as his (for where all things are common, nothing can be the proper to any one
man)’ (DC VI.15: 85). ‘Natura dedit omnia omnibus, that Nature hath given all things to all
men’, sinks, then, into the stance of the ‘right of all men to all things’, which ‘is in effect no
better than if no man had a right to any thing’ (EL I.14.10). Seen in this light, the claims of
private dominion that follow from the sovereign instinct are not just pointless but in a
manner of speaking specious, since dominion is shared by everyone, and so really held by
no one, all claims to the contrary notwithstanding. At this point, Mandeville looks more the
contemporary of Hobbes than of Locke on the issue. After all, he does not say that the
sovereign instinct is wrong, but rather that it is false.

But Mandeville does not merely leave his critique of the instinct of sovereignty at that. He
gives us a second reason why it amounts to a false principle:

Man of Sense, Learning and Experience, that has been well educated, will always find
out the difference between Right and Wrong in things diametrically opposite; and there

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37 I have already suggested that Mandeville’s view of politics and political thought is influenced by
Hobbes. This, along with his arguments more generally, lead to the conclusion offered above. ‘No,
fickle timorous Animal, the Gods have made you for Society, and design’d that Millions of you,
when well join’d together, should compose the strong Leviathan’ (FB I: 179).
are certain Facts, which he will always condemn, and others which he will always approve of: To kill a Member of the same Society, that has not offended us, or to rob him, will always be bad; and to cure the Sick, and be beneficent to the Publick, he will always pronounce to be good Actions in themselves: and for a Man to do as he would be done by, he will always say is a good Rule in Life; and not only Men of great Accomplishments, and such as have learn’d to think abstractly, but all Men of midling Capacities, that have been brought up in Society, will agree in this, in all Countries, and in all Ages (FB II: 221-222).

These striking remarks emerge from a broader discussion of whether justice is natural or acquired, or if a being outside society could come to know what justice is and what its demands might be. The question, more precisely, is whether the ‘wildest Man, you can imagine’ would ‘have from Nature some Thoughts of Justice and Injustice’ (FB II: 200). Cleomenes's answer to this is that such a being, led by the instinct of sovereignty, ‘grasping every thing to himself’ and desiring not only uncontrolled liberty but also recognition of his superiority, will form notions of propriety from these materials: he will consider the right he claims to everything to be, as a matter of fact, right. ‘Then they would soon be undeceiv’d’, Horatio replies, ‘if two or three of them met together’. Not so, Cleomenes says, they would ‘soon disagree and quarrel’ but not ‘be undeceiv’d’. Moreover, even if the wild human being were by some miracle ‘to receive a fine Judgment, and the Faculty of Thinking, and Reasoning consequentially, in as great a Perfection, as the wisest Man ever had it’, he would not ‘ever alter his Notion, of the Right he had to every thing he could manage’, for one ‘can reason but à posteriori, from something that he knows, or supposes to
be true’ (*FB II*: 222-223).” These reflections apply just as much to a child born in society, for she too comes into the world with that instinct. Hence, Mandeville will insist that we ‘cannot be cured of’ this ‘domineering Spirit’ but ‘by our Commerce with others, and the Experience of Facts, by which we are convinc’d, that we have no such Right’, which is to say that ‘the Notions of Right and Wrong are acquired’ through education, by one’s being raised in society, ‘for if they were as natural, or if they affected us, as early as the Opinion, or rather the Instinct we are born with, of taking every thing to be our own, no Child would ever cry for his eldest Brother’s Playthings’ (*FB II*: 223-224).”

The notions of right and wrong are acquired. But what of the status of the notions themselves? Mandeville’s remarks in the passage above are, as I have indicated, striking, for they suggest very strongly that the notions of right and wrong are to some extent ‘eternal Truths’, a view which goes counter to the posture of ethical relativism generally attributed to his thought (*FB II*:223). There are, after all, certain facts that cannot but suffer condemnation, and others that cannot but win approval. There are, in addition, certain principles of conduct all suitably placed persons, in all ages and in all societies, will agree upon. Yet clearly Mandeville takes something like a relativistic view of morality. It is his view that moral standards, similar to the variations we see in our tastes regarding art, beauty, architecture, fashion and so forth, yield chiefly to the peculiar modes and customs of the societies to which we belong, and so differ widely across them. Thus the alliances between siblings or between a man and his mother were considered, for example, ‘meritorious’ in

38 Mandeville’s observations are echoed in Hume’s discussion of the same, with slight modifications (*THN* 3.2.2: 314).
39 Compare with Locke’s remarks in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* §103-105.
the East but ‘abominable’ elsewhere. But while this may be so, he thinks it ‘certain that, whatever Horror we conceive at the Thoughts of them, there is nothing in Nature repugnant against them, but what is built upon Mode and Custom’ (*FB I*: 326-331).

Notions of right and wrong are peculiar to each society. Nature offers no moral standards by which we all ought to live.

Together, the two positions return a tension. One way of dissolving the tension, arguably the easiest, involves dismissing one of the two views as unreflective of Mandeville’s considered position. This requires taking an extended view of the aims, targets and strategies of his work as a whole. Inconsistencies are to be accounted for in terms of mere slippage, or they can, with greater difficulty, be shown as part of a broader rhetorical strategy at work. Mandeville rather famously uses satire and irony to get his point across to his readers, and taking these various elements into account, one might consider his seemingly universalist ethical remarks as reflective of such satirical excursions. To take his statements regarding the universality of certain ethical facts seriously is to have missed the point of the joke, to stay embarrassingly silent amidst the laughter. There are certainly merits to this view, even if a lot more needs to be said for its demonstration and validity. This I shall not attempt. I shall, however, say something about how we might take his remarks about universality seriously without giving up the more openly relativistic elements of his thought. This will, admittedly, require that we leave for the moment the current inquiry into the instinct of sovereignty. But we shall come out of this digression with materials that will aid in the construction of a more complete picture of the instinct.
The first thing to notice is that his statements about ethical facts are not without qualification. The items on the list of ethical facts are (or at least must be) few and the list itself severely restricted. When Mandeville says that there are facts about right conduct, he has particularly in mind certain obvious harms and benefits no member of any society will dispute. Killing murderously, robbing another of her property, or healing the sick, actions supposedly commended or condemned consistently, are the examples of choice. But why consider the ethical quality of such actions indubitable? Now, it is not insignificant that such actions are described as enactments within political society. Judgments concerning the ethical quality of those enactments are, likewise, made by members of a society, though beyond that bare stipulation a set of conditions which ultimately affects whether a subject will in fact be capable of making the right sorts of judgment stands. The point, in any case, is that these are not ethical facts that somehow hang from natural ones, from the basic properties of the natural world, or by the light of an à priori reason out of which laws prescribing standards of right conduct between human beings may be discerned. They are rather those that come about from the very idea of a social union itself.40 By society, Mandeville understands:

a Body Politick, in which Man either subdued by Superior Force, or by Persuasion drawn from his Savage State, is become a Disciplin’d Creature, that can find his own Ends in Labouring for others, and where under one Head or other Form of Government each Member is render’d Subservient to the Whole, and all of them by

40 I have used the word ‘union’ here intentionally; following Hobbes’s use in De Cive, where ‘union’ is contrasted with ‘concord’. I shall say more about this later, but I am following and indebted to the discussion by Hont (2015).
cunning Management are made to Act as one. For if by Society we only mean a Number of People, that without Rule or Government should keep together out of a natural Affection to their Species or Love of Company, as a Herd of Cows or a Flock of Sheep, then there is not in the World a more unfit Creature for Society than Man; an Hundred of them that should be all Equals, under no Subjection, or Fear of any Superior upon Earth, could never Live together awake Two Hours without Quarrelling, and the more Knowledge, Strength, Wit, Courage and Resolution there was among them, the worse it would be (FB I: 347-348).

Societies arise out of the various attempts to bring order to an otherwise conflictual state of affairs between persons, and standing among the many things that raise discord between them are the competing claims of superiority and, in close connection, possession. In the case of individuals living in the state of nature, the right to judge of such disputes is claimed as well, which follows, again and naturally enough, from the instinct of sovereignty. Beyond this, the ‘vast Esteem we have of ourselves, and the small Value we have for others, make us all very unfair Judges in our own Cases’ (FB I: 80). In an important passage on these matters, he writes:

All Men are partial in their Judgments, when they compare themselves to others; no two Equals think so well of each other, as both do of themselves; and where all Men have an equal Right to judge, there needs no greater Cause of Quarrel, than a Present amongst them with an Inscription of detur digniori. Man in his Anger behaves himself in the same manner as other Animals; disturbing, in the Pursuit of Self-preservation, those
they are angry with; and all of them endeavour, according as the degree of their Passion
is, either to destroy, or cause Pain and Displeasure to their Adversaries. That these
Obstacles to Society are the Faults, or rather Properties of our Nature, we may know by
this, that all Regulations and Prohibitions, that have been contriv’d for the temporal
Happiness of Mankind, are made exactly to tally with them, and to obviate those
Complaints, which I said were every where made against Mankind. The principal Laws
of all Countries have the same Tendency; and there is not one, that does not point at
some Frailty, Defect, or Unfitness for Society, that Men are naturally subject to; but all
of them are plainly design’d as so many Remedies, to cure and disappoint that natural
Instinct of Sovereignty, which teaches Man to look upon every thing as centring in
himself, and prompts him to put in a Claim to every thing, he can lay his Hands on (FB
II: 271).

‘The undoubted Basis of all Societies’, for Mandeville, ‘is Government’; union is
impossible without it, ‘No Multitudes can live peaceably’ in its absence (FB II: 183-184;
230; 269). Governments cannot ‘subsist without Laws, and no Laws can be effectual long
unless they are wrote down’. The ‘Invention of Letters’ thus marks ‘the third and last Step
to Society’ (FB II: 269). We shall come back to the origins of society in greater detail in the
next chapter. For now, our attention must be focused elsewhere, on the idea of a social
union itself. Now, ‘Laws and Government are to the Political Bodies of Civil Societies,
what the Vital Spirits and Life it self are to the Natural Bodies of Animated Creatures’ (FB
Societies thus consist in their arrangement of individuals into a body politic, where each becomes a member of a larger entity constituted by government and law. They embody the efforts of many over a long tract of time to quell the quarrels and disputes between men unfettered by authority or rule. Men come to blows as each absorbed in the procurement of esteem or the objects of desire antagonizes those around him, whether indirectly and innocently, or directly and maliciously. These antagonisms result in great part from a specific element in human nature, the sovereign instinct within, though self-preservation, too, makes trouble for us. To establish order, the regulations societies are composed of must attend to the effects of this instinct, or better yet, to the instinct itself. The principal laws of all countries have for this reason the same tendency; they look to put to rout the effects of the instinct, which is the same everywhere. Societies are made what

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41 Mandeville goes on to say “and as those that study the Anatomy of Dead Carcases may see, that the chief Organs and nicest Springs more immediately required to continue the Motion of our Machine, are not hard Bones, strong Muscles and Nerves, nor the smooth white Skin that so beautifully covers them, but small trilling Films and little Pipes that are either over-look’d, or else seem inconsiderable to the Vulgar Eyes” (FB I: 3). On this statement, Brandon Turner (2015: 5) observes that ‘the Fable’s biological imagery goes well beyond the didacticism of Leviathan’s frontispiece; indeed, the Fable’s opening lines critique Hobbes’s over-simplified symbology ... Mandeville makes frequent use of this idea—that the minute and otherwise unnoticed movements of society’s most insignificant parts constitute its animating force—here, however, he uses it to deepen and enrich the body politic metaphor in ways that draw on his extensive medical training’.  
42 Or as Mandeville says elsewhere: ‘Thus Men make Laws to obviate every Inconveniency they meet with; and as Times discover to them the Insufficiency of those Laws, they make others with an Intent to enforce, mend, explain or repeal the former’ (EOH I: 16); and that ‘the principal Laws of all Countries are Remedies against human Frailties; I mean, that they are design’d as Antidotes, to prevent the ill Consequences of some Properties, inseparable from our Nature; which yet in themselves, without Management or Restraint, are obstructive and pernicious to Society’ (FB II: 283)  
43 Mandeville is not at all clear about how self-preservation is to be related to the instinct of sovereignty, and to the disputes between individuals. The passage could be read in a number of ways.  
44 Again, as Mandeville describes it, ‘The First Business of all Governments, I mean the Task which all Rulers must begin with, is, to make Men tractable and obedient, which is not to be perform’d, unless we can make them believe, that the Instructions and Commands we give them have a plain Tendency to the Good of every Individual, and that we say Nothing to them, but what we know to be true. To do this effectively, Human Nature ought to be humor’d as well as studied: Whoever
they are by the (occasionally unreflective or unconscious) undertaking of men to take men out of their native conflictual state, to arrest the feuds lit by nature. As a consequence, they cannot merely repeat, replicate, or reproduce the conditions they were meant to resolve. To do so would be to fail, to claim to have done so without contradiction or incoherence, delusion.

If there are any ethical facts at all, then, it is because there are certain kinds of treatment of others that are ‘inherent in there being such a thing’ as society, or because they relate to actions that very obviously bring benefits or harms to something that may be intelligibly grasped as a social body, and to the members that make up that body. Notions of right and wrong may not be natural – they are artificial, the products of human invention or intervention – but they are not indiscriminately arbitrary. Some very limited set of those

45 The quoted phrase is from Williams (2005: 5). There might be an accusation of anachronism here, but it should be noted that (1) Williams bases his account on Hobbes and the notion of politics derived from his philosophy (but, of course, goes beyond it), and (2) I am not at all suggesting that Mandeville has anything like the account of a basic legitimation demand [BLD] Williams articulates, an ethical account which ‘does not represent a morality that is prior to politics’ but one that is ‘inherent in there being such a thing as politics’ (5). Getting to the BLD involves a complex argumentative sequence which Mandeville’s observations do not offer, and he says nothing about legitimation here. Nevertheless, Mandeville does, at least in my view, gesture towards the idea of an ethics that builds out of political society. Critics of Williams have suggested that his claims are untenable, for they must eventually ‘fall back … upon some foundational moral premise that all persons matter’ (Sleat, 2010: 495). This criticism is, I think, a mistake. For an excellent defense of Williams, see Hall (2015).

46 I have relied on Hume’s discussion of justice and its status in suggesting that the notions of right and wrong, while artificial, are not necessarily arbitrary. On justice, Hume writes: ‘I have already observ’d, that justice takes its rise from human conventions; and that these are intended as a remedy to some inconveniences, which proceed from the concurrence of certain qualities of the human mind with the situation of external objects. The qualities of the mind are selfishness and limited generosity: And the situation of external objects is their easy change, join’d to their scarcity in comparison of the wants and desires of men’. Like Mandeville, he thinks that human beings will come to learn about justice (and learn to act in accordance with its demands) only by being raised in

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notions are bound up in fundamental although not always apparent ways with what it is for a group of people to live together as members of a single body politic. ‘The Bond of Society’, Mandeville notes, ‘exacts from every Member a certain Regard for others, which the Highest is not exempt from in the presence of the Meanest even in an Empire’ (FB I: 79).” Thus the regard one must have for the life of another member of one’s society, for instance, is basic: it can never be right to take another’s life in the absence of an injury suffered. To deny this essential principle, and to hope to sustain the idea of a society in the midst of such a denial, is incongruent. In close connection, the impropriety of robbing another is inherent in (and arguably makes sense only within) a society that has settled upon some notion of private property as its configuration of rightful possession. This is an admittedly weakened version of the general claim, since private property is not here described as inherent in there being such a thing as society. But it may well be that Mandeville thought it was. Curing the sick, by contrast, is not inherent in either of these ways, but it is arguably beneficial to members of a social body, and recognizably so to individuals in their self-conceptions as members of such a social body. Certainly, these notions society. He goes on to say: ‘when I deny justice to be a natural virtue, I make use of the word, natural, only as oppos’d to artificial. In another sense of the word; as no principle of the human mind is more natural than a sense of virtue; so no virtue is more natural than justice. Mankind is an inventive species; and where an invention is obvious and absolutely necessary, it may as properly be said to be natural as anything that proceeds immediately from original principles, without the intervention of thought or reflection. Tho’ the rules of justice be artificial, they are not arbitrary. Nor is the expression improper to call them laws of nature; if by natural we understand what is common to any species, or even if we confine it to mean what is inseparable from the species’ (THN 3.2.1: 311). The status of justice was something Hume struggled with, and in a response to Hutcheson’s criticism, he made it clear that while he understood justice to be ‘artificial’, he did not think it was thereby ‘unnatural’. For an excellent discussion of Hume’s struggles on this subject, see Haakonssen (1981: 21-26). Haakonssen discusses the second passage quoted on p.22, and Hume’s response to Hutcheson on p.23. There are parallels between Hume and Mandeville here, but it is of course important not to equate their views entirely. Mandeville will not, for example, agree to the notion of calling justice natural, even along the two narrow definitions of ‘natural’ posited by Hume. 47 In context, this sentence appears in a section discussing the desire for esteem, shame, modesty and impudence. But it applies to the actions discussed as well, since Mandeville thinks that killing another or taking her property involves showing no regard for another.
are not themselves beyond qualification; specific cases can raise difficulties or objections, but the notions of right and wrong hold generally nonetheless. (Three things are worth mentioning here. First, these facts are not facts because every member of a society recognizes them to be so, but because they are inherent in, or deeply connected to, the arrangement of individuals into a body politic. Second, it is not necessary that members see them as facts inherent in the idea of a body politic (insofar as they do see them as facts), and so of any body politic. It is enough for them to recognize the notions of right and wrong as features of their own society. The universal element is not generated from agreement, nor is it generated from every member’s recognition of the inherency of those features in the constitution of a society conceived in abstraction. Third, while some notions of right and wrong have their basis in the idea of political membership, the question of membership is not itself resolved by these notions, and neither should we expect it to be). I take something like this to be how Mandeville must view the matter if he meant for his comments about ethical facts to be taken seriously, but whether the view is ultimately sustainable is a deep and difficult question, which I cannot pursue further here. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which ethical notions, while artificial and for the most part products of the unique customs and modes of a particular society, are not contingent all the way down.

The present discussion has carried us some distance away from the inquiry into the instinct of sovereignty. But it has, in the process, given us the materials to look deeper into it. It was said earlier that the instinct expresses a desire for uncontrolled liberty and an impatience of restraint. This, in turn, conveys a drive to do and be unimpeded in doing whatever one
wants, or to acquire and be unimpeded in acquiring whatever one desires." The thesis should not, however, be taken to involve merely a desire for the absence of external interference in the pursuit of wants, in the more or less spatial sense of the physical hindrances put up by others, but also an impatience of legal (and even moral) restraint. Life in society is for Mandeville a life lived ‘under the Restraint of Laws’ (*FB II*: 139). But while this may be so, and while it is only within society that we can hope to rid ourselves of the sovereign instinct, the instinct, being one ‘of great Power’, is nevertheless a ‘Frailty hardly to be cured’, something immensely difficult ‘to destroy, eradicate and pull ... out of the Heart of Man’ (*FB II*: 273). In the depths of the socialized heart it flows in secret, prompting individuals to bid defiance to the prescribed rules of social commerce. And it is in these bold attempts at defiance that we shall discover vice. As Mandeville puts it, ‘Vice proceeds from the same Origin in Men, as it does in Horses; the Desire of uncontroul’d Liberty, and Impatience of Restraint, are not more visible in the one, than they are in the other; and a Man is then call’d vicious, when, breaking the Curb of Precepts and Prohibitions, he wildly follows the unbridled Appetites of his untaught or ill-managed Nature’ (*FB II*: 271).

To this description the desire for dominion must be added. Certainly, the combination of these elements was not an unfamiliar idea. Hobbes, in the opening lines of Chapter XVII of the *Leviathan*, describes men as creatures ‘who naturally love liberty, and dominion over

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48 There is a sense in which this closely follows Hobbes’s account of liberty or freedom, which ‘signifieth (properly) the absence of opposition; ... external impediments of motion’ and ‘a FREEMAN, is he, that in those things, which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has a will to’ (*LN XXI*: 139). The scholarship on Hobbes and liberty is extensive. For two recent treatments, see Petit (2005) and Skinner (2008). Skinner argues, convincingly and against Petit and many others, that Hobbes’s view of liberty changes from his earlier work to its final statement in the *Leviathan*. For two other sophisticated treatments of Hobbes philosophy more generally, see Johnston (1986) and Oakeshott (2000).
others’ (LN XVII: 111). A similar image is encountered when we read Locke’s Some Thoughts Concerning Education, where children are said to have a natural love of liberty and, even more than liberty, dominion. By dominion he meant two things. First, that it represented the desire of adolescents ‘for nothing but to have their wills. They would have their desires submitted to by others; they contend for a ready compliance from all about them, especially from those that stand near or beneath them in age or degree, as soon as they come to consider others with those distinctions’. And second, that they ‘desire to have things be theirs; they would have property and possession, pleasing themselves with the power which that seems to give, and the right they thereby have to dispose of them as they please’ (STCE §103-105: 93-94).

Locke’s remarks are helpful, for there is an ambiguity in Mandeville’s statements about the claims which emerge from the instinct of sovereignty. At one level, human beings are said to claim a right to the things they desire. But at another level of questioning, Mandeville invokes a stronger operation of the claim itself. In this operation, what is expressed is a claim of a right to everything, of how individuals ‘imagine every thing to be theirs’, and so forth. The problem, of course, is that the two statements do not express exactly the same idea. For one thing, if I claim a right to all the things I desire, and only the things I desire, it follows that my claims will be extremely limited if my desires are extremely limited. On the basis of claiming a right to the things I desire alone, Mandeville will not get what he needs to illustrate the discord he seeks to illustrate. An obvious solution is to take the second statement as the ascendant claim. Since Mandeville describes as an effect of the instinct of sovereignty a desire for dominion, it is much clearer to say that, because of the desire, all
the pleasurable things that come under my notice, or that fall within my horizon, are claimed as mine. Another way of putting the point is that the desire for dominion involves not merely a claim of right to the things I desire but a more general desire for things to belong to me. Understood in this way, the sovereign instinct explains the extensiveness of our desires, and our claims of right to the objects of those desires.

Only in part, however, does the stress of dominion fall on property and possession. Now, what is often desired is a will un-derailed and undisrupted, an open path to pleasure. But things are not quite as simple as that, since the sovereign instinct can indeed go a step further. To be left alone to do as one pleases stands merely at one end of a list of possible dictates, demands of submission and compliance the other. There is a question, though, if the latter must always involve a desire for lasting compliance, or, and perhaps differently, an enduring desire for compliance, or both. It might be thought that the demand for compliance (on either or both of the two alternatives) can be episodic rather than habitual, singular rather than repeated. This, however, seems unlikely. For there is a sense in which the notion of dominion cannot coincide with the isolated or the merely episodic. Of the sovereign instinct we have been told that it is in part a general desire for dominion. As an instinct, a general desire, it cannot be sensibly thought to lie prevailingly dormant, working its way to the surface only infrequently. Similarly, a single or infrequent insistence that another obey or comply with my will, an insistence not itself singular or infrequent because of restraint or subjection, can only be called a desire for dominion with great caution. The infrequent insistence of compliance under conditions where restraint is absent suggests something other than a general desire for dominion motivates its call. The desire for
dominion along this particular dimension can be best described, then, as an enduring demand for others to act in accordance with my commands or wishes, which can be filled out in various ways according to the sort of command given, and the circumstances within which it is issued. If there is a complication in trying to state in more precise terms what exactly compliance and having one’s desires submitted to entails, it is because any attempt to propose a single view consonant with the portrayal of submission and compliance is impossible, or perhaps even an error, for submission and compliance admit precisely of a range of possibilities.

These remarks, taken together, show the instinct of sovereignty as one composed of three elements – the desire for uncontrolled liberty, the desire for possession or for things to belong to me, and the desire for others to submit to my desires and comply with my will. The sovereign instinct, it must not be neglected, is a consequence of self-liking, the high esteem each has for himself above everyone else, which involves not only a sense of superiority but a desire for that superiority to be recognized by others. While Mandeville does not give a very satisfactory account of the relations between these elements, it is not difficult to see the demands of the sovereign instinct as features of self-liking, as advancing from a self-conception of superiority which demands recognition. And however exactly these elements are to be understood in their relations to one another, it is certain that they can all be compressed in a single act or interaction. In this way, the desire for esteem is a desire for one’s special regard for one’s self to be recognized by others, a special regard which emerges from a conception of sovereign agency. The sought after response is one of recognition in terms of confirmation. But the desire to have one’s self-valuation confirmed
by others does not in this case arise solely out of diffidence or a want of confidence in the valuation one has set upon one’s being. I do not want to deny that diffidence may indeed have something to do with the struggle for recognition even in this form. Yet it would be an error of judgment to simply reduce it to that. The desire for recognition that builds out of an instinct of sovereignty springs not merely from diffidence, but also from a self-assertive picture; it issues not merely in a desire for esteem, but a demand that it be given. There is a sense in which one is sure of it, and all that remains is for others to bear witness to its certainty. If this seems paradoxical, it is only because human nature is routinely paradoxical, a view Mandeville constantly emphasizes throughout his writings.
Chapter 2: Mandeville

Genealogy, Sociability, and Esteem

The nature of man, so ungenerously described, raises some very large difficulties for Mandeville. Society, sociability, virtue, altruism, the cherished monuments of humanity, all appear rather unthinkable on his account. The predicament is not the result, as it may be supposed, of a description of human nature as composed of self-love and self-liking. For human nature while inextricably involved with the passions may yet hold other properties which lend to the reduction or mitigation of their effects, properties that may be relied upon in resisting their pull. In them we might even find the foundations of a redemptive or reverent account of human nature and existence. Thus it is that although the human

49 Nagel (1970:79) understands altruism not as ‘abject self-sacrifice, but merely a willingness to act in consideration of the interests of other persons, without the need of ulterior motives’. Williams (1973:250) says something similar: altruism ‘is not to be taken, as the term very commonly is, to mean a disposition to strenuous and unsolicited benevolent interference. Rather, it refers to a general disposition to regard the interests of others, merely as such, as making some claim on one, and, in particular, as implying the possibility of limiting one’s own projects’. These accounts are what I have in mind in speaking of altruism here.
subject is a passionate creature, she is at the same time a reasonable one. It is in the light of
this faculty that the tasks of discerning virtue and living a life in accordance with its
expectations become real options for her. And so it may be that while she is moved by the
instinct of sovereignty, she is moved also and at once by sympathy or benevolence or a
natural affection for her species. Those sentiments, with or without the support of reason,
account for her sociability and the foundations of society. The problem, however, is that
Mandeville rejects these avenues of explanatory relations as plainly false. They are false
because the details on which they depend are simply devoid of truth.

In rejecting those and other familiar routes, Mandeville looks to discredit the views of many
of his contemporaries. Indeed, involved in this rejection is a criticism of the view of human
excellence as invested with an actuality that bears, at the limit, only a pale resemblance to
reality. But more than this, the rejection suggests implicitly something Mandeville will
eventually say rather explicitly; the preoccupation of his peers with the false but finer
features of humanity can itself be explained by appealing to his account of human nature.
Their insistent claims about human nature, sociability and so forth, however flattering or
fanciful they may be, are the results not of minds commendably gripped by truth, but of
hearts notoriously flushed with pride. Everything they say about human beings will in the
end prove his thesis. Everything they will say against his view of human nature will prove his
point. The passions of self-love and self-liking animate life, and they are for this reason the
sources of our pieties and our industry, of our morals and our manners, of our sciences
and our arts, of our societies and our orders. To deny pride its place is itself to speak in its
tongue. Pride avoids by its nature an encounter with itself, for such a meeting cannot be
had without confronting certain existential truths and the terrors that lie in wait. And so we trade in lies and self-deceptions as we go about the business of life. Or so Mandeville thought.

Now, Mandeville is by no means unaware of the great difficulties of his task. But there is a sense in which those difficulties run a lot deeper than it first appears, and perhaps, as it appears even to him. There are several explanatory advantages attached to the adoption of a more exquisite picture of humanity. By disavowing that picture, however, Mandeville is unable, very obviously, to help himself to those advantages. But this means, in addition, that if his account, which occurs principally in the form of a conjectural history – a not unimportant fact – is to make any sense at all, it will do so only in such radically foreign and uninviting terms that together make whatever might be said about them quite unacceptable, especially in those instances where what is to be explained is intensely resistant to explanatory schemes constructed out of such terms. This is particularly clear in the case of morality. To get a better sense of the general ideas mentioned here, it may be useful to look, even if only briefly, outside Mandeville’s observations, to Nietzsche’s account of a genealogy of morality and Bernard Williams’ remarks on it, which involve similar considerations.

Morality, or at least the system of morality Nietzsche concerns himself with, contains certain constitutive features or items – like guilt, conscience, obligation, or blame – which distinguish it from other, and perhaps competing, systems of value. Nietzsche, Williams notes, ‘rightly claims that morality in this sense demands to be understood as self-
sufficient'; it demands to be understood and explained in terms internal to the system itself. It is, to describe the thought from the other direction, very basically resistant to 'explanation in terms of anything else at all'. This implies, further, that a functional explanation of the type Nietzsche gives in his genealogical account can only be met with a general hostility by the morality system, since it tries to explain the moral system from, as it were, the outside. Moreover, since the genealogical explanation is expressed 'in terms of forces that are not merely simpler or more primitive or non-moral or “lower”, but are among the supposed enemies of morality - hatred and resentment and baffled self-assertion', the 'process invoked in the explanation does not merely avoid being understood as intentionalist or deliberative; it must be unconscious, since no-one could arrive at that result while acknowledging this route to it'. Anyone committed to such a moral outlook will for those reasons be fundamentally opposed to a genealogical construction of the sort just discussed. Acceptance, if it comes at all, must come at a cost, and if one can somehow be persuaded or convinced to accept it, her outlook will, accordingly, ‘have to change’. The ‘unsettling or destructive effect’ of Nietzsche’s genealogy, Williams thinks, lies for the most part in those features of his account (Williams, 2002: 37).

Similar things can be said of Mandeville’s approach. Now Mandeville is standardly described as someone who presented a scandalized virtue to a scandalized world. Just how he did and continues to do so is not, despite that description, often clearly specified. It could stand for how he scandalizes the seemingly virtuous, since they, on his view, usually or perhaps even invariably act from false principles in the performance of public deeds. If that were all, Mandeville would have had - and I shall come back to this - little trouble
accepting the charge. Or it could stand for the scandalizing of moral virtue itself, if one supposes morality to be real, not fictional; natural, not artificial; divine not human; a truth discernible by reason or revelation or an innate moral sense, not an invention of, and something acquired through, the cunning of political craft. No doubt Mandeville has been accused of both these things and is in some ways responsible for the charges. After all, he appears unapologetically amused as he works his way to what is perhaps his most arresting announcement, that it is ‘but the skilful Management of wary Politicians’ which ‘first put Man upon crossing his Appetites and subduing his dearest Inclinations’, and ‘the nearer we search into human Nature, the more we shall be convinced, that the Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride’ (FB 1: 51).

The announcement was unambiguous in its intention to offend the moral sensibilities of its readers. This is not to deny its playfulness or its seriousness, its virtue or its truth, and it expressed in controversial terms the conclusion of an inquiry into the origins of moral virtue. In one sense, Mandeville can be seen as offering a genealogical project of his own, in this instance, about a morality marked out by certain notions like duty, benevolence, sincerity and blame. This moral system is likewise resistant to explanations constructed

50 In an engaging study, Jennifer Welchman (2007) raises the question of whether Mandeville was ever successfully rebutted by any of his critics. Working through the responses of Hutcheson, Butler, Berkeley, Hume, and Smith, she argues that they all fail in their attempts to offer a convincing response to the challenge Mandeville sets down.

51 According to Kaye, ‘there were two great contemporary currents of thought—the one ascetic, the other rationalistic, with regard to morality at the time. According to the first—a common theological position—virtue was a transcending of the demands of corrupt human nature, a conquest of self, to be achieved by divine grace. According to the second, virtue was conduct in accord with the dictates of sheer reason’. Whichever the case, Mandeville’s account would have offended both. It is worth mentioning too that Kaye thinks Mandeville uses builds his ethics on these ideas, but that is, as my reading will show, incorrect. Mandeville was attempting to give a naturalistic account of morality. In
out of terms external to it. More importantly, the terms or forces Mandeville relies upon to explain morality - most notably pride, but also the related notions of desires for and of superiority, insincerity, deception and so forth - are, much like those in Nietzsche’s exposition, not merely simpler or non-moral (though this too is a problem), but also inherently opposed to morality; they are the violent combatants morality itself seeks to vanquish. For those committed to the moral outlook, the only response available to such a description, one which has morality developing out of pride for example, is, perhaps, that it is intolerably false. This puts us, finally, in a position to see how the process described in his report must for Mandeville be, in a manner of speaking, unconscious as well, and for a reason already encountered: no one could come to this result while acknowledging at the same time such a passage to it. Mandeville will openly insist on something to this effect. The practices to which we ascribe so much conscious intentionality are not straightforwardly intentional, nor are they the singular works of genius, the outflow of an originating or creative power who designs the outcome before the deed. As he constantly reminds us of the emergence and continuation of our practices, ‘all this is done without reflection, and Men by degrees, and great Length of Time, fall as it were into these Things spontaneously’ (FB II: 139).

An immediate objection to the preceding reflections might be: “But what’s that got to do with it?” What, that is to say, have the origins of morality got to do with our present

this way, I agree with Jack (1975: 38), very broadly speaking, who tries to ‘establish the naturalistic basis of his ethics’ in his work.

52 There is a problem here given the earlier statements. Mandeville seems to be suggesting that the masses were manipulated by politicians, and that was how morality got established. The question here is how can the process then be spontaneous, and without reflection. I will examine this issue later.
valuations of it? To hold a connection between the origins of something and its current value is to commit the rather basic error of a genetic fallacy, and that surely cannot be right.\textsuperscript{53} Nietzsche and Mandeville might have given us unflattering accounts of morality’s origins, but all this means is that we are the unfortunate recipients of two dark histories of a treasured practice, nothing more. Or at least nothing which should prove unsettling or destructive to present appraisals of the system. Nietzsche himself repeatedly warns against making such a mistake, saying, at one point, that even if a morality has ‘grown out of an error’, the ‘realization of this fact would not so much as touch the problem of its value’ (\textit{GS}: 345; see also Reginster, 1997; 2006; Nehamas, 1985: 107).\textsuperscript{54}

The denigration of morality’s origins without an accompanying dissolution of its value is well expressed by Raymond Geuss (1994: 276): ‘When Nietzsche writes that our world of moral concepts has an origin (\textit{Anfang}) which “like the origin (\textit{Anfang}) of everything great

\textsuperscript{53}There are a number of formulations of the genetic fallacy but, broadly understood, it can be constituted by ‘any evaluation – positive or negative – of a statement, belief or argument on the basis of its causes or history’; or again, it involves ‘any attempt to support or to discredit a belief, statement, position or argument based upon its causal or historical genesis, or more broadly, the way in which it was formed’ (Klement, 2002: 384). Klement will suggest that genetic reasoning is not always fallacious.

\textsuperscript{54}As Reginster (1997: 283) notes in a closely related argument, ‘The view that morality is objectionable because it originates in \textit{ressentiment} does not fit well with either of these two familiar forms of criticism. Indeed, seen as an instance of either one of them, it is downright fallacious. The psychological origin of a judgment permits no inference concerning the truth of its content or the scope of its validity. Even if a psychological inquiry could establish that the belief in the value of pity originates in \textit{ressentiment}, that would still say nothing about whether or not pity \textit{is} valuable, and whether or not it is a value \textit{for all people} irrespective of their particular circumstances’. He makes this rather clear later when he says, ‘Nietzsche explicitly declares that genealogical inquiry into the origins of morality is not a critique of it, but only a means to such a critique, and a dispensable means at that’ (Reginster, 2006: 197). Nehamas (1985: 107) writes that ‘nothing is objectionable simply because it has an objectionable origin. Had Nietzsche made this argument he would indeed have been, as he sometimes seems to be, guilty of falling into the genetic fallacy, which amounts to confusing the origin of something with its nature or value’. Our concern here is not about whether Nietzsche makes such a mistake, but whether the felt destructiveness of his genealogy, and of Mandeville’s conjecture, comes down to people making that mistake.
on earth, was for a long time and thoroughly doused in blood” (GM II.6) he is opposing the sentimental assumption that things we now value (for whatever reason) must have had an origin of which we would also approve’. Nietzsche certainly holds no great attachment to the moral world or its concepts, but the notion that ‘this world had its origins in blood and cruelty is no argument against it for him’, nor is it, of course, an argument ‘in favour of it’. Yet Geuss will acknowledge, even if somewhat dismissively, that although the arguments on either side do nothing for Nietzsche with respect to the value of morality, a history of its less than admirable beginnings, if accepted, ‘might be an argument against it for those who hold the sentimental view’. Nietzsche comes close to saying this in a familiar remark, where he writes: “The inquiry into the origin [Herkunft] of our evaluations and tables of the good is in absolutely no way identical with a critique of them, as is so often believed: even though the insight into some pudenda origo [shameful origin] certainly brings with it a feeling of a diminution in value of the thing that originated thus and prepares the way to a critical mood and attitude toward it’ (WP 254).

In a reply to Geuss, Williams tells that while he ‘rightly adds that people’s beliefs about its history can affect their attitude to a set of values’, this ‘has wider impact than perhaps he allows. Particularly with regard to the morality system, it is important to people’s respect for it and hence to their confidence in it that it should not have the kind of origin that Nietzsche says it has’ (Williams, 2002: 283 n.21). Similar suggestions have been made about Mandeville’s conjectural history, surprisingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly given all that

55 The reasons for this we have already seen: morality demands to be understood as self-sufficient, something genealogy denies, and denies in a special way; it explains morality in morally objectionable terms and as something which emerges from an unconscious process.
has been said with respect to the morality system, by Christine Korsgaard. ‘The trouble with a view like Mandeville’s’, she says, ‘is not that it is not a reasonable explanation of how moral practices came about, but rather that our commitment to these practices would not survive our belief that it was true (Korsgaard, 1996: 9). Neither Williams nor Korsgaard is, I take it, holding on to the sentimental view (and of course it would be out of the question for Williams, since he comes to the morality system as a critic) or repeating the mistake of the genetic fallacy. Nor are they merely suggesting that the unsettling effects of Nietzsche’s and Mandeville’s respective histories are just to be located in the fact that people generally are involved in such errors. If that were all, the obvious solution would be to disabuse them of their silly sentimentalisms and errors of reasoning. What they mean to suggest, rather, is that there is something peculiar about how morality demands to be understood or justified (its claims of self-sufficiency and so forth), something peculiar about our expectations of it (perhaps because of the way it demands to be understood and justified and so forth), that makes the origins described by Nietzsche and Mandeville especially troubling. Or to put the point in a related but somewhat different way, there is a real question here about how far the arguments of sentimentalism or genetic fallacy will get us, of whether a commitment to morality weakened by an encounter with its hideous history can recover its strength simply with the acknowledgement of such arguments, or leave our valuations altogether undisturbed.

One could certainly, although question beggingly, push past this point and insist that there is no good reason for this. Anyone offended by such historical narratives, or who retreats from her valuation of morality as a result of its dim history, is just naively sentimental, or
reasoning poorly. Something more needs to be said if such histories are to have the shape of a destructive doctrine. There is undoubtedly more than one way to meet this request, or at least to make an attempt of it, but the most obvious involves moving away from the strictly historical side of things and into the present. Here, the basic idea is that some of the unsettling elements of those histories are still around; they continue to animate the moral enterprise. Without engaging in the project of historical recovery, however, those elements would have gone unnoticed. The historical endeavour, though not designed to take up a critical stance towards the moral system on its own, is nonetheless crucial to our getting there. But the critical stance has to pose itself as something of an internal critique for this to work. It should demonstrate not just that the practice is incongruous, but that something like a profound contradiction stands between its professed meanings, concepts and psychological operators and what is really involved in those things, as in Nietzsche’s caution of how Christian generosity in fact steals. But this in turn raises further questions. In Nietzsche’s case, it is not immediately obvious if the elements – let us take ressentiment as the principal example – are still in play, that is to say, more narrowly, if ressentiment is still a psychological mover in the moral enterprise. If it is, then we have gotten closer, on the one hand, towards articulating a broader critical project which has an important place for genealogy within it. But if it is, then we are left with the further question, on the other, about how well this fits with the genealogical method Nietzsche himself holds, since the meanings and psychological facets of a practice supposedly shift, or are discontinuous or contingent, over the course of history.\textsuperscript{56} In the case of Mandeville this might seem less of a problem, for a number of reasons. For one thing, his historical insights are conjectural

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\textsuperscript{56} For a discussion of these various themes see Leiter (2015); Reginster (2006); Ansell-Pearson (1991); Schacht (1995); and the edited volume by Schacht (1994).
rather than actual. For another, human nature for him has through the ages remained the same; the basic passions of self-love and self-liking underwrite old practices and the invention of new ones, and remain the central motivations underlying human conduct (FB I: 229). This raises the question, however, of whether Mandeville can be understood as offering something like a genealogy at all. I shall come back to this question later.

These observations still contain a number of unanswered questions, and my aim in what remains of this chapter will be to offer a reconstruction of Mandeville’s conjectural project, to explain what it involves, what he has in mind when he speaks of our practices as emerging spontaneously, without reflection, and how politeness, society, sociability and virtue are possible given the view of human nature he starts with. Standing very near the centre of his reflections on these issues will undoubtedly be the desire for recognition, but there are certainly other conditions, very important ones, that will form part of his narrative, and we shall have to account for them as we go along. I have started with these observations to demonstrate just how far Mandeville’s difficulties travel, and how destructive his reflections might appear, an observation which seems lost, if not always lurking beneath the surface, in the portrayals of Mandeville offered by scholars nevertheless keen to point out the significance of his conjectural method (Kaye 1926; Hayek 1966; Den Uyl 1987; Dickey 1990). Moreover, the radical nature of his project is not immediately obvious as one moves through the details of the conjectures themselves. Two things are worth mentioning at this point. First, I have suggested that the damaging effects of Mandeville’s conjectures are most visible in his treatment of morality. While this is so, they are not altogether absent from his treatments of society or sociability, even if the
effects might be thought to be less severe. Second, in drawing a contrast between them, I should not be taken as suggesting that Mandeville’s genealogical account rivals Nietzsche’s in sophistication, incisiveness, or destructiveness. Nor do I regard them as engaged in starkly similar projects, or that Mandeville’s genealogy, if indeed he can be said to have one at all, proceeds along Nietzschean lines. One might consider, not unreasonably, Nietzsche’s notion of *resentment* as something of greater complexity than anything Mandeville will say, if for no other reason than that it comes into view through a more elaborate or radical historicism, one which delivers a psychological portrait of deeper and darker proportions.\(^57\)

\(^57\) But even saying this much is problematic. Nietzsche begins the *Genealogy* by attacking the British psychologists for a number of things, two of which shall concern us here. The first is that they lack, quite severely, a historical sense, which is vitally important. He says, for example, that ‘what is documented, what can actually be confirmed and has actually existed, in short the entire long hieroglyphic record, so hard to decipher, of the moral past of mankind’ is of great significance. This leaves the expectation of an extensive and careful historical study, and yet, as it has often been pointed out, nothing quite so extensive is forthcoming. The ‘Just So story which Nietzsche has attributed to the English psychologists and dismissed’ is replaced, Millgram says, by ‘another Just So story’ (Millgram, 2007: 96; see also Reginster, 1997: 282). Or as Hoy (1994: 253) observes: ‘Nietzsche takes particular pains in the preface to distinguish his genealogies from those of the British, and he is especially right about Hume in remarking on the unhistorical character of their psychological studies. Nietzsche’s own genealogies, however, do not provide the detailed historical studies the preface calls for, and I cannot see that they are less psychologically speculative than Hume’s’. Second, Nietzsche criticizes the British psychologists for their views that ‘one [originally] approved unegoistic actions and called them good from the point of those to whom they were done, that is to say, those to whom they were *useful*; later one *forgot* how this approval originated’ and considered them ‘good in themselves’ (*GM* 1:2). He considers this line of reasoning absurd, since usefulness presents itself as an ‘everyday experience’, which means that ‘instead of fading from consciousness, instead of becoming easily forgotten, it must have been impressed on the consciousness more and more clearly’ (*GM* 1:3). Nietzsche’s alternative account, which relies on *resentment*, raises some basic problems and questions. Bittner (1994: 133) points out that if revenge (in the form of a new table of values building out of *resentment*) were the invention of the slaves themselves, then it cannot possibly be satisfying to them, since they must know, as its inventors, that it is fictional: slaves ‘cannot actually compensate themselves with a revenge they themselves consider imaginary’. But this means, further, that they could not have invented those values, for if they did, its imaginary qualities would be known to them. The only solution here is that they themselves must have forgotten about it, but, given Nietzsche’s own remarks about forgetting, it is terribly unclear how that might be so. Leiter (2015: 163 n.14) responds that this criticism misses the mark somewhat, for the invention is unconscious, and if so, the problem of forgetting in this instance goes away. But Leiter will himself present a new problem: how could the masters have fallen for the plot at all? To which Millgram replies, ‘One way or another, the masters have to forget an awful lot that’s perfectly obvious to them ... in the short space between criticizing
Granted this statement, the larger point can still, I think, be taken without detraction: Mandeville’s project is unsettling, for reasons already mentioned, reasons which mirror (even if in less profound and intricate ways) some of the unsettling aspects of Nietzsche’s thought.

II

The importance of Mandeville’s conjectural reflections in the history of thought has been remarked upon in quite unequivocal terms by Hayek: ‘That we do not know why we do what we do, and that the consequences of our decisions are often very different from what we imagine them to be, are the two foundations of that satire on the conceits of a rationalist age which was his initial aim’. The ‘speculations to which that jeu d’esprit led him’, Hayek goes on to report, ‘mark the definite breakthrough in modern thought of the twin ideas of evolution and of the spontaneous formation of an order, conceptions which had long been in coming, which had often been closely approached, but which just then needed emphatic statement because seventeenth-century rationalism had largely submerged earlier progress in this direction’ (Hayek, 1966: 126; Haakonsen, 1981: 21). Such was Mandeville’s ingenuity in this respect that Kaye thought it not inappropriate to say, ‘There were before Mandeville only embryonic and fragmentary considerations of the growth of society from the evolutionary point of view which he adopted ... I have found no predecessor - not even the “English psychologists” and presenting his own alternative, Nietzsche has forgotten how hard forgetting is supposed to be’ (Millgram, 2007: 95). I cannot take up how one might respond to these challenges to Nietzsche here.

58 The idea that some social phenomena are the unintended effects of human actions is not original with Hume: it is in modern time clearly anticipated by Bernard Mandeville. But Mandeville uses the idea in a rather general way and ‘mostly in an economic context, which was of course the context in which the idea was to become especially famous with Adam Smith’.
Hobbes - even remotely rivaling the account of social evolution given by Mandeville in Part II of the *Fable* (Kaye, 1924: cxii-cxiii). Mandeville’s efforts in these and other areas would inaugurate a distinctive method of inquiry into the human condition, and inspire similar efforts at conjectural reasoning in the works of Smith, Hume, and Rousseau (and even by extension, Kant). Smith would, of course, famously touch upon the affinities between Mandeville’s *Fable* and Rousseau’s *Second Discourse*, a comment which some have read as an accusing hint of a degree of plagiarism.\footnote{Whoever reads this last work with attention, will observe, that the second volume of the Fable of the Bees has given occasion to the system of Mr. Rousseau, in whom however the principles of the English author are softened, improved, and embellished, and stript of all that tendency to corruption and licentiousness which has disgraced them in their original author. Dr. Mandeville represents the primitive state of mankind as the most wretched and miserable that can be imagined: Mr. Rousseau, on the contrary, paints it as the happiest and most suitable to his nature. Both of them however suppose, that there is in man no powerful instinct which necessarily determines him to seek society for its own sake: but according to the one, the misery of his original state compelled him to have recourse to this otherwise disagreeable remedy; according to the other, some unfortunate accidents having given birth to the unnatural passions of ambition and the vain desire of superiority, to which he had before been a stranger, produced the same fatal effect. Both of them suppose the same slow progress and gradual development of all the talents, habits, and arts which fit men to live together in society, and they both describe this progress pretty much in the same manner (Smith, 1980 [1756]: 250-251).}

Beyond influence, what we shall discover from an engagement with Mandeville, it has been suggested, ‘is that a truly naturalistic thesis based on the predominance of the passions would not in fact issue in a social contract theory, but rather in an evolutionary theory’, for ‘social contracts demand more rationality and foresight than can reasonably be expected given the premises of the argument’ (Den Uyl, 1987: 371). But this, if it is true at all, is true not because Mandeville focuses on the passions, but rather because the passions he focuses on have a particular content or character. An evolutionary account might not seem quite so essential if the passions he observes in human beings were of the more benevolent sorts.
Yet be that how it may, getting clear on how exactly Mandeville understands our practices to have emerged in such a manner is immensely difficult. Indeed, Hayek (1966: 127) for all his observations about Mandeville’s contribution to social evolution, appears himself to be at a loss when finally called to account, saying, ‘perhaps in no case did [Mandeville] precisely show how an order formed itself without design’, although ‘he made it abundantly clear that it did’.

This is a remarkable statement. The distinctive feature of Mandeville’s philosophy reveals itself only in shadowy intimations; it is a significant contribution of unspecified form. It is all the more remarkable when put alongside Kaye’s analysis, which suggests quite the opposite, a treatment of social evolution unsurpassed in its sophistication at the time of its communication. Both Hayek and Kaye are in some ways right. The question for us is how they may both be so, and what Mandeville’s project involves.

We need to start, then, with Mandeville’s own statement on the matter. He does not give us very much, but he does, at one point, tell us (even if only very sketchily) what he takes himself to be doing:

When I have a Mind to dive into the Origin of any Maxim or political Invention, for the Use of Society in general, I don’t trouble my Head with enquiring after the Time or Country, in which it was first heard of, nor what others have wrote or said about it; but I go directly to the Fountain Head, human Nature itself, and look for the Frailty or Defect in Man, that is remedy’d or supply’d by that Invention; When Things are very
obscure, I sometimes make Use of Conjectures to find my Way (FB II: 128).

There are a number of helpful ideas in this passage. The first is that Mandeville is not interested in giving an account of the precise historical moment, whether in time or location, in which a practice comes into being. He is not looking to establish, strictly speaking, the historical origins of a practice, the wheres and whens of its rise or inception. His interests lie elsewhere, in explaining the ways in which a particular practice has, or more precisely, might be thought to have, come about. The second is how he goes about doing this. Again, he does not look for his materials in the historical records of human ways of life. Nor does he build his account out of the testimony of others. He goes directly to the source, human nature itself, searching for its frailties, relying upon the idea that practices emerge as responses to those defects, as inventive remedies supplied to resolve the problems transported by them. It follows that his conjectural accounts do not advance explanations of human nature but rather involve certain assumptions about it, which, along with further environmental assumptions, come together to effect an explanation of how practices materialize. Yet it should not be thought that the conjectural accounts play no role in substantiating his view of human nature. For if from this view there appears to be no discernible path to our practices at all, and if by mere observation such practices are certainly known to exist, then the fact of their existence might be thought to count against that view. The conjectures, in supplying those routes, are supports to his thesis even if they do not mean that the origin has to be singular in nature. For an example of the kind of project Mandeville is certainly not doing, one might look at Samuel Moyn’s (2010) The Last Utopia, a fascinating if not controversial account of the contemporary human rights practice, which he gathers to have come about sometime in the 1970s, and which involves a radical break with earlier natural right traditions, traditions normally perceived as the foundations of human rights practices today. For an excellent critique of contemporary human rights practices, see Gündoğdu (2015).

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are not directly involved in establishing the picture of human nature he maintains to be true. Mandeville, in any case, makes it clear that he is not in the business of proving anything by way of his conjectures. His conjectures are just that, conjectures, attempts at explanation or demonstration, rather than certifiable proofs. They are, in other words, not to be taken as historical truths. But while this may be so, they are still meant to be taken seriously.

The materials of Mandeville’s conjectures, though not historically sourced, are not, then, to be dismissed as the whimsical thoughts of a wild and vivid mental life. They are in one sense very much like works of fiction, stories, which ‘in order to stand firmly on reality, need to keep no more than one foot on probability’ (Trilling, 1964: 5). But they are in another sense more than stories, for they stand as explanations of our practices, accounts of how they emerged and how they are sustained. But in what sense can they be understood as offering explanations? The tenor of Mandeville’s remarks encountered up until now suggests that it would not be wholly inappropriate to refer to his conjectural exercise as something Williams once called an ‘imaginary genealogy’, that is to say, ‘an imagined developmental story, which helps to explain a concept or value or institution by showing ways in which it could have come about in a simplified environment containing certain kinds of human interests or capacities, which, relative to the story, are taken as given’. Understood in this way, genealogies are usually put in the service of naturalism, ‘a general outlook which, in relation to human beings, is traditionally, if very vaguely, expressed in the idea that they are “part of nature” – in particular, that they are so in respects, such as their ethical life, in which this is not obviously true’. The fundamental idea involved in such
approaches is their attempt to explain a phenomenon as functional where it is not straightforwardly the case that it would be seen as such: ‘a functional account is given of something that not everyone would expect to have a functional account; and the account is given in terms of motivations that people must be granted to have anyway’. In addition, ‘it derives the functional from what is not functional or is functional only at a lower level’; it explains the phenomenon as emerging (functionally) from a prior state of affairs which contains properties of a more basic sort, and explains it without appealing to concepts involved in the phenomenon itself, or as the result of collective deliberative efforts, since to do either would be to assume much of what is meant to be explained (Williams, 2002: 21; 22; 33-34). In Hume’s treatment of justice and private property we shall, according to Williams, find one such example: starting with the individual motivations of self-interest and sympathy, along with certain environmental elaborations, Hume delineates how the artificial virtue of justice and the institution of private property may be gathered to have come about. Hume will insist, and rightly so, that the entire process be understood as fictional.\footnote{These ideas share a number of qualities with Nozick’s account of state of nature theories which, when properly deployed, can serve as (potential) fundamental explanations of a realm, explanations of a realm which ‘make no use of any notions of the realm’. I shall leave aside some of the interesting and perhaps hazardous things he has to say about state of nature explanations, for instance, that they can be or usually are either fact-defective, law-defective or even process-defective in some way or other, but that such defects do not drastically intrude upon their explanatory power even when they are known to be deeply incorrect. More important is his statement of invisible-hand explanations, which he on occasion seems to regard as importantly connected to the idea of fundamental explanations. ‘An invisible-hand explanation explains what looks to be the product of someone’s intentional design, as not being brought about by anyone’s intentions’, it shows ‘how some overall pattern or design, which one would have thought had to be produced by an individual’s or group’s successful attempt to realize the pattern, instead was produced and maintained by a process that in no way had the overall pattern or design “in mind”’. Unlike straightforward explanations, invisible-hand ones do not ‘explain complicated patterns by including the full-blown pattern-notions as objects of people’s desires or beliefs’, and so ‘minimize the use of notions constituting the phenomena to be explained’ (Nozick, 1974: 6-9; 18-19). They are, as a result, particularly helpful in attempts to understand a realm in question, and this is so despite a}
With his conjectures Mandeville gives us, then, imaginary genealogies riveted to a specific naturalistic view, where practices, institutions and so forth, develop as, in his case, remedial functions to the misadventures that arise from the human subject’s interactions with nature and her interactions with others. Such practices may be understood, very broadly, as sets of conventions, considerations, customs, manners, stipulations, in short, procedural articulations, specifying standards of conduct, requirements or roles that relate to actions or performances. They are the ‘disclosed’ but ever incomplete ‘by-products’ of human transactions not themselves entered into with a view of procedural articulation, transactions where each stands as a recipient or target or petitioner of some desired result, where each invites or is invited to engage in some performance in relation to specified wishes, where ‘invitations’ may be declined or accepted or responded to in unfamiliar ways. Practices or institutions are not designed or conceived in the mind prior to their introduction nor

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62 These remarks are deeply influenced by Oakeshott’s discussion of a practice. While I have adopted some of Oakeshott’s ideas and formulations, those which I think are helpful in getting clear on Mandeville’s remarks, I have not followed him all the way, since his account is certainly more complex and in some respects fundamentally different than the position described here, and involves an understanding of things such as the postulates of human conduct and adverbial qualifications. Practices may, moreover, themselves be the expressly designed result of performances. But I shall not discuss them since my concern here is to offer an account that will help us make sense of Mandeville’s view rather than one which lays out Oakeshott’s notions of a ‘practice’. And it is for this reason (to avoid confusion) that I do not cite Oakeshott in the text. See Oakeshott (1975: 55-65). For two of the best treatments on Oakeshott, see Nardin (2001) and O’Sullivan (2003). See O’Sullivan (2014) for an excellent treatment of Oakeshott’s relation to the left (this should give some pause to those who would unsophistically identify Oakeshott as a conservative).
instantiated by the executions of a plan prefiguring activity. The origins of politeness offers one instance of Mandeville’s view, where he has Cleomenes say: ‘the Disturbance and Uneasiness, that must be caused by Self-liking, whatever Strugglings and unsuccessful Tryals to remedy them might precede, must necessarily produce at long run, what we call good Manners and Politeness’ (FB II: 138).

Mandeville remains keenly aware, in making this statement, of just how easy it is to go wrong with regard to its meaning. He has Horatio summarize the position, somewhat incorrectly, in order to bring greater clarity to it after:

I understand you, I believe. Everybody, in this undisciplin’d State, being affected with the high Value he has for himself, and displaying the most natural Symptoms, which you have describ’d, they would all be offended at the barefac’d Pride of their Neighbours: and it is impossible, that this should continue long among rational Creatures, but the repeated Experience of the Uneasiness they received from such Behaviour, would make some of them reflect on the Cause of it; which, in tract of time, would make them find out, that their own barefaced Pride must be as offensive to others, as that of others is to themselves.

To this Cleomenes replies, ‘What you say is certainly the Philosophical Reason of the Alterations, that are made in the Behaviour of Men, by their being civiliz’d: but all this is done without reflection, and Men by degrees, and great Length of Time, fall as it were into these Things spontaneously’ (FB II: 138-139). Horatio finds this decidedly mystifying,
prompting further clarification from Cleomenes:

In the Pursuit of Self-preservation, Men discover a restless Endeavour to make themselves easy, which insensibly teaches them to avoid Mischief on all Emergencies: and when human Creatures once submit to Government, and are used to live under the Restraint of Laws, it is incredible, how many useful Cautions, Shifts, and Stratagems, they will learn to practise by Experience and Imitation, from conversing together; without being aware of the natural Causes, that oblige them to act as they do, viz. The Passions within, that, unknown to themselves, govern their Will and direct their Behaviour (FB II: 139).

This marks the beginning of a relatively long digression into the formation of practices, and not merely those distinctly social in character. Mandeville draws attention to the similarities involved in the coming to be of social manners with the physical use of our bodies, and some of the arts and trades with which one might be familiar, such as ship building and sailing.\(^{63}\) I shall pass over the details of this discussion. They are illuminating but difficult and occasionally muddled, and there are certainly problems with the suggestion that a sturdy resemblance holds between feats of physical dexterity, engineering and navigation at one level, and between those items and social practices at another. To pursue those

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\(^{63}\) Some of other arts and trades mentioned include: soap-boying and Grain-dying. At one point, however, he speaks of such a mechanism as being at the foundation of improvements in ‘all other Arts and Sciences’. There is a problem with this argument, for, as we shall see, what he means to deny with it is that such improvements develop from an understanding of the principles or rationale underlying a particular activity. This cannot be true of some of the arts and sciences. It is certainly true that scientific understandings develop and increase over the ages, building on the work of past generations, but this does not mean that those developments occur without reflection touching upon principles.
questions here will set us too far adrift of our present concerns. What matters most are
some of the associations he draws between them. For example, Mandeville cites the work
of Reneau on the mechanisms of sailing, where he ‘accounts mathematically for every thing
that belongs to the working and steering of a Ship’, but says, and this is the main point, that
‘neither the first Inventors of Ships and Sailing, or those, who have made Improvements
since in any Part of them, ever dream’d of those Reasons, any more than now the rudest
and most illiterate of the vulgar do, when they are made Sailors, which Time and Practice
will do in Spight of their Teeth’. Given their ignorance of those reasons, ‘it is impossible,
that they should have acted from them, as Motives that induced them a priori, to put their
Inventions and Improvements in practice, with Knowledge and Design’ (*FB II*: 143-144).
That is to say, bringing the account back to a contrast with manners, those

who made the first Essays in either Art, good Manners as well as Sailing, were ignorant
of the true Cause, the real Foundation those Arts are built upon in Nature; but likewise
that, even now both Arts are brought to great Perfection, the greatest Part of those that
are most expert, and daily making Improvements in them, know as little of the
*Rationale* of them, as their Predecessors did at first: tho’ I believe at the same time
Monsieur Reneau’s Reasons to be very just, and yours [Horatio’s] as good as his; that
is, I believe, that there is as much Truth and Solidity in your accounting for the Origin
of good Manners, as there is in his for the Management of Ships. They are very seldom
the same Sort of People, those that invent Arts, and Improvements in them, and those
that enquire into the Reason of Things (*FB II*: 144).
From these reflections Mandeville closes out his account of the emergence of manners in the following way:

When once the Generality begin to conceal the high Value they have for themselves, Men must become more tolerable to one another. Now new Improvements must be made every Day, ’till some of them grow impudent enough, not only to deny the high Value they have for themselves, but likewise to pretend that they have greater Value for others, than they have for themselves. This will bring in Complaisance, and now Flattery will rush in upon them like a Torrent. As soon as they are arrived at this Pitch of Insincerity, they will find the Benefit of it, and teach it their Children. The Passion of Shame is so general, and so early discover’d in all human Creatures, that no Nation can be so stupid, as to be long without observing and making use of it accordingly. The same may be said of the Credulity of Infants, which is very inviting to many good Purposes. The Knowledge of Parents is communicated to their Offspring, and every one’s Experience in Life, being added to what he learn’d in his Youth, every Generation after this must be better taught than the preceding; by which Means, in two or three Centuries, good Manners must be brought to great Perfection (FB II: 145).

Mandeville’s argument, in brief summary, is this. First, insofar as one can speak of a recognizable practice at all, it is not to be understood as the product of design or genius. It is not the result of someone’s being able to look around the corners of appearances, as it were, and into the nature of things, from which one then designs a practice as some sort of a response. It is rather the (unfinished and indirect) result of a long historical process of
divided labours accumulated and refined. It has taken, as Mandeville describes it, two or three centuries for social manners to have been brought to a degree of perfection. This means, second, that a social practice emerges as alterations in conduct occur in response to the lived experiences of human interaction, where sought after outcomes are frustrated or denied, or satisfied only with great difficulty. Frustrations encouraged inventive replies, that is, changes to the ways in which demands or claims were issued and desires expressed. Some of those alterations, particularly those involving concealments of self-valuations rather than open displays of them, fared better than others; they offended less the self-likings of those involved in a subject’s claim-making activities, and thus increased the ease of desire satisfaction and the attainment of sought after ends. This, in turn, won general approval, itself a sought after end. The desire for greater esteem and pleasure led to further refinements as concealment succumbed to the affectation of greater esteem for others, where we ‘make others believe, that the Esteem we have for them exceeds the Value we have for our selves, and that we have no Disregard so great to any Interest as we have to our own’ (FB I: 76-77). Actions eventually gave rise to patterns and finally conventions specifying standards of conduct to be ‘ subscribed’ to in acting could be distinguished.\(^64\)

This much seems clear. Our practices are not the outcomes of consciously made plans. What is less clear is how far Mandeville thinks he can go with that. For one thing, he certainly wants to say that such alterations in conduct were not \textit{themselves} the results of conscious reflection on the nature of things. No study of human nature or the passions, no inquiry into the foundations of social conflict or the grounds of everyday disturbances, was

\(^{64}\) The notion of rule ‘subscription’ is taken from Oakeshott. See n.62.
embarked upon where the outcomes of such an inquiry were used in making changes to how we act. Rather, the transformations were, more or less, local adjustments, and the more successful ones were imitated by the rest or the less inventive each seeking to replicate those successes for themselves. They were taught to children by way of playing on the passions of shame and pride. Initiates would learn how to go about acting in the world, and none of this required knowledge of the philosophical reasons standing behind the whole practice (whether of its emergence, its transformations, or its continuation). That is, polite conduct is not the result of human beings reflecting on the causes of their troubled interactions; it was not the reflective discovery ‘that their own barefaced Pride must be as offensive to others, as that of others is to themselves’ which prompted change. Nor does it involve knowing the rationale lodged in their doings, the ‘natural Causes, that oblige them to act as they do, viz. The Passions within, that, unknown to themselves, govern their Will and direct their Behaviour’ (FB II: 138-139). This raises the question, however, of whether Mandeville thinks we remain unaware of the fact that what we are really doing when engaged in polite manners is, as he describes it, ‘flattering the Pride and Selfishness of others, and concealing our own with Judgment and Dexterity’ (FB I: 77). He appears to draw an association between those items, and it is not immediately obvious if they all involve the same thing. In any case, we could go further and say that, even if the rules composing the practice must be learnt and known if one is to act the part, if one is to be polite and not just by accident or sheer luck, polite conduct is not to be identified with an agent acting in the consciousness of being polite, and so the unreflective character of a polite performance does not merely involve being unaware of the rationale or motivation behind acting in a mannerly way, nor even the rationale behind the whole practice itself,
but it also involves acting without doing anything like consciously applying the rules of polite manners in a performance, or acting in conscious subscription to those rules in that performance.\footnote{I have borrowed the phrase ‘with an agent acting in the consciousness of’ from Oakeshott’s discussion of the self-conscious agent as a postulate of conduct. His sentence reads: ‘To say, for example, that a self-conscious agent is the condition of imputing moral conduct is not to identify moral conduct with an agent acting in the consciousness of doing right or wrong’ (Oakeshott, 1975: 89). I do not, again, cite Oakeshott in the text to avoid confusion, as if he were speaking about Mandeville, which he obviously was not, but his turn of phrase here is very helpful in expressing the thought. The thought in fact goes further: no notion of acting politely need be in one’s thoughts at all as one acts politely. It goes further since one can have the notion of needing to act politely in one’s mind without considering rule application or subscription.}

This, in a restricted sense, is in fact something Mandeville will consistently insist: we do not know the true motivations standing behind our actions. The wise, the sincere, the virtuous, the generous, the religious, the kind, the honourable, all are condemned in their choices, all are condemned by their character. All are motivated by the passions of self-love and self-liking, by social esteem, by applause, by glory, which in the end settles to a desire for standing, for superior standing. It is not necessarily the case that we act with others in the consciousness of deception. We deceive others because we are ourselves deceived, and we are ourselves deceived because we have deceived ourselves.\footnote{‘Pride blinds the Understanding in Men of Sense and great Parts as well as in others, and the greater Value we may reasonably set upon ourselves, the fitter we are to swallow the grossest Flatteries in spight of all our Knowledge and Abilities in other Matters’. The human being is often ‘ignorant of his own Heart, and the Motives he acts from’ (\textit{FB II}: 79).} Yet how could Mandeville have known this? If our motivations are, by his own account, hidden, how is he able to see them? This is a problem he will himself recognize: ‘You wonder, I know, which way I arrogate to my self such a superlative Degree of Penetration, as to know an artful cunning Man better than he does himself, and how I dare pretend to enter and look into a Heart,
which I have own’d to be completely well conceal’d from all the World; which in strictness is an Impossibility’. It is a question Mandeville will return to over and again. His conjecture, his construction of the ideal gentleman in the case of the duel, his arguments regarding the basis of a flourishing commercial republic, mark different attempts at ‘dragging the lurking Fiend from his darkest Recesses into a glaring Light, where all the World shall know him’ (*FB II*: 80-81).

In short, we are not conscious of the motivations of our actions. But Mandeville will sometimes speak as if we do know more than he supposes we do. If I desire something which requires changes to your resolution, flattery might seem a very conscious instrument of mine. And in these cases, he speaks of the satisfactions of self-loving and self-love in the following way. On the one hand, assuming the whole endeavour to be successful, I get what I want. On the other, I gain a secret pleasure knowing that I have by my false ways deceived you into aiding in my aims. It proves my cunning and my intelligence, your stupidity and your servility. You have been made an instrument of my will without ever having known it.

My sense of superiority and mastery is satisfied, and, in addition, I gain your approval, all for the false esteem I have bestowed upon you. Now of course the finer details of the interaction may be altered given the circumstances, and it is impossible to capture the wide variations possible in such interactions. Nevertheless, the point is that Mandeville does offer accounts of this nature, and it seems as if one is acting consciously on the knowledge of human nature and its frailties. But even here, it might be said that one can flatter and do all those things and gain all such secret satisfactions without actually being conscious of the rationale of her actions. But Mandeville must admit that some will be conscious of the
rationale behind things, or of their motivations, and I doubt he will disagree. His concerns about motivational ignorance were directed more at those who considered themselves virtuous, and the general run of human beings, rather than the few.

When Mandeville speaks of such developments as proceeding without reflection, without an understanding of the philosophical reasons or rationale behind them, as emerging spontaneously or without awareness of the natural causes, this is principally what he intends. The comparison he draws between manners and the trades and the arts, leaving aside the difficulties involved there, marks his attempt to make those ideas easier to bear. That transformations occur in such a manner, while unfamiliar, is nevertheless unmysterious. Finally, then, and taking everything into consideration, it does not mean, and it is very important that it does not mean, that those who have discovered the rationale or what Mandeville sometimes calls equivalently the philosophical reasons of things are wrong. There is a difference between a theoretical or reflective understanding of a practice, and the practice itself. One way to express the difference, especially in the case of our social practices which is our main concern, is to say, even if only very clumsily, that a theoretical or reflective understanding of a social practice (or its emergence) gives us an explanation of what those involved were doing, or what was involved in their doings, which is not necessarily an explanation or an account of what they thought they were doing. And this is why Horatio’s account of our manners is not, as it were, incorrect.

There are two further components of Mandeville’s genealogy worth mentioning. The first is that of contingency. As we have seen, although good manners and politeness emerged
over time as responses to the disturbances and uneasiness caused by self-liking, they were preceded by a series of ‘Strugglings and unsuccessful Tryals’ (FB II: 138). Similarly, when Horatio asks how human beings could ever ‘be form’d into an aggregate Body’ given the picture of human nature Cleomenes begins with, how, that is to say, ‘came Society into the World’, Cleomenes replies: ‘from private Families; but not without great Difficulty, and the Concurrence of many favourable Accidents; and many Generations may pass, before there is any Likelihood of their being form’d into a Society’ (FB II: 200; emphasis added). The notion that our present societies and practices are the results of a concurrence of many favourable accidents is something Mandeville repeatedly emphasizes (e.g. FB II: 264).

What we see or encounter in everyday experience are neither the products of a teleological process nor the work of necessity. But contingency applies also to the passion of self-liking, although in a more restricted way than it does in Rousseau’s account of the contingency of amour-propre (Neuhouser, 2012). He tells us, for example, that ‘it is incredible, how many strange and widely different Miracles are and may be perform’d by the force of [self-liking]; as Persons differ in Circumstances and Inclinations’ (FB II: 64). And he does not neglect to point out that self-liking, when ‘moderate and well regulated, excites in us the Love of Praise, and a Desire to be applauded and thought well of by others, and stirs us up to good Actions: but the same Passion, when it is excessive, or ill turn’d, whatever it excites in our Selves, gives Offence to others, renders us odious, and is call’d Pride’ (EOH I: 6). Self-liking, then, is malleable (and that should of course be true, for if it were not, human societies and sociability would be impossible).
The second feature worth emphasizing might be called, without too much error, ‘diversity’. Mandeville applies this idea most evidently to his account of sociability. ‘Sociableness’, he writes, ‘is a Compound, that consists in a Concurrence of several Things, and not in any one palpable Quality, that Man is endued with, and Brutes are destitute of’ (FB II: 188; 182). That is to say, searching into the origins of the human subject’s sociability, we will not find just one item on which we could mount an explanation of everything; the origin is not singular in nature. Rather, we shall have to acknowledge that it is the concatenation of several things and events, without necessity and over a long period, which eventually makes human beings sociable creatures. What, then, composes sociability?

Sociableness, Mandeville says at one point, ‘implies no more, than that in our Nature we have a certain Fitness, by which great Multitudes of us co-operating, may be united and form’d into one Body (FB II: 183; emphasis added). In fact, Mandeville rejects the view that human beings are unfit for society, a position he attributes to Hobbes (FB II: 177). This might seem to contradict his view that we are not naturally sociable creatures, but all Mandeville says here is that we have a natural fitness to become sociable creatures, not that human beings are naturally sociable. In speaking of fitness, he first compares it to wine. Grapes possess a fitness to be made into wine, but they are not so individually, nor can they be turned into wine without human effort and guile. The process of turning grapes into wine requires artifice and occurs by the process of fermentation. In the same way, human beings possess a fitness to become sociable, but they are not so individually, and do not naturally turn into sociable creatures without artifice and intervention (artifice here refers to the creation and continuation of society, which for Mandeville is artificial since it requires our
intervention: ‘When we speak of the Works of Nature, to distinguish them from those of Art, we mean such as were brought forth without our Concurrence’ (FB II: 186). Human societies, given this distinction, visibly involve artifice; they represent not the work of nature but of our work upon nature). Now, if vinosity is the ‘Effect of Fermentation’, then in relation to society there must be, Horatio thinks, ‘an Equivalent for’ it, something ‘that individual Persons are not actually possess’d of, whilst they remain single, and which, likewise, is palpably adventitious to Multitudes, when joyn’d together’. This is the question he puts to Cleomenes. That is to say, what exactly is the equivalent of fermentation when it comes to sociability? (FB II: 189).

Cleomenes responds by saying that ‘Such an Equivalent is demonstrable in mutual Commerce ... the greatest Part of the Attribute is acquired, and comes upon Multitudes, from their conversing with one another’. This is principally what Mandeville means when he says that human beings ‘become sociable by living together in Society’ (FB II: 189; emphasis added). But if grapes can be made into wine, it is not the work of fermentation alone. They must contain the basic properties which allow for it. And so it is with human beings. The innate passions belong among those properties, that seems perfectly clear, but there are three additional ones – our physical makeup, our term of life, and the capacity for reason and speech – which are important, the last of which very basically involves what Rousseau would later call perfectibility. ‘It is the Concurrence of these, with other Properties, that together compose the Sociableness of Man’. The other properties Mandeville has in mind are of course the passions, but, moreover, certain external circumstances, for example, the existence of a social environment, which makes it possible
for us to converse, compete, and engage in commerce with one another, and thus become, by its ‘fermentation’, sociable creatures (*FB II*: 182-189).

The ‘Capacity of acquiring the Faculty of Thinking and Speaking well’ is ‘a peculiar Property belonging to our Nature’ which, however, ‘vanishes, when we come to Maturity, if till then it has been neglected’ (*FB II*: 182). This faculty, then, is a latent capacity. Persons uninstructed in their youth and remaining so beyond a certain age of maturity may no more easily engage in the activity of reasoning and speech, or learn how to do so, than what many might call, on such grounds, the lesser animals. But this tells of a special difference between the human being and the remaining parts of the animal kingdom: the first possesses the potential to acquire the abilities of reasoning and speech; the latter cannot but forever remain destitute of both. This is not, of course, a reason for arrogance, nor is it always an advantage to be celebrated, for as Oakeshott (2001: 4) once said in a different context, ‘the possibility of being wise entails the possibility of being stupid’.  

But just as it is possible for individuals never to acquire them (thus remaining latent), and just as it is possible for them to lose the ability to acquire those faculties after a certain passage of time (thus being lost forever), it is not simply true that human beings would have had developed both faculties. As Mandeville describes it, savages lived for generations without ever having developed either to any discernible degree at all (*FB II*: 286). Language and reason, like everything else in human existence – the arts, the sciences, agriculture, physics, astronomy, architecture, painting and so forth – develop ‘by slow degrees’;

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67 A sentiment I believe Mandeville, given his remarks about human beings and animals, would agree with.
‘Human Wisdom is the Child of Time’ (FB II: 287; EOH I: 41). But how does speech and the understanding contribute to our sociability? Speech, of course, allows us to communicate, and Mandeville does not deny that, although he is keen to point out, rather amusingly, the less than benign uses to which it may be put, for in reply to Horatio’s suggestion that ‘Speech is likewise made use of to teach, advise, and inform others for their Benefit, as well as to persuade them in our own Behalf’, he has Cleomenes say: ‘And so by the help of it Men may accuse themselves and own their own Crimes’. But the more important function of speech and its role in making us sociable creatures lies not just in communication, but in concealed communication. The function of speech is not to make our thoughts known to others, but to withhold them from public view. This is a controversial idea, one Voltaire would later hold (perhaps because of Mandeville), and Mandeville states his position by saying: ‘If by Man’s speaking to be understood you mean, that when Men speak, the desire that the Purport of the Sounds they utter should be

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*To give a brief sense of the development of language, language is in Mandeville’s view an artificial product, the result of considerable labour over many generations. The wild human being in her first moments certainly had no possession of it, yet it would be quite absurd to think reflection wholly absent from her mind: it might well be said that some degree of reflection is necessary to get the whole project of inventing a language going at all. It was enough for the first human beings, given their limited wants and equally limited knowledge, to make themselves intelligible to one another through ‘dumb signs’ – gestures and looks – rather than sounds. But Mandeville believes, further, that ‘we are all born with a Capacity of making ourselves understood, beyond other Animals, without Speech: To express Grief, Joy, Love, Wonder and Fear, there are certain Tokens, that are common to the whole Species’. The cries of children, ‘weeping, laughing, smiling, frowning, sighing, exclaiming’, are all items on that list, and he goes on to suggest: ‘How universal, as well as copious, is the Language of the Eyes, by the help of which the remotest Nations understand one another at first Sight, taught or untaught, in the weightiest temporal Concern that belongs to the Species?’ It is only ‘by slow degrees’ and after having ‘lived together for many Years’ that ‘for the Things they [wild couples] were most conversant with they would find out Sounds, to stir up in each other the Idea’s of such Things, when they were out of sight’. To their children these invented sounds would be taught and transmitted, and ‘the longer they lived together the greater Variety of Sounds they would invent, as well for Actions as the Things themselves’. These rudimentary attempts at communicating through speech were refined and ‘improved upon’ over successive generations. And it is over this gradual and extended sequence that the ‘Origin of all Languages, and Speech it self’ may be accounted for (FB II: 285-287).
known and apprehended by others, I answer in the affirmative’. If however, by that one means ‘that Men speak, in order that their Thoughts may be known, and their Sentiments laid open and seen through by others, which likewise may be meant by speaking to be understood, I answer in the Negative’ (FB II: 289). For our thoughts are hateful, prideful, envious, despisable, demanding, derisory and so forth, and open communication laced with these unhappy elements can only disturb the esteem of others and the order of public life.

The understanding, on the other hand, does three things. It ‘makes Man sooner sensible of Grief and Joy, and capable of entertaining either, with greater difference as to the Degrees’, it ‘renders him more industrious to please himself, that is, it furnishes Self-love with a greater Variety of Shifts to exert itself on all Emergencies’, and it ‘gives us a Foresight, and inspires us with Hopes, of which other Creatures have little, and that only of things immediately before them’ (FB II: 300). These elements work as ‘so many Tools, Arguments, by which Self-love reasons us into Content, and renders us patient under many Afflictions, for the sake of supplying those Wants that are most pressing’. And this, Mandeville goes on to say, ‘is of infinite use to a Man, who finds himself born in a Body Politick, and it must make him fond of Society’ (FB II: 300). This argument, which comes in the Sixth Dialogue, supports a view Mandeville advances earlier, in the Fourth, where sociability is linked to society and being governable. Understanding, very basically, allows us to construe servitude to our own advantage. To take just one point, in the civil state it allows us to see the benefits we accrue from that particular living arrangement, that our wide ranging desires can only be satisfied by virtue of living in a social condition with a
division of labour, that presently unsatisfied wants may be met by exchange rather than conquest, or that whatever privations and restrictions one must suffer by virtue of the law is repaid by the security of property and possession – if I cannot simply take what I want, what is yours, neither can you take what is mine with freedom and without consequence. This is not to say that peace reigns within a body politic; or, rather, that no one out of the instinct of sovereignty breaks out in resistance. The point is simply that the understanding may, under the direction of self-love and self-liking, reason us into bearing social life with less hostility, but this, certainly, requires being raised in a social setting from the beginning, for Mandeville thinks that superiority of understanding in the state of nature makes us more, rather than less, intractable (it is perhaps worth mentioning that it is self-love which reasons us into content; it continues from Mandeville’s view of reason, which in Hume’s words is the slave of the passions). 69 While this may be so, and Mandeville’s account of sociability is far more complex than commonly acknowledged, it is important to remember that it is self-love and self-liking that drive development and change; together they form the grand principle of our sociability, even if this quality is not reducible to them. But this also means that we need to take a much broader view when explaining the origins of our practices, such as morality, honour or manners. For as we have seen, while manners have taken two or three centuries to develop, their development is itself contingent on the

69 ‘We are ever pushing our Reason which way soever we feel Passion to draw it, and Self-love pleads to all human Creatures for their different Views, still furnishing every individual with Arguments to justify their Inclinations’, Mandeville tells us, prefiguring Hume’s famous pronouncement that ‘reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them’ (FB I: 333; THN 2.3.3: 266); ‘When Laws begin to be well known, and the Execution of them is facilitated by general Approbation, Multitudes may be kept in tolerable Concord among themselves: It is then that it appears, and not before, how much the Superiority of Man’s Understanding beyond other Animals, contributes to his Sociableness, which is only retarded by it in his Savage State’ (FB II: 300).
presence of a social context. It is only after human beings ‘submit to Government, and are used to live under the Restraint of Laws’ that manners begin to develop (*FB II*: 139). Although Mandeville does consider the passions as central to his conjectures, it is misleading to regard them as the sole basis of social life.

Before ending my remarks on the structure of Mandeville’s conjectural project, which I have called a genealogy, it is perhaps worth saying something about its relation to contemporary genealogical endeavours. My remarks here will admittedly be sketchy. Now, the idea of a genealogy is most intimately associated with what is generally taken to be a distinctive mode of inquiry first voiced by Nietzsche. It rose to prominence with the help of Foucault’s lively discussion of it, where it was described, very roughly, as a mode of inquiry which ‘opposes itself to the search for “origins”’. The problem involved in such a search lies in its ill-considered aspiration, its ‘attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities’, and its equally ill-advised assumption, of ‘the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession’. What the genealogist does in her efforts at unmasking is to show that “there is something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms’. The contingent and accidental convergence of disparate items, over certain vital and perhaps less interesting moments, are the things and ways in which something, a practice, a value, a mode of knowledge, arises. ‘What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity’ (Foucault, 1977: 77; 78; 79).
The idea of a genealogy in its Nietzschean dress can be expressed in two other closely related ways. The first contrasts it with the very thing it is often associated with, the tracing of a pedigree. Such tracings are commonly done ‘in the interests of a positive valorization of some item’, and they begin ‘from a singular origin’ viewed as the ‘actual source of that [item’s] value’. The exercise proceeds by tracing ‘an unbroken line of succession from’ origin to item ‘by a series of steps that preserve whatever value is in question’. Nietzsche’s genealogy overturns every aspect of pedigree tracing. It is not an endeavour aimed at the positive valorization of something and it yields nothing to the idea of a single origin. It insists, instead, on ‘a conjunction of a number of diverse lines of development’ from which the object of study results. The series of processes involved are, moreover, ‘separate’ and ‘historically contingent’, presenting ‘no obvious or natural single stopping place that could be designated “the origin”’. Under those conditions it is terribly unlikely that a genealogical approach will ‘locate anything that has an unequivocal, inherent “positive” value which it could transmit “down” the genealogical line to the present’ (Geuss, 1994: 274-276).

The second understands genealogy as an expression of radical historicism, which includes three, shall we say, commitments: nominalism, contingency, and contestability. Nominalism is ‘the idea that universals are just names for clusters of particulars’. Starting with this in mind, ‘radical historicists reject uses of concepts that refer to types [of things] as if they had an essence that defines their boundaries and explains other aspects of their nature or development’; they reject, in other words, ‘reifications’ (Bevir, 2010: 5). Contingency involves in ways already familiar seeing history as ‘a series of contingent or
even accidental appropriations, modifications, and transformations from old to new’. It rejects explaining historical change by way of appealing to unchanging essences or principles, and denounces developmental historicism’s language of teleological narratives. (Bevir, 2008: 267). And out of the stress laid upon contingency we get, finally, contestability, the implication ‘that history is radically open in that what happens is always contestable. It suggests that there are always innumerable ways in which a thing – an action, practice, or tradition – may be reinterpreted, transformed, or overpowered’. Radical historicists are, as such, ‘suspicious of attempts to portray a thing as unified and its transformation as peaceful’, and take great care to spotlight ‘the diverse meanings that accompany any practice and the contests that accompany all attempts to transform practices’ (Bevir, 2008: 268). In summary, genealogies ‘denaturalize beliefs and actions that others think are natural’. They expose, in addition, beliefs of inevitability regarding certain ideas and practices as the work of contingency and contestation in the historical process. ‘The critical nature of genealogies consists in their thus unsettling those who ascribe a spurious naturalness to their particular beliefs and actions’ (Bevir, 2010: 10).

Genealogical projects nevertheless face certain challenges arising from the character of the enterprise itself. Some of the challenges are basic and less interesting, for example, if genealogies are meant to be subversive, and inherently so, and if genealogies have genealogies of their own, which they surely must, then what we are left with is an endless stream of subversions and nothing substantial to hold on to (Kekes, 2014: 94-95). But this, if it is a criticism at all, is only so, I suspect, from the outside. Those radically committed to the project of subversions and counter-subversions, those too impressed, perhaps, by the notions they apply to their own activity, might be little troubled by this. A more striking criticism rules out rejection as altogether serviceable, since rejection entails reliance in a rather spirited sense: ‘The genealogist has up till now characteristically been one who writes against, who exposes, who subverts, who interrupts and disrupts. But what has in consequence very rarely, if at all, attracted explicit genealogical scrutiny is the extent to which the genealogical stance is dependent for its concepts and its modes of argument, for its theses and its style, upon a set of contrasts between it and that which it aspires to overcome – the extent, that is, to which it is inherently derivative from and even parasitic upon its antagonisms and those towards whom they are directed ... The intelligibility of genealogy requires beliefs and allegiances of a kind precluded by the genealogical stance’ (MacIntyre, 1991: 215).
It is quite unfortunate that some have carried those ideas beyond certain credible limits. Their suspicions, and it is of course suspicious that they should be, lead, they tell us, to the liberating and perhaps unhappy outcome that there are no truths, only interpretations, interpretations, moreover, that will in the end prove baseless and arbitrary (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983). As a statement about the world this is lavishly non-committal; as a self-described extension of Nietzsche’s thought it is simply false (Clark 1990; Williams 2002). It is perhaps worth pointing out, although rather unfairly (since I shall not substantiate the claim), that it is a curious and convenient fact how the suspicions of the immoderately suspicious always seem to turn out to be, as it were, true. Setting aside those more immoderate developments, if radical historicism is the soul of genealogy, then Mandeville cannot be said to have one. Neither, of course, can Rousseau (Rousseau refers to his Second Discourse as a genealogy at OC IV: 936). And Mandeville most definitely runs foul of a central commitment, the avoidance of reifications, for he seems to reify human nature (but again, it is malleable to an extent). But there are nevertheless points of contact, or perhaps methodological continuities between them. Most clearly, the notions of contingency and diverse developmental lines are expressed in both sorts of genealogies (again in a restricted sense). In any case, if the critical aims of genealogies are to be found in their denaturalizing of beliefs and actions, their dismantling of the notion of inevitability, their practicing upon the speculative faiths of shiftless spirits, then Mandeville (and Rousseau) might be thought of as sharing in such commitments. And what we might learn from them, in the end, is that there is more than one way to go about accomplishing such ends.
In his treatment of sociability and the origins of society Mandeville builds on a number of ideas which, in his view, are so indisputable that, once admitted, will leave no room for doubt. The most basic of them is the view that natural sociability cannot explain how a flourishing commercial society might have been established. The idea of natural sociability, briefly, takes human beings to have a natural benevolence or affection or love for one another, which explains the formation of societies. In Mandeville’s view, however, not only are ‘the good and amiable Qualities of Man ... not those that make him beyond other Animals a sociable Creature; but moreover that it would be utterly impossible, either to raise any Multitudes into a Populous, Rich and Flourishing Nation, or when so rais’d, to keep and maintain them in that Condition, without the assistance of what we call Evil both Natural and Moral’ (FB I: 325; 4). The claim is emphasized, with slight variations, on many occasions (FB I: 4; 347-348; FB II: 183), but all Mandeville has really said in those remarks is that a flourishing commercial republic cannot be raised or sustained by the benevolent passions. This still leaves open the possibility that societies in their first moments could, and that the corruption necessary for commercial development was itself the product of social commerce. And this implies, further, that human beings could, perhaps, possess a natural affection for their species, in which case his view of human nature would be false.

Beginning with this view, however, and setting aside the problems associated with it, Mandeville must now explain how societies might have come about if not from natural
human affection. His account, very roughly, begins with the family in the state of nature, although even there, parents ruled over their children and their offspring not without much difficulty. This might also seem problematic, given his picture of human nature, but Mandeville accounts for his scheme by saying, first, that parents, while having some sort of natural affection for their children (which led to the provision of care), nevertheless saw them as part of their dominion, their property, out of the passion of self-liking. Seeing their children in these ways, parents would discipline infractions against their will, which produced fear. But fear was not the only sentiment the child would have for her parents, she loved them as well, in part out of the care they offered her. Moreover, as a witness to their superior capacities in the various employments of life, she esteemed them, and the three passions came together to form reverence, the passion the child would in the end have for her parents. Reverence did not guarantee obedience, but it played an important role in holding the family together, although there were certainly occasions where reverence was overruled by other, stronger passions, tearing the family apart (FB II: 200-202).

From this picture, Mandeville then tells us that the first step to society consisted in the need to guard against the predations of beasts. But protection was not the only reason for establishing primitive associations. Beasts were our natural competitors, since they spoiled and devoured the things human beings needed for sustenance, and so mutual assistance went beyond the first concerns of safety to ‘routing and destroying them’ (FB II: 242). Elsewhere, however, Mandeville includes a further element in his account. The

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71 This point is often missed in scholarship on Mandeville.
‘Sociableness of Man’, he tells us there, ‘arises only from these Two things ... The multiplicity of his Desires, and the continual Opposition he meets with in his Endeavours to gratify them’. His view of sociability will eventually evolve in its complexity, but at this point, he takes these obstacles and our efforts to overcome them as its foundations. The obstacles, very broadly, ‘relate either to our own Frame, or the Globe we inhabit’ (FB I: 344). The two things are difficult to separate, as he acknowledges himself, but what he principally means by this is that human beings discover the world to be a rather inhospitable place. The elements are our enemies, we are threatened by all sorts of predators, and our natural frames are thoroughly unfit for the life of ease we crave. His treatment of this subject is detailed and humorous, but I shall not attempt to restate his lively descriptions. It is enough to say that this unwelcoming state of affairs is what first prompts us to press nature into obedience; this is where the first springs of industry can be found. ‘Where a Man has every thing he desires, and nothing to Vex or Disturb him, there is nothing [that] can be added to his Happiness; and it is impossible to name a Trade, Art, Science, Dignity or Employment that would not be superfluous in such a Blessed State’. Pride and vanity would later add to this general desire to establish a life of greater comfort, and together (although the emphasis shifts to the latter) they account for our efforts to remodel the world. ‘If Men were naturally laborious, and none unreasonable in seeking and indulging their Ease ... who would have thought of Coaches or ventured on a Horse’s Back? What occasion has the Dolphin for a Ship, or what Carriage would an Eagle ask to travel in?’ (FB I: 346-347). Advances in transportation would hardly be possible were it not for the felt inconvenience and apparently unbecoming prospect of having to travel on foot.
The second step to society, Mandeville proceeds to say:

is the Danger Men are in from one another: for which we are beholden to that stanch
Principle of Pride and Ambition, that all Men are born with. Different Families may
endeavour to live together, and be ready to join in common Danger; but they are all of
little use to one another, when there is no common Enemy to oppose. If we consider,
that Strength, Agility, and Courage would in such a State be the most valuable
Qualifications, and that many Families could not live long together, but some, actuated
by the Principle I named, would strive for Superiority: this must breed Quarrels, in
which the most weak and fearful will, for their own Safety, always join with him, of
whom they have the best Opinion (FB II: 266-267).

This naturally divided ‘Multitudes into Bands and Companies, that would all have their
different Leaders, and of which the strongest and most valiant would always swallow up the
weakest and most fearful’. This disorderly condition might have moved some to attempt
peace by contract, but contracts, at least in those early states, were submitted to only so far
as ‘Interest lasted’. Eventually, though, after a long series of struggles and wars, leaders of
such associations would aspire to be ‘obey’d in civil Matters, by the Numbers’ they led, for
‘the more Strife and Discord there was amongst the People they headed, the less use they
could make of them’. With unrest constantly threatening to break out between members
and against the leaders themselves, they soon established ‘Prohibitions and Penalties’ to
curb the conduct of those they led, and discovered ‘very early’ that ‘no body ought to be a
Judge in his own Cause’ (FB II: 268). Yet this would not be enough, for
What signify the strongest Contracts, when we have nothing to shew for them; and what Dependance can we have upon oral Tradition, in Matters that require Exactness; especially whilst the Language that is spoken is yet very imperfect? Verbal Reports are liable to a thousand Cavils and Disputes, that are prevented by Records, which everybody knows to be unerring Witnesses; and from the many Attempts that are made to wrest and distort the Sense of even written Laws, we may judge, how impracticable the Administration of Justice must be among all Societies that are destitute of them. Therefore the third and last Step to Society is the Invention of Letters. No Multitudes can live peaceably without Government; no Government can subsist without Laws; and no Laws can be effectual long, unless they are wrote down: The Consideration of this is alone sufficient to give us a great Insight into the Nature of Man (FB II: 269).

Mandeville considers society as developing out of the need to curb the instincts of self-liking, and in fact suggests that the development of legal systems are to be explained as revisions made to standing provisions, that is to say, they are replies to the cunning of human beings who have gotten around prior prohibitions: ‘Thus Men make Laws to obviate every Inconveniency they meet with’ and ‘as Times discover to them the Insufficiency of those Laws, they make others with an Intent to enforce, mend, explain or repeal the former’ (EOHI: 16). This then, represents Mandeville’s conjectural account of how societies are established, an imaginary genealogy anchored on a particular naturalistic view, where self-liking, especially in the form of the instinct of sovereignty, becomes disciplined.
But as Mandeville points out in an earlier dialogue, it is not enough for human beings to yield to the force of law. For this would render them merely submissive rather than governable. In submission, one ‘only embraces what he dislikes, to shun what he dislikes more; and we may be very submissive, and be of no Use to the Person we submit to’ (FB II: 184). Human beings need to be made governable, or tractable, and while his account on this subject is highly complex, I want to turn to his view on the origin of moral virtue, which I take to be part of it. This will also allow us to say something about his view on the unreflective nature of how things emerge. For in that account, he famously speaks of moral virtue as if it were the invention of politicians. Moreover, in his treatment of societal formation, he says, at one point, that the rule of law materialized only after leaders turned their attentions to a study of human nature. What are we to make of this? It is perhaps worth mentioning, though, that I shall not be too concerned about the chronological order of his account. The process of moralization starts somewhere in between the oral tradition and the invention of letters, or perhaps after, but I shall take this to be an unimportant consideration for our reconstruction.

But before we get to his conjecture on the origin of moral virtue, it is necessary to ask in the first place what exactly Mandeville understands virtue, and its contrary, vice, to be. The answers to this question do not come readily. One reason for this lies in the fact that Mandeville does not use the terms “vice” and “virtue” in a consistent way (and we should not expect them to be so used). A different, and perhaps more damaging reason, comes from the nature of the discussion itself, from his failure to assemble, carefully enough, his
thoughts on the matter. But we must begin somewhere if we are to get clear on it, and it is best to begin, I think, with what most commentators have taken to be his principal definition of vice and virtue, which involves considering ‘every thing, which, without Regard to the Publick, Man should commit to gratify any of his Appetites, V I C E; if in that Action there cou’d be observed the least prospect, that it might either be injurious to any of the Society, or ever render himself less serviceable to others’, and ‘every Performance, by which Man, contrary to the impulse of Nature, should endeavour the Benefit of others, or the Conquest of his own Passions out of a Rational Ambition of being good’, virtue (FB I: 49).

Mandeville perceives in (moral) virtue the requirement of self-denial, of acting contrary to the impulse of nature, of an effective conquest of one’s passions which builds out of reason. ‘No Practice, no Action or good Quality, how useful or beneficial soever they may be in themselves, can ever deserve the Name of Virtue, strictly speaking, where there is not a palpable Self-denial to be seen’ (EOH: vi). He is revolted by the idea that virtue requires no self-denial; in this, a view he attributes to Shaftesbury and his followers, he finds only a ‘vast Inlet to Hypocrisy’ (FB I: 331; FB II: 109; EOH :x). In the sentence ‘there is no Merit but in the Conquest of the Passions, nor any Virtue without apparent Self-denial’ we find the very center of Mandeville’s understanding of virtue (FB II: 109). But when we are asked to give expression to that understanding, clear waters turn grey.

One objection to Mandeville is that he does not seem to give us a way to get to virtue. He maintains, for instance, that ‘we are ever pushing our Reason which way soever we feel
Passion to draw it, and Self-love pleads to all human Creatures for their different Views, still furnishing every individual with Arguments to justify their Inclinations’ (FB I: 333). If reason simply follows the passions, if it is unable to stubbornly resist their directives, there is no road to self-denial and conquest. Perhaps this, it might be said, merely represents a diagnosis of human beings scuttled into corruption rather than a descriptive fact about them. But then he tells us that a human being is but ‘a compound of various Passions, that all of them, as they are provoked and come uppermost, govern him by turns, whether he will or no’ (FB I: 39). This is not a description of human nature transformed by corruption; it is a description of human nature, period.

‘That which in a free Agent I call the Action’, Mandeville further states, ‘is but the Principle it came from, the inward Motive of the Mind, that put him upon performing it’ (FB II: 120). Actions are invariably the results of some passion or other, for the passions, although mostly considered ‘to be Weaknesses, and commonly call’d Frailties’, are in fact ‘the very Powers that govern the whole Machine; and, whether they are perceived or not, determine or rather create the Will that immediately precedes every deliberate Action’ (EOH I: 6). We are left with a deepening sense of the futility of any attempt to set sail on the quest to become virtuous creatures, since virtue requires reason’s conquest over the passions as we go about acting in the world, but acting in the world proceeds always from an immediately preceding will determined or created by the passions. This has led some to suggest that if virtuous action is to be possible at all, Mandeville must not mean to require of it complete

72 This prefigures Hume’s famous pronouncement that ‘reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them’ (THN 2.3.3: 266).
self-denial (where no passion precedes action), but partial self-denial, ‘an assertion that there is no virtue in any action which does not involve a denial of a passion, leaving it open that this denial may be the overriding of one passion by another’ (Colman, 1972: 131). But this, at one level, will not do, if it implies the possibility of abstracting conquest entirely from the work of reason. The ‘difference between such Actions as proceed from a Victory over the Passions, and those that are only the result of a Conquest which one Passion obtains over another’, as Mandeville calls it, is a difference ‘between Real, and Counterfeited Virtue’ (*FB I*: 230). At another level, it is impossible to withhold all confidence that something like that must be true, even for Mandeville himself:

All Human Creatures are sway’d and wholly govern’d by their Passions, whatever fine Notions we may flatter our Selves with; even those who act suitably to their Knowledge, and strictly follow the Dictates of their Reason, are not less compell’d so to do by some Passion or other, that sets them to Work, than others, who bid Defiance and act contrary to Both, and whom we call Slaves to their Passions. To love Virtue for the Beauty of it, and curb one’s Appetites because it is most reasonable so to do, are very good Things in Theory; but whoever understands our Nature, and consults the Practice of Human Creatures, would sooner expect from them, that they should abstain from Vice, for Fear of Punishment, and do good, in Hopes of being rewarded for it (*EOH I*: 31)

It is tempting to take from this passage the message that proper conduct is the result of fear and hope, of punishment and reward. More important, however, is the suggestion that
acting in accordance with the dictates of reason, and accordingly with knowledge, itself requires the assistance and support of certain passions. Slavery to the passions lies primarily in the revolt against both, and the fact that we cannot but help to be moved to act by our passions does not of necessity put us at odds with virtue. A closely related point, which Mandeville does not quite state nearly often enough, is that ‘it is not in feeling the Passions, or in being affected with the Frailties of Nature, that Vice consists; but in indulging and obeying the Call of them, contrary to the Dictates of Reason’ (FB II: 7). Despite his occasionally misleading prose, Mandeville does not imagine that vice stalks action merely because it is underwritten by passion. The collapse of our ethical lives occurs only when our passions oblige us to act in ways contrary to the recommendations, or more strongly, the commands, of reason. Moreover, the renunciation of all emotion is not to be expected, not even in the most virtuous of beings. As it happens, virtue calls for a certain affective state, the alliance of which, with reason, consorts to a mastery over our poorer, less dignified selves.

Mandeville never tells us what sentiments might lie beneath virtue’s adequate and honest performance. Perhaps by ‘rational ambition’ he means for pride to be involved, since ambition involves pride, but not a pride that takes the esteem of others for its motivation, not even self-esteem, but it is hard to see how, if this is so, pride can be involved at all. Or perhaps this is just what virtue consists in, and it is no objection to it that we are the failed creatures we are, incapable of instantiating it in the world. Ought does not imply can, it implies ought, and what this, along with facts about human nature, implies, is that we never can do as we ought. It is not, I think, profitable to pursue possible answers to these issues in
Mandeville, for they will involve significant speculations on our part. I want to return now to the question of his conjecture regarding its rise.

Now, in his inquiry into the origin of moral virtue, Mandeville tells us that those who would seek to govern men or at least make them governable soon understood that force alone could not be relied upon to subdue the appetites.\(^{73}\) For force is not infrequently a power which simplifies its object, and the rich complexities of human beings resist simplification. If human beings were to be made ‘tractable’, and indeed they would have to be made tractable (since self-liking in the form of the instinct of sovereignty would still leave them somewhat intractable even as it functions within social environment with coercive rules), and if they were to ‘receive the Improvements’ they were ‘capable of’, then something beyond the threat of sanction would be required. Instead, they would have to be made to ‘believe’ that ‘it was more beneficial for every Body to conquer than indulge his Appetites, and much better to mind the Publick than what seem’d his private Interest’ (\textit{FB I}: 42). Belief, here, meant belief in the truth of the proposition (to believe that \(p\) is in any case to believe that \(p\) is true). And ‘as this has always been a very difficult Task, so not Wit or Eloquence has been left untried to compass it; and the Moralists and Philosophers of all Ages employed their utmost Skill to prove the Truth of so useful an Assertion’. Yet while the impression given here of belief is that it is something of great importance, it is immediately dispensed with. For it is powerless to effect the desired kinds of conduct given the kinds of persons we are: ‘But whether Mankind would have ever believ’d it or not, it is not likely that any Body could have persuaded them to disapprove of their natural

\(^{73}\) See Jonathan Israel (2001, 2006).
Inclinations, or prefer the good of others to their own, if at the same time he had not shew’d them an Equivalent to be enjoy’d as a Reward for the Violence, which by so doing their of necessity must commit upon themselves’ (FB I: 42). By virtue of the elements composing human nature, any conquest of the appetites or minding of the public incorporates doing violence to the self, and such acts cannot be expected of persons without the prospect of restitution (and here, the notion of violence must surely bring to mind what Nietzsche would later say about Christian morality, a cruelty turned inwards).

Bringing about belief in the proposition was not, then, the whole of the problem. Even if human beings could be made to believe it, it would hardly be enough to motivate publically mindful action (this, I think, comes very close to what is now generally referred to as a Humean account of moral motivation. The view, very roughly, holds that moral beliefs are on their own insufficient to motivate moral action. This is in turn, and in current philosophical circles, often discussed in the language of internalism and externalism, but the debate has, I think, generated great confusion over what exactly both positions (internalism and externalism) hold, and I shall not discuss this further).\textsuperscript{74}

Rewards were thus essential and needed in abundance. The problem, however, was that there was simply not enough to go around. ‘Being unable to give so many real Rewards as would satisfy all Persons for every individual Action’, those ‘that have undertaken to civilize Mankind’ found themselves ‘forc’d to contrive an imaginary one, that as a general Equivalent for the trouble of Self-denial should serve on all Occasions, and without costing any thing either to themselves or others, be yet a most acceptable Recompense to the

\textsuperscript{74} For the best discussions on the internalism and externalism debate, see Falk (1948); Frankena (1958); Nagel (1970). For a slightly different but brilliant discussion, see Williams (1981).
Receivers’ (*FB* I: 42). They searched into human nature for something serviceable to the purpose, and the search soon revealed that the very passion that made human beings intractable held within itself a redemptive power and promise. The desire for superiority and recognition of eminence, when played against itself, could be transformed into a means of getting people to mind the public interest, to attempt a conquest of their appetites.75 Vital to the entire enterprise was the discovery that, as a consequence of self-liking, no member of the human species was ‘either so savage as not to be charm’d with Praise, or so despicable as patiently to bear Contempt’. From the discovery or observation, flattery was gathered to be ‘the most powerful Argument that could be used to Human Creatures’ (*FB* I: 42-43). Flattery was, to be sure, merely the instrument (praise, the reward). Its efficacy depended on the context or narrative within which it was deployed. The narrative, as Mandeville described it, involved two ideas. The first consisted in setting the human being apart from the rest of the animal world. Humans were different, indeed special and of

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75 In his seminal study *The Passions and The Interests*, Albert Hirschman (1977: 14-15) notes that ‘a feeling arose in the Renaissance and become firm conviction during the seventeenth century that moralizing philosophy and religious precept could no longer be trusted with restraining the destructive passions of men’. Three alternatives were proposed. The first involved coercion and repression. The second involved harnessing the passions. The third involved discriminating among the passions and playing them against each other. Hirschman locates Mandeville in the second tradition: ‘The idea of harnessing the passions of men, of making them work toward the general welfare, was put forward at considerably greater length by Vico’s English contemporary, Bernard Mandeville ... [he] invoked throughout *The Fable of the Bees* the “Skilful Management of the Dextrous Politician” as a necessary condition and agent for the turning of “private vices” into “public benefits.” Since the modus operandi of the Politician was not revealed, however, there remained considerable mystery about the alleged beneficial and paradoxical transformations. Only for one specific “private vice” did Mandeville supply a detailed demonstration of how such transformations are in fact accomplished. I am referring, of course, to his celebrated treatment of the passion for material goods in general, and for luxury in particular’ (17-18). There are two problems with this remark. First (and because of the range of the use of his term vice), while it is true that Mandeville does on occasion speak of harnessing the passions, he articulates, too, the idea of playing the passions against themselves. In Mandeville, however, this involves playing the passion of, very roughly, pride, *against itself*, rather than discriminating amongst our passions and playing them against one another. This comes about since Mandeville is involved in a degree of reductionism. Secondly, Mandeville does give an account of the modus operandi, which I hope will become obvious from the discussion below and elsewhere in the chapter.
more excellent natures, for they possessed a rational faculty which made possible the most extraordinary accomplishments. ‘Making use of this bewitching Engine’, Mandeville tells us, artful politicians ‘extoll’d the Excellency of our Nature above other Animals, and setting forth with unbounded Praises the Wonders of our Sagacity and Vastness of Understanding, bestow’d a thousand Encomiums on the Rationality of our Souls, by the Help of which we were capable of performing the most noble Atchievements’ (FB I: 43). Reason, so the story goes, shakes loose humanity from the brute.

‘Having by this artful way of Flattery insinuated themselves into the Hearts of Men’, the politicians then ‘began to instruct them in the Notions of Honour and Shame; representing the one as the worst of all Evils, and the other as the highest Good to which Mortals could aspire’. Upon its completion, they ‘laid before them how unbecoming it was the Dignity of such sublime Creatures to be sollicitous about gratifying those Appetites, which they had in common with Brutes, and at the same time unmindful of those higher Qualities that gave them the preeminence over all visible Beings’ (FB I: 43). The impulses of nature were admittedly acutely felt. Any sort of resistance mounted against them would indeed be onerous. It was never imagined that the successful conquest of them would come cheaply. But it is precisely the great difficulty of the task that gave it its worth. It is there, in the immense toil required of the endeavour, that the greatness of humanity stood.

Together, those elements conspired to show ‘how glorious the Conquest of [the appetites] was on the one hand, and how scandalous on the other [it was] not to attempt it’ (FB I: 43). But it was at this point that a second idea was introduced. While human beings were
indeed to be distinguished from the other animals, they were not all so equally distinguished. The species was itself said to be composed of two classes, one, of ‘abject, low-minded People’, ‘always hunting after immediate Enjoyment’, ‘wholly incapable of Self-denial, and without regard to the good of others’, possessed of ‘no higher Aim than their private Advantage’, ‘enslaved by Voluptuousness’, yielding ‘without Resistance to every gross desire’, beings who used their rational faculties only ‘to heighten their Sensual Pleasure’; the other, of ‘lofty high-spirited Creatures’, ‘free from sordid Selfishness’, who ‘esteem’d the Improvements of the Mind to be their fairest Possessions; and setting a true value upon themselves, took no Delight but in embellishing that Part in which their Excellency consisted’ (FB I: 43-44). The higher exemplars of the human race despised the common traits they, by the work of nature, shared with the irrational animals. They employed their reason not in the service of their inclinations but in opposition to them, and vigilantly staged ‘a continual War with themselves to promote the Peace of others, aim’d at no less than the Publick Welfare and the Conquest of their own Passion’. For these reasons, they and no one else were to be recognized as the ‘true Representatives of their sublime Species, exceeding in worth the first Class by more degrees, than that it self was superior to the Beasts of the Field’ (FB I: 44).

The instruction of persons in the notions of honour and shame, and the idea of the human species as composed of two classes of beings, were not needless additions to an already adequate story. Instruction served the function not just of establishing belief in the narrative, since pride would have on all sides seen to that, but of guaranteeing that the force of the narrative would become a personal and felt reality. The idea of a class-differentiated
species served, differently, the function of inspiring emulation. It was one thing to describe humanity’s superiority over animals in respect of its rational faculty, another to tell its members that some, more so than others, were fairing better in fulfilling the true promise of the species. Moreover, while the dividing line between humans and animals was indeed one of rank, it counted for little in the final analysis. For the degrees separating human beings from animals held lesser worth than those separating the true representatives of the human species from the rest who, by some cosmic fate or natural destiny, happened merely to share in its rank.

Relying on these ideas, Mandeville proceeds to close out his conjecture regarding ‘the manner after which Savage Man was broke’ (FB I: 46). The advancement of illusion into being required the complicity of its audience to force it into fact. Not only would the most ‘speculative’, the ‘fiercest’, the ‘most resolute’ and the best of the species ‘endure a thousand Inconveniences, and undergo as many Hardships’ for ‘the pleasure of counting themselves Men of the second Class, and consequently appropriating to themselves all the Excellencies they have heard of it’, they would not ‘recede an Inch from the fine Notions they had receiv’d concerning the Dignity of Rational Creatures; and having ever the Authority of Government on their side’, would ‘with all imaginable Vigour assert the esteem that was due to those of the second Class, as well as their Superiority over the rest of their kind’ (FB I: 45). The others, pinned to their impulses as they were, unable to cleave action from appetite, would themselves affirm the tale, for fear of exposing their inner wretchedness. And if they were incapable of the heroic resolutions of their betters, they would nevertheless drape a concern for the common estate around their actions. This
represented for them not only a feasible approach to escape exposure, but a chance to
gather the esteem of those around them, contingent, of course, on the seamless
presentation of self-seeking conduct as aimed for the public benefit. But beyond those
considerations stood a more basic reason to affirm virtue and social commitment: the
greater the general concern for public sacrifice and private virtue, the greater the ease for
anyone still consumed by self-interest to meet his desires.

The problem seems clear: the passage to moral virtue runs through the streams of political
deception. It is the outcome of a conspiracy built over the ages, a conscious tampering of
minds and hearts by an insightful few against an unworldly populace. They had, as it were,
and as Edmund Blackadder once mentioned in a different context, contrived a cunning
plan, a plan so cunning one could stick a tail on it and call it a fox.

There is, then, some obscurity about what Mandeville takes himself to be saying in all of
this. The question comes up over and again in the literature on Mandeville, and there is
little agreement on what he might have meant by it, whether this leaves his account
incoherent, or if sense can be made of it (Kaye 1924; Hayek 1966; Cook, 1999; Heath
2014). Maurice Goldsmith has suggested that ‘the skilful politician need not be taken
literally’; it is a ‘device’ Mandeville relied upon to stand for ‘the long, gradual development
of social institutions’, a view which has received acknowledgement and dissent (Goldsmith,
1985: 62-64; Heath 1998; Cook, 2002). In order to make sense of Mandeville’s claims, a
few things need to be said. First, this account appears in an early work, and it might be
thought that Mandeville simply changes his mind. So while he initially attributes to the
skillful politician a manipulative hand, he eventually comes to abandon it. But there are difficulties involved in such a view, for, as I have said, the notion of the politician looking into human nature surfaces in his later works as well. In *An Enquiry Into The Origin of Honour*, Mandeville once again speaks of them as involved in such doings, as he does in the *Fable*’s second volume. But in this later work, he clarifies what he means to some extent, by saying that he gives the names ‘Moralists and Politicians ... promiscuously to All that, having studied Human Nature, have endeavour’d to civilize Men, and render them more and more tractable, either for the Ease of Governours and Magistrates, or else for the Temporal Happiness of Society in general’. Yet he goes on to say that ‘all Inventions of this Sort, the same which [I] told you of Politeness’ are ‘the joint Labour of Many’ (*EOH* I: 40-41).

But as we have already seen, politeness emerged spontaneously, without reflection. The tension remains, and Mandeville simply cannot get around the problem by describing it as the joint labour of many over the ages. Now, one thing that might immediately be said is that, even if moral virtue is in fact, and in part, the work of politicians and moralists, its becoming a social practice requires the endorsement of the governed. At this level, we might speak of its social endorsement and uptake as proceeding unreflectively; the rationale or motivation standing behind public sacrifice or the acknowledgement of moral virtue (whether one strives to enact it in action or not) is self-liking and pride, but those involved in such doings and endorsements remain unaware of their true motivations.\(^{76}\) This still leaves us with the moralists and politicians. I want to suggest that they might themselves

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\(^{76}\) I have tried to suggest this already in my treatment of Mandeville’s account of moral virtue above.
be unaware of certain deeper truths, and this goes back to our earlier discussion of the
distinction between a philosophical account of what is involved in certain doings, and what
the actors involved in such doings might have thought about their doings. Let us take the
example of Cicero, a moralist and politician by Mandeville’s own account. In *De Officiis*
(I:105-106), he says: ‘But it is essential to every inquiry about duty that we keep before our
eyes how far superior man is by nature to cattle and other beasts: they have no thought
except for sensual pleasure and this they are impelled by every instinct to seek; but man's
mind is nurtured by study and meditation ... Nay, even if a man is more than ordinarily
inclined to sensual pleasures ... he hides the fact, however much he may be caught in its
toils, and for very shame conceals his appetite. From this we see that sensual pleasure is
quite unworthy of the dignity of man and that we ought to despise it and cast it from us’.
Cicero’s statement here comes very close to the description Mandeville gives of the efforts
of the moralists and politicians, and he certainly builds his account out of a study of older
treatments of human nature (working on the labour of past generations). We know this
picture of human nature to be, according to Mandeville, false; reason for him is the slave of
the passions. The question here is if Cicero speaks of human beings in these ways from a
consciousness of its falsity, merely as an instrument to flatter the pride of all, and it is not at
all obvious that he does. He might himself believe the message he delivers.

The ‘Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride’, and while
Mandeville does in his initial depiction describe the process as if it were borne out of the
cunning of politicians, it may be that they were themselves the fools of their own apparent
wisdom. They did indeed look into human nature, but as Mandeville insists, knowledge
about *that* is itself the child of time, which seems to suppose, at least, that the older glances in that direction got many things wrong, even if they did get some things right. If they spoke about our rational abilities and excellences, it was not because they had seen the cold truth, or thought that human beings had to be flattered into submission through the construction of lies. In short, they did not set out to flatter by working on the fields of consciously known untruths. They did, however, end up flattering, unconscious of the truth. This, I think, might have been what Mandeville was trying to get at. If not, it might at least blunt the sharper edges of a conspiratorial reading, or render his account coherent given its parts. This does not mean that no politician was ever just manipulative, but neither does it mean that they all were either. There are certainly challenges that may be leveled against this view, that I do not doubt, but I shall not pursue them further here.

The establishment of society and the introduction of laws, alongside a developing ethical code, made possible the first real advancements in industry, commerce, and the arts and sciences. But once again, these developments all counted on the innate passions of self-love and self-liking: ‘what we call Evil in this World, Moral as well as Natural, is the grand Principle that makes us sociable Creatures, the solid Basis, the Life and Support of all Trades and Employments without Exception: That there we must look for the true Origin of all Arts and Sciences, and that the Moment Evil ceases, the Society must be spoiled, if not totally dissolved’ (*FB I*: 369). Mandeville’s views on this subject are familiar, and I shall not speak at length about them. But, very roughly, his view is that from our innate passions we desire things that bring us pleasure and things that demonstrate our superiority over others, which also bring us pleasure. Self-love and self-liking bid us to ‘look on every
Creature that seems satisfied, as a Rival in Happiness’ (FB I: 139). If clothes ‘were originally made for two Ends, to hide our Nakedness, and to fence our Bodies against the Weather, and other outward Injuries’, it is pride that adds a third, the function of ornament, ‘for what else but an excess of stupid Vanity, could have prevail’d upon our Reason to fancy that Ornamental, which must continually put us in mind of our Wants and Misery?’ To this he adds, sarcastically, ‘it is indeed to be admired how so sensible a Creature as Man, that pretends to so many fine Qualities of his own, should condescend to value himself upon what is robb’d from so innocent and defenceless an Animal as a Sheep, or what he is beholden for to the most insignificant thing upon Earth, a dying Worm’ (FB I: 130). The comparisons we make leave us miserable, and the pride we take from such ornaments, from the superiority they supposedly demonstrate of our selves, are downright silly, but nevertheless inescapable.

But our desires for such things are themselves the products of circumstances and the intersections of social progress. For with the development of manners, for example, we find ourselves no longer able to show pride in its nakedness. Desirous still of demonstrating supremacy, we invent new ways to show our stature, most notably, through signs and symbols. These symbols (ornaments, clothes, fine equipages and so forth) allow us to reveal greater standing in a mediated way, and they are less offensive since excuses may be made on their behalf. In a different way, the division of labour introduces and is itself refined by ways to satisfy our desires and acquire social standing. The progress we see in the arts and sciences are all driven, too, by a desire for glory and wealth. In short, human beings invent to differentiate, and they differentiate to set themselves apart from and above
others. This is the spur of industry, and the foundation of a commercial society. And this, the struggle to outdo one another, is what accounts, largely, for our sociability.

IV

In this final section, I shall examine, briefly, Mandeville’s surprising treatment of how self-liking indeed operates in the person of honour. His account appears to take back his main argument, that we do all we do because of the desire to be esteemed. In order to see this, it is necessary to begin with his philosophical use of the duel, which, for him, represents certain proof of the fact that all the goodness we see in the world issues from pride, and that the ‘true Object of Pride or Vain-glory is the Opinion of others’ (FB II: 64-65, emphasis added).

In the First Dialogue, Cleomenes presses Horatio on the question of where we are to locate virtue, not in some general or abstract scheme of knowledge, but in terms of the people who possess it. Since Horatio thinks virtue exists in the world, he must be able to direct us to the places where it supposedly resides. Horatio’s first instinct is to ‘argue for the Generality of Men, that they are possess’d of these Virtues’, yet, as Cleomenes runs over the various possibilities, Horatio rejects them all. Cleomenes complains in increasing tones of frustration: ‘I have tried you every where: you are as little satisfied with Persons of the highest Rank, as you are with them of the lowest, and you count it ridiculous to think better of the midling People ... What sort of People are they, and where must we look for them, whom you will own to act from those Principles of Virtue?’ (FB II: 58). Recoiling from the
pressure, and, retreating from his generous outlook, Horatio eventually settles on persons of noble birth and of sound or fine education. Cleomenes denies the ascription, he says, very basically, that if we inquire into their conduct we shall find them to be lacking in the very qualities attributed to them. On no less than three occasions, however, does Horatio raise complaints of a similar nature. The accusation is that no argument is offered in the place of bare assertion: ‘I must interrupt you, and cannot suffer you to go on thus. What is all this but the old Story over again, that every Thing is Pride, and all we see, Hypocrisy, without Proof or Argument? Nothing in the World is more false, than what you have advanced now; for according to that, the most noble, the most gallant, and the best-bred Man would be the proudest; which is so clashing with daily experience, that the reverse is true’ (FB II: 65). The dialogue ends naturally enough in disagreement, with Horatio taking leave to attend to personal business but not without first promising to renew their discourse the next day. The Second Dialogue picks up where the first leaves off, with Cleomenes making the following remark:

Yesterday I ask’d you, where and among what sort of People we were to look for those, whom you would allow to act from Principles of Virtue, you named a Class, among whom I found very agreeable Characters of Men, that yet all have their Failings: If these could be left out, and the best were pick’d and cull’d from the different good Qualities that are to be seen in several, the Compound would make a very handsome Picture (FB II: 62-63).
This represents Mandeville’s first step in his argument. He narrows the field of possibilities down to the ideal gentleman. The assumption is that the less than perfect specimens of our species are obviously without virtue, and there is no need to account for them. But the argument also involves a different thread: if the ideal gentleman represents the best of humanity, and if he can be shown to be motivated by self-liking, then we all stand condemned. The next natural step for Mandeville to take is to draw a picture of the ideal gentleman. We do not need to be detained by the details of this description, it is enough to say that in the ideal gentleman the virtues are concentrated without considerable blemish; he is wealthy, noble, kind, generous, humane, honourable, reasonable, religious, virtuous and so forth. He is temperate in character and moderate despite the passions. With the description of the gentleman more or less complete, Mandeville’s third step turns on a brief but important account of early education, on how the young are typically raised to prefer and endorse the ‘Precepts of others to the Dictates of their own Inclinations’ in ‘the Choice of Actions’ (FB II: 78). There are of course various methods that may be called upon to deliver the result; punishments and rewards are, for example, widely used instruments in this respect. However, there is no method which undoubtedly:

proves more often effectual for this Purpose, or has a greater Influence upon Children, than the Handle that is made of Shame; which, tho’ a natural Passion, they would not be sensible of so soon, if we did not artfully rouze and stir it up in them, before they can speak or go: By which means, their Judgments being then weak, we may teach them to be asham’d of what we please, as soon as we can perceive them to be any ways affected with the Passion itself. But as the fear of Shame is very insignificant, where
there is but little Pride; so it is impossible to augment the first, without encreasig the latter in the same Proportion (FB II: 78).”

Mandeville’s suggestion is that the gentleman’s education (and most of ours) is one based on instruction which plays on the sentiments of pride and shame, that is to say, one’s self-liking. This involves one of his most central claims, that although our pride cannot be ‘destroy’d by Force, it might be govern’d by Strategem, and that the best way to manage it, is by playing the Passion against itself’. It is by means of an ‘artful Education [that] we are allow’d to place as much Pride as we please in our Dexterity of concealing it’ (FB II: 78-79). Concealment does not occur, of course, without great difficulty, yet ‘when his noble and polite Manner is become habitual to him, it is possible, he may in time forget the Principle he set out with, and become ignorant, or at least insensible of the hidden Spring, that gives Life and Motion to all his Actions’ (FB II: 79). It should be mentioned that with this insertion Mandeville seems to short-circuit the need to say anything else. In one sense it clearly does. But in another sense he still needs to show how the ideal gentleman does not actually act from virtue, for if one thinks that he acts without pride, Mandeville’s description of education might be called into question as incomplete or false. Or perhaps one’s education begins with such methods, but the motivational structure changes as one matures. The gentleman, after all, now acts with so much generosity and kindness, and there is more reason to doubt Mandeville’s treatment than there is to doubt the sincerity of

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77 Shame produces a physiological response: ‘When a Man is overwhelm’d with Shame, he observes a sinking of the Spirits; the Heart feels cold and condensed, and the Blood flies from it to the Circumference of the Body; the Face glows, the Neck and Part of the Breast partake of the Fire: He is heavy as Lead; the Head is hung down, and the Eyes through a Mist of Confusion are fix’d on the Ground: No Injuries can move him; he is weary of his Being, and heartily wishes he could make himself invisible’ (FB II: 67).
his performances.

The fourth step involves taking our ideal gentleman into the situation of being challenged to a duel. The demand for satisfaction on the part of another moves our gentleman to accept, and accept he must if he is to defend his honour. And it is on this acceptance that Mandeville will mount his accusation of the absence of virtue in his character: ‘what is it, pray, that so suddenly disposes a courteous sweet-temper’d Man, for so small an Evil, to seek a Remedy of that extreme Violence? but above all, what is it, that buoys up and supports him against the Fear of Death? for there lies the greatest Difficulty’ (FB II: 82). There are two things Mandeville wishes to discuss here. One is the motivational state of the gentleman. What exactly must be present if he is to risk his life, if he is to overcome his natural fear of death, all, moreover, for a trifle? For injury or death are the prospects that await him in any duel. But if he should prevail in the confrontation, if he should win their tilt, then he must in turn cause hurt or death to another, all, again, for a trifle. He claims to be ‘sincere in his Religion’, but ‘Christians of all Persuasions are unanimous in allowing the Divine Laws to be far above all other; and that all other Considerations ought to give Way to them’. If he enters into the duel, ‘how, and under what Pretence can a Christian, who is a Man of Sense, submit or agree to Laws that prescribe Revenge, and countenance Murder; both which are so expressly forbid by the Precepts of his Religion?’ (FB II: 83). Moreover, by accepting the challenge of the duel, ‘so just and prudent a Man, that has the Good of Society so much at Heart’, cannot but ‘act knowingly against the Laws of his Country’ (FB II: 82). The second question, then, involves, speaking in very broad terms, the issue of ethical consistency.
Horatio will try to excuse the gentleman. He describes the acceptance of the challenge as ‘the strict Obedience he pays to the Laws of Honour, which are superior to all others’ (*FB II*: 82). The gentleman, in addition, was not to blame. It was ‘forc’d upon’ him, and ‘all the Wisdom in the World cannot teach him how to avoid it’ (*FB II*: 83). He shifts the discourse to his own experience, and in moving the discussion to Horatio’s own encounter Mandeville is surely deploying a rhetorical strategy; we are no longer dealing with the ideal gentleman, with imaginary thoughts over the course of those events. We are now in the realm of personal testimony, giving the account of the discussed emotional states greater force. For Horatio will speak of his great reluctance to accept the duel, his fear of death, and ‘the Remorse and Uneasiness one must feel as long as he lives, if he has the Misfortune of killing his Adversary’, along with the knowledge of the sins involved in just such an endeavour (*FB II*: 84).

Yet in raising the second of his questions, Mandeville means to suggest, although he does not explicitly say it, that our desires for esteem, our valuations of things, are in the end incompatible or incongruent. We concentrate in the ideal gentleman all the fine qualities, we esteem him for his wealth, his honour, his civic obedience, his religiosity, his virtue and so forth, and these values sit together coherently in our minds, without remainder or loss. But in the duel the picture crumbles under pressure. He betrays his civic duty, he abandons his religious faith, he loses his virtue but retains, perhaps, his honour (yet if he is honoured in part for his virtue, then this must diminish as well). The point, then, is that we weave together elements which cannot cohere; we esteem incompatible things. Some desire
to be esteemed in all aspects, others esteem them all, and all stand in a state of confusion by supposing them to be reconcilable. This is a different message from the one Bernard Williams takes from the figure of Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Callicles, on Williams’s account, thinks that we desire to be envied and esteemed, to avoid being the subject of contempt, and to think highly of ourselves, and that the path to this is power and exploitation, ‘having no concern for justice’. The message he draws is that ‘implicit in this, indeed very near the surface of it, is the idea that people do secretly admire the successful exploiter and despise the virtuously exploited, whatever they say about the value of justice’ (Williams, 2006: 164). This may be true, and this may even be true of Mandeville’s case, but I think closer to what he wants to say is not that we secretly despise the virtuous, but that we esteem them and the powerful, and that we blind ourselves to their stark contradictions because they all represent superior standing in one way or another, which is what we seek.

It is here that the discussion moves to motivation. Cleomenes describes Horatio as one who entered into the duel ‘without Force or Necessity’, but Horatio will insist repeatedly that the great reluctance he felt at accepting the challenge demonstrates compulsion: ‘when a Man comes to an Action with the utmost Reluctancy, and what he does is not possibly to be avoided, I think he then may justly be said to be forc’d to it, and to act from Necessity’ (*FB II*: 87). It might be thought that Mandeville is standing here for the notion of choice, that Horatio could have chosen otherwise, and would have if he were truly just. All talk of compulsion is idle. And this might, indeed, make sense to us given our Kantian leanings; we are able to step back from our roles and particular identities and make choices as reason commands, in the bare image of humanity. But it is not at all obvious that this is
what we should take from it. I shall come back to this, but first, let us complete
Mandeville’s argument for the motivational state involved in just such a doing.

Along with obedience to the laws of honour, Horatio will tell of his reasons for accepting
the challenge:

Entirely to quit the World, and at once to renounce the Conversation of all Persons
that are valuable in it, is a terrible Thing to resolve upon. Would you become a Town
and Table-talk? could you submit to be the Jest and Scorn of Publick-Houses, Stage
Coaches, and Market-Places? Is not this the certain Fate of a Man, who should refuse
to fight, or bear an Affront without Resentment? Be just, Cleomenes; is it to be
avoided? Must he not be made a common Laughing-stock, be pointed at in the Streets,
and serve for Diversion to the very Children, to Link-boys and Hackney Coachmen? Is
it a Thought to be born with Patience?

to which Cleomenes replies harshly, ‘How come you now to have such an anxious Regard
for what may be the Opinion of the Vulgar, whom at other Times you so heartily despise?’
(FB II: 88). It is commonplace to think that the opinions of those we feel contempt for do
not count, since we do not authorize them, so to speak, as worthy judges. This is true on
many levels, but Horatio’s fear of their ridicule can be explained, not by his concern for
their approval, but by the fact that they would be right in their ridicule. That those for
whom we have contempt may be right about our defects of character is a far more
distressing experience than it is often supposed. But Mandeville takes it to be a concern for esteem, and in this case Horatio has betrayed himself in admitting it. Cleomenes uses this in the end to pin Horatio’s concern on his pride:

You remember the Concern you was under, when you had that Duel upon your Hands, and the great Reluctancy you felt in doing what you did; you knew it to be a Crime, and at the same Time had a strong Aversion to it; What secret Power was it, that subdued your Will and gain’d the Victory over that great Reluctancy you felt against it? You call it Honour, and the too strict though unavoidable Adherence to the Rules of it: But Men never commit Violence upon themselves but in struggling with the Passions that are innate and natural to them. Honour is acquir’d, and the Rules of it are taught: Nothing adventitious, that some are possess’d and others destitute of, could raise such intestine Wars and dire Commotions within us; and therefore whatever is the Cause, that can thus divide us against ourselves, and, as it were, rend human Nature in twain, must be Part of us; and to speak without Disguise, the Struggle in your Breast was between the Fear of Shame and the Fear of Death; had this latter not been so considerable, your Struggle would have been less: Still the first conquered, because it was strongest; but if your Fear of Shame had been inferior to that of Death, you would have reason’d otherwise, and found out some Means or other to have avoided Fighting (FB II: 92).

It might be thought that in this discussion Mandeville leaves out considerations of virtue

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78 See Williams (1993: 82) for a clear statement of this.
altogether, and that this does not reveal the actions of the gentleman to be lacking in virtue in all instances. It shows us, in this case, that he has acted without virtue, but in his other dealings, surely it remains possible that he acts out of a rational ambition to be good. But these objections involve a muddle. A few things need to be said here to clarify Mandeville’s thought. First, he takes it for granted that anyone who reasons well enough will know that it is wrong to take another’s life for a slight grievance. One might refer to this as an unhappy obligation mandated by the laws of honour, but this is to ‘mistake an imaginary Duty for an unavoidable Necessity to break all real Obligations’ (FB II: 94). Second, virtue, as we have seen, requires self-denial. The duel represents the starkest instance where one must choose between esteem and virtue and life, and to choose to act contrary to virtue’s requirements in a moral emergency says something about one’s self. It is only when one’s humanity is, as we might say, put under pressure, that one’s character is revealed. Next, it is very important that this represents not just a choice in a single instance, but an expression of character; the concern for self-esteem in men of honour is the ‘Foundation of their Character’ (FB II: 90). In accepting the challenge of the duel, he is not just to be condemned for his choice; his choice is an expression of his character, which means, further, that all his other actions are to be understood as motivated from the same source. If his character is compromised, so are all his actions. Lastly, since the fear of death is an innate passion, it is impossible to overcome it by an artificially induced passion. This means that honour has to be tied to something deeper within us, and for Mandeville, it is tied to the passion of self-liking. It is this that allows us to overcome our natural fear of death. If the ideal candidate of virtue stands condemned, then so are the rest of us.
This, then, is a philosophical reconstruction of Mandeville’s attempt to demonstrate that virtue is for the most part an illusion. We do not act from virtue but from self-liking and pride. There are certainly problems with the argument, which I shall not discuss (to take just one point: even if we accept the transition of ideas in the argument as sound, it is perhaps the case that he has started at the wrong place, with the wrong individual. But this may be why Mandeville never denies the possibility of virtue. The argument targets, then, merely the false impressions of the public, who see virtue only in appearances). I want to turn our attentions to something else he says. For, supposing we grant his argument, and supposing he has shown how, as we saw earlier, the main object of pride is the opinion of others, Mandeville rather inexplicably appears to take it all back.

In his *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*, Cleomenes now describes modern honour as ‘a Notion, by which a rational Creature is kept in Awe for Fear of it Self, and an Idol is set up, that shall be its own Worshipper’. Honour, in this case, represents a further development of moral virtue. Horatio is left utterly bemused: ‘But I deny, that in the Fear of Shame we are afraid of our Selves. What we fear, is the Judgment of others, and the ill Opinion they will justly have of us’ (*EOH* I: 41). This, as we have seen, has been Mandeville’s line of argument all along, and it is the central thesis of the *Fable*. But he has Cleomenes respond:

Examine this thoroughly, and you’ll find, that when we covet Glory, or dread Infamy, it is not the good or bad Opinion of others that affects us with Joy or Sorrow, Pleasure or Pain; but it is the Notion we form of that Opinion of theirs, and must proceed from the Regard and Value we have for it ... it is the Notion we have of Things, our own
Thought and Something within our Selves, that creates the Fear of Shame: For if I have a Reason why I forbear to do a Thing to Day, which it is impossible should be known before to Morrow, I must be with-held by Something that exists already; for Nothing can act upon me the Day before it has its Being (EOHI: 41-42).

It is perhaps worth mentioning that this idea is in fact present in the Fable, although it remains submerged there. The final argument is, in any case, and on the surface, a very poor one. Even if it were true that a particular performance on my part will not be publically known until the next day, and even if the actual opinions of others cannot be known at the moment when a decision to act is made, it remains nevertheless possible to anticipate their reactions, and to act in accordance with the expected responses in mind. In this sense, it is still the opinions of others that restrain my conduct, for I know, that if I should do this or that now, which shall come to light only tomorrow, the fact that it will be disapproved of when it does might be enough for me to withhold a performance. And, it might be further said, that even if the notion we form of the opinion of others proceeds from the regard and value we have for it, even if it is based on our authorization, it still does not mean that we are in the end afraid of ourselves, of our own judgments of our selves. Mandeville’s argument here is often ignored by most commentators since it appears to be poorly formed. But I shall try to say something in its favour.

Williams’s reflections on shame and necessity are helpful here. He points to two mistakes which are often made when it comes to thinking about the operations of shame. The first, what he calls a ‘silly mistake’, is ‘to suppose that the reactions of shame depend simply on
being found out, that the feeling behind every decision or thought that is governed by
shame is literally and immediately the fear of being seen’. It is impossible for this to be
true, for ‘if everything depended on the fear of discovery, the motivations of shame would
not be internalized at all. No one would have a character, in effect, and, moreover, the very
idea of there being a shame culture, a coherent system for the regulation of conduct, would
be unintelligible’. Mandeville is, I think, gesturing towards something like this in the final
sentence of the quoted passage. In short, it is ‘to overlook the importance of the imagined
other’ (Williams, 1993: 81-82).

The second mistake, according to Williams, ‘concerns the identity, and the attitudes, of the
other whose gaze is in question. Shame need not be just a matter of being seen, but of
being seen by an observer with a certain view’. As he goes on to tell us:

It is a mistake to take that reductive step and to suppose that there are only two options:
that the other in ethical thought must be an identifiable individual or a representative of
the neighbours, on the one hand, or else be nothing at all except an echo chamber for
my solitary moral voice. Those alternatives leave out much of the substance of actual
ethical life. The internalized other is indeed abstracted and generalized and idealized,
but he is potentially somebody rather than nobody, and somebody other than me. He
can provide the focus of real social expectations, of how I shall live if I act in one way
rather than another, of how my actions and reactions will alter my relations to the world
about me (Williams, 1993: 82, 84).
Ajax, when he decides that he must take his own life, says ‘Now I am going where my way must go’. The thought is conveyed with the word ‘poreuteon’, which is ‘an impersonal expression of necessity’. Williams explains this by saying, ‘He has no way of living that anyone he respects would respect which means that he cannot live with any self-respect. That is what he meant when he said poreuteon, that he had to go’ (Williams, 1993: 75, 85). The idea of practical necessity is something Williams takes seriously. It is a part of our ethical lives. It is something, he says, which the ‘cunning of the Kantian construction’ simply fails to recognize or acknowledge (Williams, 1993: 75).

Mandeville does not of course say quite this much. On his description, the individual is ‘made an Object of Reverence to himself’ (EOH I: 39). Reverence, as we have seen, involves fear, esteem, and love. We love and esteem ourselves, and fear in this case represents the dread of shame. The internalized other is really for Mandeville the self, or perhaps, an othered self within the self, one nevertheless constructed out of the ethical materials of his social environment. It is the othered self, the self revered, who is the true or even ideal self (Trilling 1972). Yet the operations involved might still be similar. When the person of honour withholds from doing something, he has the thought that if he were to perform that particular action, the self he respects, or in this case, reveres, would be unable to respect it, which means he cannot perform that action and live with any self-respect. If we return to the case of the duel, we can now understand the language of necessity deployed there. To refuse the challenge is to act in a way in which Horatio could no longer go on living with any self-respect, which is to say, he could not actually be expected to go on living at all. He is someone who reveres himself, whose whole sense of being consists in its
honour. The language of necessity there is not to be taken lightly, and while this cannot be
generalized without caution, we can nevertheless understand why Horatio expresses his choice in those terms.
'Let each of them in his turn uncover his heart at the foot of Thy throne with the same sincerity; and then let a single one say to Thee, if he dares: “I was better than that man”, Rousseau says very near the beginning of his *Confessions* (*C*, 5/ *OC* 1, 5). For anyone familiar with his writings on the crudities of pride or the indecencies of vanity, it appears almost impossible to read this statement without sensing a thorough betrayal of purpose. Rousseau does not repress the relish of describing himself as his own personal ideal, which alone must have generated a deep moral ambivalence about the state of his character, one routinely reported as a lot less governed by the strains of *amour-propre* than those of its peers. Nor does he withhold challenging another to uncover his heart with the same sincerity, declaring immediately after that anyone valiant enough to attempt it must in the end lack the courage to announce himself of finer morals. Certainly, Rousseau denies here another the rank of moral superiority, not equality. But the temper of his remarks must
have left those already disposed to dismiss his sincerity further convinced of the shallowness of his professions, and that he thought himself better than every man.

Nevertheless, what Rousseau felt he felt deeply; the depth of his sentiments assured him of the truth of his convictions. With Mandeville he simply could not agree that virtue was for the most part chimerical, that human beings were by nature and at bottom covetous creatures, driven by their innate passions to trample their fellows underfoot, or that a love of self stood at the centre of all human relationships. He would agree, however, with much of Mandeville’s description of the corruption of the times, of the absence of sincerity in our interactions with one another, and of the competitive struggles which condition social life. But he will account for them differently. A treatment of Rousseau’s view of *amour de soi* and *amour-propre*, with a focus on the latter, is the subject of this chapter. Now of course much has been said of Rousseau’s views of *amour-propre*. While that may be so, there are still some very large disagreements over what it actually entails. I shall examine some of those disagreements, and highlight other features of the passion not usually discussed. And I shall also consider some of the continuities and discontinuities between Rousseau’s view of the passions and human nature with the one already encountered in Mandeville’s thought.

Let us begin with the clearest and most explicit formulation Rousseau gives of the two passions. In an important footnote in the *Second Discourse*, he tell us:
Amour-propre and love of oneself (amour de soi-même), two passions very different in their Nature and their effects, must not be confused. Love of oneself is a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to watch over its own preservation, and which, directed in man by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue. Amour-propre is only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in Society, which inclines each individual to have a greater esteem for himself than for anyone else, inspires in men all the harm they do to one another, and is the true source of honor (SD 91/ OC 3, 219).

Amour de soi is here described as a love of oneself, a passion concerned with, for the most part, self-preservation. In the state of nature this amounts to, very roughly, a concern for one’s physical well-being, and we are moved by the passion to recover for ourselves the necessities of life and the provisions for existence. But as it has been pointed out by Nicholas Dent and Frederick Neuhouser, it is not to be understood just in those terms. For amour de soi is contingent on one’s self-conception, and what it looks to alters under certain modifications applied to that conception. If the notion of the self extends beyond a purely physical impression, then amour de soi will go beyond the cares of one’s physical condition (Dent, 1988: 89-112; Neuhouser, 2008: 30). There are indefinitely many things or items that may be sought after as a consequence of a different or modified self-conception. So far as the sought after item or end is not a comparative one, or, more precisely, is not sought after in order that one may gather esteem for one’s self, it may yet be thought to fall under the direction of amour de soi.
But this first and most natural passion, whose concern lies with the preservation of the being it animates, extends its care beyond bodily health and whatever else might fall its way as a result of a modified self-conception. In an almost baffling insight, Rousseau tells us that:

Man is not a simple being. He is composed of two substances. While everyone does not agree on that, you and I do, and I have tried to prove it to the others. Once that is proved, the love of self is no longer a simple passion. But it has two principles, namely the intelligent being and the sensitive being, the well-being of which is not the same. The appetite of the senses conduces to the well-being of the body, and the love of order to that of the soul. The latter love, developed and made active, bears the name of conscience. But conscience develops and acts only with man’s understanding. It is only through this understanding that he attains a knowledge of order, and it is only when he knows order that his conscience brings him to love it (LB, 28/ OC 4, 936).

Amour de soi consists, then, of two principles which conduce to a person’s well-being, not just of the body, but also that of the soul. More remarkably, it is in amour de soi that conscience resides. Conscience, for Rousseau, is frequently referred to as an innate principle of justice and moral truth, the central artery of virtue, the ‘sublime science of simple souls’ (FD 22/ OC III, 30). Given this description, it is not entirely false. It is innate, since it dwells in secret within amour de soi, although it emerges only after comparisons are made and the understanding develops. For it cannot love what it does not know, and the human being does not come into this world with a knowledge of order built into her mind.
Or as Rousseau says elsewhere, ‘before the age of reason one cannot have any idea of moral beings or of social relations’ (E II, 221/ OC 4, 316). Moreover, this, despite appearances, hangs coherently together with the view described earlier, of how love of self can extend beyond the rather basic task of self-preservation in the light of alterations to our self-conceptions, since there is a sense in which one’s self-conception changes once a knowledge of order is obtained; one comes to see the true relations of human beings and learns that one is a part of it, and is so in a rather special way, as an equal member of a broad and extended community. Yet seeing that conscience is seated in amour de soi, a passion directed towards our self-preservation, and granted its connections to justice, we now have a view of justice as something tied to the preservation of the soul. The Platonic lines run deep here, but I shall not pursue this, except to say that justice for Rousseau, at least at the very deep level of principle, is indeed as David Lay Williams once described it, transcendent (Williams 2007).

Our inquiry into Rousseau’s distinction between the passions has no sooner begun than it has led to some wide differences with Mandeville. For it is with Mandeville that the passions of self-love and self-liking are both innate and relate to self-preservation (although

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79 Rousseau’s notion of conscience is difficult and widely contested. Cooper (1999: 88-95) discusses the passage cited but does not connect justice to the preservation of the soul, although he does point out that conscience tends to the well-being of the soul. He goes on to say, however, that conscience is a ‘principle of soul’ for Rousseau, although he acknowledges that Rousseau never calls it that. Further, he says conscience ‘alone is the source of all this excellence, the source of all this sublimity’, by which he means, it is the source of virtually all human excellence, whether in love or friendship, in a fine aesthetic sensibility, or love of truth. This seems to me to carry the point a step too far. Jonathan Marks suggests that conscience is a passion, but it is also a salutary untruth, since it ‘has undergone an elaborate voice training at the hands of Emile’s governor, who makes liberal use of illusion and rhetoric in the course of that training’. This, I think, is wrong. See also Cassirer (1989: 99, 108-110); Taylor (1989: 359-362). For Rousseau’s Platonic sensibilities, see Williams (2007) and Orwin (1998).
self-love does so only under the direction of self-liking). Self-liking, in addition, has a non-comparative element to it, even if it is for the most part concerned with one’s social position. For Rousseau, however, love of self is the only innate passion (besides pity), and it is concerned with the preservation of the body and of the soul. It is absolute, unlike _amour-propre_, which, by contrast, is not only a comparative sentiment, but also one that is, in a scene of crucial significance, artificial and born in society, a product of human beings coming together and coming to stand in relations to one another, an outcome of intercourse and commerce. What self-liking and _amour-propre_ share is that individuals possessed of either generally hold greater esteem for themselves over others, and desire recognition of that esteem in turn. It should be further noticed that in the first quoted passage, all the ‘unsightly marks of violence or harm’, to speak in the words of Wordsworth, human beings work upon one another, are inspired by _amour-propre_. Rousseau never exempts the passion from the principal role it plays in our social pathologies. It is impressed upon us again in the _Dialogues_: ‘_Amour-propre_, the principle of all wickedness, is revived and thrives in society, which caused it to be born and where one is forced to compare oneself at each instant’ (_D II_, 100/ _OC_ 1, 789-790). Although this particular species of self-love stands always at the center of the evils we visit upon our fellow beings, it is not ill turned through and through. It is possible to direct it towards gentleness or humanity, commiseration or beneficence; it can be turned into a virtue (_E IV_, 389; 409/ _OC_ 4, 523; 547). But while it is described on more than one occasion as a ‘useful’ instrument, it is nevertheless a ‘dangerous’ one, an instrument which often ‘wounds the hand making use of it and rarely does good without evil’; and while, echoing the streams of Mandeville’s philosophy, it is to ‘this ardor to be talked about, to this furor to distinguish
oneself, which nearly always keeps us outside ourselves, [that] we owe what is best and worst among men, our virtues and our vices, our Sciences and our errors, our Conquerors and our Philosophers’, Rousseau ends the contrast by describing the whole episode as the production of ‘a multitude of bad things as against a small number of good ones’ (E IV, 400/ OC 4, 536; SD 63/ OC 3, 189). In some attempts to demonstrate the passion’s positive contributions to human existence, which is not at all to be denied, the notion standing behind Rousseau’s statements is occasionally obscured. What is at issue here is not just that the passion can do good and evil, but that it rarely does good without evil, and this comes through rather clearly in Rousseau’s position on the arts and the sciences, which is at best an ambivalent one. The point is that amour-propre produces good and it produces evil, and very often it produces evil in the good it helps create, or, differently, the good it creates springs from darker sources.80 This last view Rousseau clearly takes from Mandeville. But these claims stand in need of examination and qualification, for what exactly is meant by them with respect to Rousseau is not at all obvious in these rather vague statements. We need to get a clearer sense of what amour-propre consists in.

In the work of Laurence Cooper we find an influential account of the passion. ‘The great difference between it [amour-propre] and amour de soi’ he tells us, ‘is simply that in amour-propre, the desire for one’s own good necessarily includes the desire to esteem oneself’. It is ‘self-valuation, or the need for self-esteem’ which ‘lies at the heart of amour-propre’. It is a

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80 Human learning will not be found to have an origin corresponding to the idea we like to have of it. Astronomy was born from superstition; eloquence from ambition, hate, flattery, and falsehood; Geometry from avarice; Physics from vain curiosity; all, even Moral philosophy, from human pride [de l’orgueil humain]. Thus the Sciences and the Arts owe their birth to our vices; we would be less doubtful of their advantages if they owed it to our virtues (FD, 12/ OC 3, 17).
desire to be a ‘good witness of oneself’. Once human beings become self-conscious creatures, they ‘acquire the ability – and with the ability, the need – to evaluate themselves’, and our conceptions of self-worth now take on the requirement ‘that we meet certain standards of worthiness – or rather, that we believe that we are meeting such standards’. Cooper, in making this demonstrative statement, notes that Rousseau never quite puts his view of *amour-propre* in this way, or even in a manner that might approach it. But he is undeterred by that fact, and claims, rather insistently, that this indeed represents Rousseau’s true position. He even goes so far as to say that *amour-propre* is ‘not perfectly synonymous with the desire for recognition. In certain instances, *amour-propre* disregards others’ opinions. Moreover, the desire for recognition does not always indicate *amour-propre*: a certain desire for recognition also emanates from *amour de soi*’ (Cooper, 1999, 137-138). He defends this controversial announcement with an appeal to the testimony of Rousseau in the *Dialogues*, who acts there as the judge of Jean-Jacques, a work written after Rousseau had decided that he could no longer trust the public to judge him and the *Confessions* correctly. If they were to do so, they would have to do so under his tutelage; they could arrive at the right sorts of judgments only if they reviewed him as he judged himself. Jean-Jacques is in that dialogue described as someone barely touched by the flames of *amour-propre*, and yet he desires recognition, to be ‘known, esteemed, and cherished’ (*D II*, 119/ *OC* 1, 814). ‘He told me a hundred times that he would have been consoled about the public injustice if he had found a single human heart that opened up to his, felt his sorrows, and pitied them. The frank and full esteem of one single person would have compensated him for the scorn of all the others’ (*D III*: 225/ *OC* 1, 950). This passage is quoted by Cooper and used as further support for his reading: ‘If Rousseau is
consistent in his autobiographical works, if Jean-Jacques truly is without much *amour-propre*, then we must conclude that not even the desire for others’ esteem is a perfect indicator of the presence, let alone the essence, of *amour-propre*’ (Cooper, 1999: 137-138; 141).

‘If’, as the Spartans supposedly replied to Philip II of Macedon at the threat of invasion, Cooper’s argument hinges on a very large if, and it is not entirely obvious why we should believe Rousseau when he describes himself in his autobiographical reflections as no longer caught in the throes of *amour-propre*. For that is precisely what we would expect of a man enveloped by that passion; Rousseau could certainly have been in delivering his denial fully caught up in it. No one who reads even sympathetically the immensely dense account of Rousseau’s history will be able to consent without some reservation and some caution to the presumptions of a soul restored to emotional integrity, nor stand thoroughly convinced that what Rousseau declares to be a purged heart is not just *amour-propre* dug deeper and carried over a degree or limit. But even if we do read Rousseau as no longer being affected by *amour-propre*, that would only mean the absence of its pernicious form, and not, as it were, the complete absence of the passion.

Appeals to Rousseau’s own determinations about his self to define the content of *amour-propre*, whether one agrees with Cooper’s reading or with my more skeptical statements, are speculative. But there are further reasons to doubt that self-esteem stands at the centre of it. As Neuhouser remarks, not only does Cooper at times show that ‘Jean-Jacques is *not* free of *amour-propre*’, but, even if he were, ‘his seeking recognition in its absence would imply only (falsely) that the quest for recognition is possible without *amour-propre*, not that *amour-
propre can exist without the desire for others’ good opinion’ (Neuhouser, 2008: 33 n.9). Moreover, Rousseau himself draws a heavy distinction between the two: ‘Self-esteem is the greatest motive force of proud souls. Amour-propre, fertile in illusions, disguises itself and passes itself off as this esteem. But when the fraud is finally discovered, and amour-propre can no longer hide itself, from then on it is no more to be feared’ (RSW VIII, 78/ OC 1, 1079). It might be said that this represents inflamed amour-propre rather than amour-propre, a distinction now often made by those studying Rousseau to describe the passion in its insidious forms, since amour-propre can certainly manifest in ways that are neither ‘excessive’ nor ‘perverse’ (Dent, 1988: 52-58, 256, 20-21; Neuhouser, 2008: 58; McLendon 2014, Cooper 1999, O’Hagan, 1999: 162-179; Reisert, 2003: 19-20; Kolodny 2010). This is certainly true, but in drawing this distinction Rousseau makes no effort to qualify his remarks. If he truly considers amour-propre to be bound intimately to self-esteem, then certainly he would not have described it as its imposter, or, in doing so, he would have unquestionably sought to clarify that statement, with, at the very least, an indication of how amour-propre in its inflamed versions certainly pretends to self-esteem, although not so in its more reasonable forms. The point, in any case, is that there is very little evidence to suggest that self-esteem and amour-propre are inextricably linked, especially in the way Cooper would have us believe.\footnote{This is not to say that amour-propre cannot be put in the service of self-esteem (given certain conditions). The esteem of others can often do wonders for us. The point is just that amour-propre and self-esteem are not the same thing or related in the way Cooper suggests.}

So we are left once again with the question of what exactly amour-propre entails. On Neuhouser’s reading, which is in my view largely correct, the defining feature of the passion
lies in its relativity, which comes in two ways. First, ‘the good that amoùr-propre seeks is relative, or comparative; to desire recognition is to desire to have a certain standing in relation to the standing of some group of relevant others’ (Neuhouser, 2008: 32-33). It is a desire to ‘have a position, to be a part, to count for something’ (E II, 305/ OC 4, 420). This does not mean, and it is very important that it does not mean, that the sought after standing must be an elevated one, for the desire for equal standing in relation to others is still an expression of the more general good of having relative or comparative standing with respect to others. But Rousseau, it must be said, very often describes amoùr-propre as expressed in the desire for greater standing, and not only that, as an esteem for the self held beyond all others, and if one is to come to the basic view of equality, to affirm it sincerely and not just as a false courtesy, one must travel very far and over many torturous paths to get there. No less than in the genealogy of our social beginnings and more forthrightly in the arrangement of Emile’s education does it become apparent just how effortless it is to lose ourselves to thoughts of distinction. To view the social world in terms of equality is not, as it were, natural to us. But neither is the demand for inequality. I shall come back to this particular point later.

Relativity in its second sense comes to the idea that, ‘since the good it seeks is recognition from others, its satisfaction requires – indeed, consists in – the opinions of one’s fellow beings’. This implies, further, that the ‘immediate and primary end that amoùr-propre seeks is not self-esteem – nor even external confirmation of one’s sense of self-worth – but esteem (or recognition) in the eyes of others’. But the assertion of this remark, that the confirmation of one’s self-worth is not the principal end of amoùr-propre, denies neither the
desire for it nor its importance. ‘Rousseau’s point, rather, is that beings who possess *amour-propre* care about the good opinion of others directly and for its own sake, independently of its role in producing or reinforcing self-esteem’. Neuhouser fixes upon, correctly, those qualities as central to any understanding of the passion: ‘self-love counts as *amour-propre* whenever, and only when, the good sought is relative in the two senses’ (Neuhouser, 2008: 33-34; 44).

Now Neuhouser’s view of *amour-propre* is, as I have said, largely correct. But I have added a reservation to this assessment since there are, I think, a number of instances where inflamed *amour-propre* arises without meeting both conditions. It is not entirely obvious, however, if his account is unable to, or does not, track or deal with those issues. But they are not as immediately forthcoming as are some of his other statements on the problems of *amour-propre*, and it is perhaps worth mentioning them. But I shall consider them later. For now, I want to address some of the questions that have come about as a result of our first treatments of *amour-propre* in Rousseau’s thought. Our survey up to the present has granted us a certain degree of clarity by which we may grasp, speaking rather broadly and in omission of the soul, Rousseau’s report that ‘all our labours are directed toward only two objects: namely, the commodities of life for oneself, and consideration among others’ (*SD*, 92/ *OC* 3, 220). The notion of consideration (*considération*) among others is here an important one, so much so that Tzvetan Todorov judges it a ‘veritable revolution in the middle of the eighteenth century’. It represents for him a shift in the mode of bearing witness to the human condition, where consideration, or the need for consideration, stands as an ‘extension perceptibly greater than our aspiration for honour’. In this he is not at all
wrong, although perhaps the more accurate expression would be to portray this need as
going deeper than the general concerns for honour. But he mistakenly describes it as a ‘third sentiment’, one sitting oddly in between *amour de soi* and *amour-propre*, when it is in fact the first revelation of the latter passion (Todorov, 1996: 2-4; cf. Wokler 1996). In any case, we shall now turn to examine certain aspects of this need, very basically, how it arises, the forms it takes and the ills it produces. These questions are at times difficult to summarize or hold apart, given the aims, strategies and techniques Rousseau uses to convey his ideas. Moreover, his treatments of those themes constantly cross and leap over one another. We must proceed nevertheless, and I should like to start with the rest of the passage we cited at the beginning of this chapter:

This being well understood, I say that in our primitive state, in the genuine state of Nature, *amour-propre* does not exist; for each particular man regarding himself as the sole Spectator to observe him, as the sole being in the universe to take an interest in him, and as the sole judge of his own merit, it is not possible that a sentiment having its source in comparisons he is not capable of making could spring up in his soul. For the same reason this man could have neither hate nor desire for revenge, passions that can only arise from the opinion that some offense has been received; and as it is scorn or intention to hurt and not the harm that constitutes the offense, men who know neither how to evaluate themselves nor compare themselves can do each other a great deal of mutual violence when they derive some advantage from it, without ever offending one another. In a word, every man, seeing his fellows hardly otherwise than he would see Animals of another species, can carry off the prey of the weaker or relinquish his own
to the stronger, without considering these plunderings as anything but natural events, without the slightest emotion of insolence or spite, and with no other passion than the sadness or joy of a good or bad outcome. (*SD*, 91-92/ *OC* 3, 219-220).

This passage contains some very large and significant ideas which I shall discuss in greater detail in the following section. I wish to first highlight some of its more important features, which shall serve as a guide for us as we proceed. The first thing to notice is that *amour-propre* does not exist in the genuine state of nature, which implies already that it will appear at some stage in our historical travels and in the state of nature itself, just not in its original form. It does not exist there since it has its source in comparisons which individuals in the original state are incapable of making in their minds, and because they are in this way incapable they are severally their own and only spectator. But spectatorship is perhaps the wrong way to speak of natural man’s relation to self, at least at the very beginning, since the operations involved in such an activity are probably beyond his native mental capacities; in addition, the observable something to throw his gaze upon has presumably not yet received sufficient definition. Yet he may well be his sole spectator but in a different sense, through an observation by feeling, a sentiment of his existence (*SD*, 43/ *OC* 3, 164).” In his simplicity the savage man lacks the sophistication to carry out what would eventually plunge the human species into its richest but poorest condition. Rousseau rather remarkably says that it is for this reason that a great deal of violence may be done in that state without offence ever coming to light. For a being who has not yet learnt how to compare knows no other and thus no self, and cannot at first glance see through the act and into its intention.

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82 For a study of Rousseau’s thought grounded on this idea, see Gauthier (2006).
Moreover, without a self-in-relation-to-other, so to speak, any harm experienced has no ideational character. It is in the strictest sense purely physical. If the other has not yet become conscious of comparisons herself, then there is no intention at all, and there is nothing malicious to attribute to the harm. It is force applied; an action performed, but without, as it were, an actor. The harm is not a sin, it is not a crime, it is not a fatal dismissal or disregard of a passionate intelligence. Grief and joy are the impressions the savage feels at his fortunes or setbacks, hate and revenge are absent from his thoughts. Hate and revenge are responses to intentional hurt, and the idea of intentionality will play a not insignificant role for Rousseau when he speaks of the ills of *amour-propre*, which we shall come back to. The savage experiences misfortunes rather than injustices, offences, insults or derision. But when at last the natural human being discovers the relation between self and other, it will not take long for her to discover the being behind the action, the will behind the being, and the intention behind the will, and she will see in a harmful act all the signs of contempt. The violence can no longer be for her a mechanical movement, a blind energy, or a plain force. It now has, in a sense, a character; it is an exertion of will, a severe intention to harm, an insult relayed without words, a message if received without reply will condemn her to a very apparent mediocrity both in the eyes of another and especially in those of her own.

II

The *Second Discourse* represents, at least in part, Rousseau’s attempt to explain how those changes might have come about. The method he deploys is a genealogical one, and we
might say, with some reservation, that it proceeds in a rather similar way to the model of an imaginary genealogy described earlier. Rousseau is very often thought to be giving us a genuine historical report, but this is false. He is a careful reader of Mandeville, and the Second Discourse bears the considerable imprint of the ideas contained in the Fable. As we have seen in the last chapter, Mandeville emphasizes the conjectural nature of his historical survey. And like Mandeville, Rousseau will insist on the fictional character of his account: ‘The Researches which can be undertaken concerning this Subject must not be taken for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasonings better suited to clarify the Nature of things than to show their genuine origin’ (SD, 19/ OC 3, 132-133). Or again, its occurrences are described as ‘singular and fortuitous combinations of circumstances ... which could very well never [have] happen[ed]’ (SD, 25/ OC 3, 140). It is perhaps worth mentioning that an imaginary genealogy can, and perhaps very often will, ‘go beyond’ its merely fictional elements, including within its narrative historical elements as supports to its arguments (Williams 2002). But to use historical events in support of a conjecture is not to write history. Nor is it to claim that one is indeed writing history, or engaged in historical research or study. And this, I think, is frequently the source of confusion for many. Rousseau’s use of history is in any case riddled with problems of decency and accuracy, and this might go further to sustain the view that he is not attempting anything quite like “real history” in any serious manner or in any certain way (McLendon 2014).

Very near the beginning of the Second Discourse, Rousseau discredits the research of ‘The Philosophers who have examined the foundations of society’. For they ‘have all felt the necessity of going back to the state of Nature, but none of them has reached it’. Surveying
their different failures, he ends with a critique directed against them all: ‘All of them, finally, speaking continually of need, avarice, oppression, desires, and pride, have carried over to the state of Nature ideas they had acquired in society: they spoke about savage man and they described Civil man’ (SD, 18-19/ OC 3, 132-133). This assessment is routinely considered as one leveled principally against Hobbes, which is not false, but this suggestion overlooks the obliquities of the blow, which surely had Mandeville in its periphery if not very close to its center. In any case, Rousseau proceeds to speak almost ironically, and perhaps sarcastically, of how we shall in search of the truth have ‘to begin by setting all the facts aside’ (SD, 19/ OC 3, 133). For it is not implausible that he meant by it to set aside all the facts used and established by those philosophers to get to the state of nature, which, in the light of their errors, were not really facts at all.

Although it would not be improper to call Rousseau’s tale an imaginary genealogy, for it is imaginary, and it is a genealogy, it bears a crucial difference to the account delivered by Mandeville, which I shall raise only to set aside. The difference lies in the fact that while Mandeville gives us a functional account of how things transition from one state to another, Rousseau attends to the deep psychological change which arises from social commerce, which then moves the process along. In one sense, the direction of change is reversed. For Mandeville, what stands outside is revised under the strains of an internal force; for Rousseau, it is the environmental alterations, as it were, which render possible the first and most important change in the historical record (the first springs of amour-propre). But not even this much is certain, since the actual change occurs through the development of a mind capable of making comparisons. Of course, once this change occurs, it becomes that
which drives the developmental story, and perhaps, the most important elements of that story. Whatever the case, his account appears almost booby-trapped against imposing any sort of singular structure to it, which is not a flaw, and this remark is not at all a criticism, for it is precisely this that makes thinking along with Rousseau a philosophical adventure.\textsuperscript{83}

Let us begin by charting out the natural human being in his natural condition. Savage man, for Rousseau, is composed of four natural properties. One is the passion of *amour de soi*, which we have already discussed. Another is the ‘faculty of self-perfection, a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, successively develops all the others, and resides among us as much in the species as in the individual’. It is otherwise known as *perfectibility*. It is a ‘very specific quality’ which distinguishes human beings from animals and ‘about which there can be no dispute’. It consists in our latent and nascent abilities to develop the understanding, or to become reasoning creatures with imagination and foresight, and to develop and acquire language and speech. All the eventual horrors and excellencies of human life Rousseau attributes to its development: ‘this distinctive and almost unlimited faculty is the source of all man’s misfortunes ... it is this faculty which, bringing to flower over the centuries his enlightenment and his errors, his vices and his virtues, in the long run makes him the tyrant of himself and of Nature (*SD*, 26/ *OC* 3, 142). Like Mandeville, Rousseau will insist that these qualities are latent and do not develop under some supernatural attendant of necessity. Without fortuitous circumstances it would have remained latent in the species, and under certain conditions the individual might never develop her faculties.

\textsuperscript{83} There is a distinction between going on a philosophical adventure and a philosophical ride. While both might be interesting and exhilarating, they will be so in a different way. But nothing serious hangs on this distinction.
It is a faculty ‘received in potentiality’ which requires for its development ‘the chance combination of several foreign causes which might never have arisen and without which [savage man] would have remained eternally in his primitive constitution’ (SD, 42/ OC 3, 162). Rousseau is often credited for introducing the term perfectibility into intellectual life, but it is perhaps worth mentioning that the Fable is littered with references of how the different species populating the earth each have their own perfections unique to themselves, and speaks of our capacity to develop our understanding and language as part of the perfection of our species.

There is a question here, however, about the target of blame. Rousseau fixes most if not all of our social hurts on amour-propre, there is scarcely a single pernicious act that does not have its source in it. And yet here lies perfectibility, the faceless felon responsible for our offenses and self-wrought miseries. Which, then, is it? The answer comes in the manner of development. It is for Rousseau a common misconception to think that the understanding stands uniquely apart from the passions. ‘Human understanding owes much to the Passions, which by common agreement also owe much to it. It is by their activity that our reason is perfected; we seek to know only because we desire to have pleasure; and it is impossible to conceive why one who had neither desires nor fears would go to the trouble of reasoning’ (SD 27/ OC 3, 143). Again, a point made in the Fable. Beginning with certain environmental changes – like earthquakes, hard winters and so forth – the needs of human beings could no longer be met easily by merely inhabiting the earth, by living off the lush fields of nature. From this state of affairs (and the need to satisfy their needs) they begin to reason, as they engage in
the activity of inventing new techniques and strategies to acquire the essentials of life and to
guard against the various threats to it. Or to put it differently, reason develops as human
beings begin to devise ways, and so make comparisons, to meet their physical needs. ‘The
Passions in turn derive their origin from our needs and their progress from our knowledge’
\((SD\ 27/\ OC\ 3,\ 143)\). With developments in our reasoning capabilities, our knowledge
increases, our passions are affected, and this leads, gradually, to an appreciable elaboration
of our wants and wishes, and thus increasingly diverse performances, which create
circumstances of greater complexity within which we must act and live, and which further
develops the felicity of reason. This, in time, takes us, as we shall see, to the development
of \textit{amour-propre}. It is a passion that has its source in comparisons, which is contingent on
reasoning and comparing: ‘Reason engenders \textit{amour-propre} and reflection fortifies it’ \((SD\ 37/\ OC\ 3,\ 156)\). Or to put it in a rather more basic way, without the potential of a
developing reason we could never have made the sorts of comparisons necessary for \textit{amour}
de \textit{soi} to transform into \textit{amour-propre}. But once \textit{amour-propre} comes upon the scene,
everything changes. Because of the particular form it will eventually take, a form
unconditioned by necessity, the endeavours of human beings within social life almost
inevitably take a particular turn; the character of their interactions, the meanings of their
performances, all are emptied of their prior innocence. The loss of innocence is not
without cost, but neither is it without profit. What we seek to know, to learn, to discover or
to create, are affected by our passions, our transformed desires and our altered needs, our
expanded wishes and our mountingly insatiable wants, and what we know influences them
in turn, and it is by way of such interactive patterns that reason becomes “perfected” (by
which Rousseau does not mean arriving at some state of perfection, but rather becoming
more complex – which, again, is not, especially from a certain normative standpoint, always a good thing in terms of what it makes possible for us to do). Perhaps one way to think about it is to say, very roughly, that reason is a developing instrument on which *amour-propre* plays and progresses to produce the cacophony of our social vices. If they share responsibility, *amour-propre* must in the end take the greatest and most direct share of it all.\(^a\)

Rousseau’s remarks about language in the *Second Discourse* are sketchy and speculative, and I shall not spend much time on them (he appears to almost give up on the project of explaining how it might have come about or advanced). But the development of language is nevertheless important, for ‘general ideas can come into the Mind only with the aid of words, and the understanding grasps them only through propositions’ (*SD*, 32/ *OC* 3, 149).\(^b\) Our greatest sciences and arts, philosophies and industries, all owe their deepening sophistication and improvements to it in some way or other. The third quality the natural human being possesses is a metaphysically free will: ‘Nature alone does everything in the operations of a Beast, whereas man contributes to his operations by being a free agent. The former chooses or rejects by instinct and the latter by an act of freedom, so that a Beast cannot deviate from the Rule that is prescribed to it even when it would be advantageous for it to do so, and a man deviates from it often to his detriment’. Moreover, it is this that truly distinguishes human beings from animals: ‘it is not so much understanding which

\(^a\) But as I have suggested in the Introduction, Rousseau appears to have a more robust view on this: ‘In addition to the constitution common to the species, each individual brings with him at birth a particular temperament which determines his genius and character, and should be neither changed nor constrained, but formed and perfected’ (*NH*, 461/ *OC* 2, 563)

\(^b\) These are more general ideas. For he tells us earlier that ‘every animal has ideas, since it has senses; it even combines its ideas up to a certain point, and in this regard man differs from a Beast only in degree’ (*SD*, 26/ *OC* 3, 141)
constitutes the distinction of man among the animals as it is his being a free agent. Nature commands every animal, and the Beast obeys. Man feels the same impetus, but he realizes that he is free to acquiesce or resist; and it is above all in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is shown’. It is ‘in the power of willing, or rather choosing, and in the sentiment of this power’ that we shall find ‘only purely spiritual acts about which the Laws of Mechanics explain nothing’ (SD, 25-26/ OC 3, 141-142).87

And finally, we have pity, a gift bestowed by nature to save us from ourselves. Rousseau, interestingly, speaks of Mandeville on this subject, and he does so in a particularly perceptive way: ‘Mandeville sensed very well that even with all their morality men would never have been anything but monsters if Nature had not given them pity in support of reason; but he did not see that from this quality alone flow all the social virtues he wants to question in men’ (SD, 37/ OC III, 155; 154). He noticed what most have generally missed, or perhaps did not want to see, that Mandeville advanced his depiction of pity against the moralists of his day. He will in fact quote Mandeville’s painful and graphic depiction of pity raised in the most helpless of moments, a dreadful image of a child in the midst of being mauled by a boar, of an observer locked in a room, a powerless witness to its unfolding, armed, through a gated window, only with his faint and useless screams, forced to watch the

87 This should perhaps be compared to what Rousseau says in Emile: ‘The principle of every action is in the will of a free being. One cannot go back beyond that. It is not the word freedom which means nothing; it is the word necessity. To suppose some act, some effect, which does not derive from an active principle is truly to suppose effects without cause; it is to fall into a circle. Either there is no first impulse, or every first impulse has no prior cause; and there is no true will without freedom. Man is therefore free in his actions and as such is animated by an immaterial substance’ (E IV, 442/ OC 4, 586-587). Rousseau seems to think that freedom (in the social or even moral sense) is contingent on a metaphysical free will. Even if this is so, it is important to note that metaphysical freedom is not moral freedom, which Rousseau speaks of in the Social Contract, and which Emile presumably will have. It is different (even if in some way connected to or contingent on) from metaphysical freedom.
breaking of weak limbs in the animal’s ‘murderous teeth, and [the] ripping apart with its claws the palpitating entrails of this Child’ (*SD* 36/ *OC* 3, 154-155).*

Despite this remarkable passage, Mandeville will indeed go further to say, given his early commitment to reducing everything to self-love, that even if we should act to stay the sufferings of another out of pity, it is merely one more demonstration of that passion, for what moves us to action is self-love’s desire to avoid the pain that would be felt in our own hearts, and there is no goodness in such a self-seeking performance (*FB* I: 56). But to accept this is not to deny pity its place. For we might say in reply to Mandeville, and this is a point Rousseau makes across his writings on the subject, that even if the movement to action is the avoidance of pain, the fact that the pain of another can be felt, or recognized as something that would be felt should no assistance be offered in her suffering, speaks to something greater than self-love, something self-love cannot by itself account for. Mandeville does, however, speak well of the passion despite holding certain reservations, and he indeed admits, at one point, that ‘without a considerable mixture of it the Society could hardly subsist’ (*FB* I: 56). But he never clarifies the role it plays in the maintenance

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*This is the passage Rousseau has in mind: ‘to look on the defenceless Posture of tender Limbs first trampled on, then tore asunder; to see the filthy Snout digging in the yet living Entrails suck up the smoking Blood, and now and then to hear the Crackling of the Bones, and the cruel Animal with savage Pleasure grunt over the horrid Banquet; to hear and see all this, What Tortures would it give the Soul beyond Expression! Let me see the most shining Virtue the Moralists have to boast of so manifest either to the Person possess’d of it, or those who behold his Actions: Let me see Courage, or the Love of one’s Country so apparent without any Mixture, clear’d and distinct, the first from Pride and Anger, the other from the Love of Glory, and every Shadow of Self-Interest, as this Pity would be clear’d and distinct from all other Passions. There would be no need of Virtue or Self-Denial to be moved at such a Scene; and not only a Man of Humanity, of good Morals and Commiseration, but likewise an Highwayman, an House-Breaker, or a Murderer could feel Anxieties on such an Occasion; how calamitous soever a Man’s Circumstances might be, he would forget his Misfortunes for the time, and the most troublesome Passion would give way to Pity, and not one of the Species has a Heart so obdurate or engaged that it would not ake at such a Sight, as no Language has an Epithet to fit it (*FB* II: 255-256).
of society. In any case, pity, at least in the Second Discourse, moderates ‘in each individual the activity of love of oneself’ and in doing so ‘contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species’. It is this internal restraint which prevents a robust savage from plundering the spoils of the weak or the old, the young or the fragile, so long, of course, as he is able to find relief in other ways. From even the little that has been mentioned, it should be clear that love of self still rules the savage; pity does not resolve him to leave untouched what might be in the hands of another if his survival depends on it. And although the principle embedded within it is a less demanding one, ‘Do what is good for you with the least possible harm to others’, rather than ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’, it nevertheless ‘carries us without reflection to the aid of those whom we see suffer’, and in the state of nature it is that which stands in for laws, morals or virtue (SD 37-38/ OC 3, 156). But Rousseau will point to some of the weaknesses of pity in Emile. As an impulse of nature it moves us without a presiding principle, and can thus be the source of good or evil. Moreover, without extending it through reason, pity moves only in proximity (E IV, 409-410/ OC 4, 548). This, perhaps, has something to do with what Mandeville thinks of it, that it is a passion which stirs in us only through the work of our sensory impressions if it is left without the expansive effort of reason.

In the original state of nature, then, composed of only these elements, dispersed across the vast surface of the earth, nourished by the natural provisions it offers, the natural human being hardly experienced hostility or contention. And if she did, such conflicts would merely be reactive and incidental, never an occasion for a grudge. There can be no
oppression or domination given the circumstances, and given the passions and intellectual capacities of its inhabitants. As Rousseau describes it:

I hear it always repeated that the stronger will oppress the weak. But let someone explain to me what is meant by this word oppression. Some will dominate by violence, the others will groan, enslaved to all their whims. That is precisely what I observe among us; but I do not see how that could be said of Savage men, to whom one would even have much trouble explaining what servitude and domination are. A man might well seize the fruits another has gathered, the game he has killed, the cave that served as his shelter; but how will he ever succeed in making himself obeyed? And what can be the chains of dependence among men who possess nothing? (SD 41/ OC 3, 161).

In face of the initial conditions in the state of nature, we can see why inequality and servitude, domination and dependence, are not natural to the human condition. This does not mean that all inequalities are inevitably unjustified for Rousseau. Neither does it mean that all forms of dependence, in particular psychological ones, deliver human beings immediately into slavery. This would be an absurd proposition, for the affective ties that bind Emile to his tutor, and Emile to Sophie, for example, do not represent relations of servitude. Moreover, Emile, as we shall see, still desires to have the esteem of his fellow beings, and this, again, in no way subjects him to a life of domination. Rousseau does on occasion exaggerate the extent to which dependence can be restricting and the places where it might be found - for instance, he rather famously refused to ask for directions to avoid being dependent on another - but he does not think complete self-sufficiency possible, nor
dependency a necessary crime. The question Rousseau must now answer is how \textit{amour-propre} comes into being, and, in particular, why inflamed \textit{amour-propre} comes into being almost as naturally. He gives several answers to these questions, and what I shall try to do in what follows is to bring those answers together.

The introduction of private property, the foolish acceptance, that is to say, of those surrounding someone’s declaration of some plot of land as \textit{his}, stands for Rousseau as a rough metaphor for the true foundation of civil society, and all of its accompanying miseries. But to get to the idea of property, ‘many prior ideas which could only have arisen successively’ was necessary, for it could not have been, in words echoing Mandeville, ‘conceived all at once in the human mind’. Rousseau charts the passage of this historical transformation by starting with, as we have already seen, certain environmental changes and an increasingly populated earth. Given their difficulties, human beings soon learnt to use animals, whether in direct relation to their needs, or in relation to others (still for their needs), and in doing so they established in their minds ‘perceptions of certain relations’. In coming to use animals, they first looked upon them and noted the differences between them: some were large, strong, or weak; others were slow, fast, or bold and so forth, and those notions, those comparisons, eventually brought about within them their first reflections. Those reflections they used to further their aims, and they eventually became superior to animals and gained an awareness of that superiority. ‘Thus the first glance he directed upon himself produced in him the first stirring of pride; thus, as yet scarcely knowing how to distinguish ranks, and considering himself in the first rank as a species, he prepared from afar to claim first rank as an individual’ (\textit{SD 44/ OC} 3, 165-166).
The next two important revolutions involved the adoption of a more sedentary way of life, the establishment of the first fixed dwellings, a rudimentary sort of property, which allowed familial relations to develop, and the procuring of new commodities, which was facilitated by the natural human beings’ invented tools and their leisure. With new commodities came the extension of basic needs. As their settlements became permanent, and as families united into bands and eventually nations, everything changed ‘its appearance’. The ‘passing intercourse’ ordered by nature soon became ‘mutual frequentation’, and as people grew ‘accustomed to consider different objects and made comparisons; imperceptibly they acquired ideas of merit and beauty which produced sentiments of preference. By dint of seeing one another, they could no longer do without seeing one another again’. But we might perhaps extend the thought. Not only by dint of seeing one another could they no longer do without seeing one another again, but they could no longer do without being seen by the other again. The extension is important; it fortifies what comes after, where ‘a tender and gentle sentiment is gradually introduced into the soul and at the least obstacle becomes an impetuous fury. Jealousy awakens with love; Discord triumphs, and the gentlest of the passions receives sacrifices of human blood’ (SD 47/ OC 3, 168-169). Love has no lack of a desire for a certain recognition or responsiveness from the intended. It is to want ‘to obtain the preference that one grants’. It ‘must be reciprocal’. ‘To be loved, one has to make oneself lovable. To be preferred, one has to make oneself more lovable than another, more lovable than every other, at least in the eyes of the beloved object’. To make oneself lovable, one has to adopt, in a sense, a standpoint outside oneself, to see from another’s eyes what is in fact lovable. This can lead to both good and ill. It allows one to
judge oneself as others would, and this could produce honourable actions. But it could also lead to alienation, where one lives entirely in the opinion of others. In any case, if making oneself loveable is achieved, one claims first rank in the eyes of another, and it is this that makes infidelity such a painful experience. These remarks occur in *Emile*, and Rousseau gives an impassioned account of how love is implicated in the broader desire for public esteem: ‘This is the source of the first glances at one’s fellows; this is the source of the first comparisons with them; this is the source of emulation, rivalries, and jealousy ... *He who senses how sweet it is to be loved would want to be loved by everyone; and all could not want preference without there being many malcontents*. It is from ‘love and friendship’ that ‘dissensions, enmity, and hate’ arise. And it is ‘from the bosom of so many diverse passions’ that Rousseau sees ‘opinion raising an unshakeable throne, and stupid mortals, subjected to its empire, basing their own existence on the judgments of others’ (*E IV*, 365/*OC* 4, 494; emphasis added).

A few additional things are worth mentioning at this point. First, the notion of superiority over animals plays, so it appears, a role here, or at least in the *Second Discourse*. It is precisely, although only in part, because natural man has carried over that sense of superiority that obstacles to obtaining a preferred partner lead to an impetuous fury. Yet we see from his remarks in *Emile* how this is not obviously a necessary condition for those raised within civil society. Second, the preferences made at this point are local, in the sense that they are more or less interpersonal rather than public. Third, it is the existence of an

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89 *Emile*’s reaction to Sophie’s infidelity, made all the more unforgivable given the high esteem he held of her, his complete loss of his sense of self, is vividly described by Rousseau in the sequel to his treatise on education).
obstacle to a desired end, so to speak (coupled with a sense of superiority), that ignites anger, driving the first sacrifices of human blood on the basis of ideas of standing (human beings could have already been engaged in isolated fights before this, so this is not the first spilling of blood). In the Dialogues, Rousseau emphasizes that it is in fact the notion of meeting with an obstacle that gives rise to (inflamed) amour-propre:

The primitive passions, which all tend directly toward our happiness, focus us only on objects that relate to it, and having only the love of self as a principle, are all loving and gentle in their essence. But when they are deflected from their object by obstacles, they are focused on removing the obstacle rather than reaching the object; then they change nature and become irascible and hateful. And that is how the love of self, which is a good and absolute feeling, becomes amour-propre, which is to say a relative feeling by which one makes comparisons; the latter feeling demands preferences, whose enjoyment is purely negative, and it no longer seeks satisfaction in our own benefit but solely in the harm of another (D, 9/ OC 1, 669).

What the Dialogues presuppose, which the Second Discourse does not, is that comparative standing, and so consideration, has already taken root. For if we were to take this passage on its own terms, deflection as a result of an obstacle would be enough to cause amour-propre to materialize. But as we have seen, human beings can do a great deal of harm to one another without causing offense in the absence of consideration. It is from desiring to be considered and taking oneself as someone who ought to be considered that obstacles have the effects they do. But it is not clear what those obstacles are obstacles to. On the one
hand, it seems most likely to represent some particular and material object of desire, which another prevents me from getting, which then turns my attention to him, the obstacle, to getting rid of it. By interfering with my attempt to get what I want, and given the rough establishment of relational standing, the interference is seen as an intentional affront, an act of contempt. On the other hand, and in a more general way, it is possible that the object of desire is itself the esteem of another. If we think back to the example of Cain and Abel, the failure to win the esteem of God left Cain with a view of Abel as an obstacle which had to be destroyed. The account of preferences in the Second Discourse proceeds in the same way. If I have a preference for you, but you for another, then the other is seen, whether rightly or wrongly, as an obstacle. Or given the preferences between a lover and her beloved, the attempt by any other to hijack the relationship cannot but arouse an intense jealousy or anger. In the passage just cited, the notion of an obstacle should be taken in a broader sense to include various things. But whatever the case, it plays a role in the (further) inflammation of amour-propre. We may perhaps count this as the first stirrings of the passion, but let us proceed to what Rousseau says next, in what is perhaps the most famous passage of the Second Discourse. As ‘contacts spread, and bonds are tightened’:

People grew accustomed to assembling in front of Huts or around a large Tree; song and dance, true children or love and leisure, became the amusement or rather the occupation of idle and assembled men and women. Each one began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. The one who sang or danced the best, the handsomest, the strongest, the most adroit, or the most eloquent became the most highly considered; and that was the first step toward
inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. From these first preferences were born on the one hand vanity and contempt, on the other shame and envy; and the fermentation caused by these new leavens eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence (SD 47, OC 3, 169-170).

The language of fermentation, and the notion of social intercourse as involved in that process, is clearly reminiscent of Mandeville. Rousseau does, however, add the notion of the passions (the effects of amour-propre) as the leavens which cause it (Neuhouser 2008, 2014). This is one of the most significant innovations of Rousseau’s genealogical account: he makes social commerce the “origin” of amour-propre, which then drives the remarkable transformations we see, rather than ascribing it, as Mandeville does, to human nature (cf. Marks 2005). The sense of superiority, the making of preferences and the desire to be preferred in love relations, carries over, presumably, from the earlier stage to this one, with the crucial difference that now preferences are public, and it is only at this point that the notion of public esteem arises. Moreover, it is only with public esteem that the passions of shame and envy, vanity and contempt, emerge (in the earlier stage, jealousy was the predominant passion to any denial of satisfaction). It is important to note that while the sense of superiority over animals carries over as well, it does not do so to the extent that each simply takes himself to already be the best, where all that is left is for the rest to confirm his image in their deeds. If that were the case, no one would be esteemed, in fact, no one could, and the social union would have collapsed at its inception. Each might desire to be esteemed as the best, but doubtless they do not all insist on it with the strictest sensibility (although some certainly might). In the end Rousseau tells us that:
As soon as men had begun to appreciate one another, and the idea of consideration was formed in their minds, each one claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible to be disrespectful toward anyone with impunity. From this came the first duties of civility, even among Savages; and from this any voluntary wrong became an outrage, because along with the harm that resulted from the injury, the offended man saw in it contempt for his person which was often more unbearable than the harm itself. Thus, everyone punishing the contempt shown him by another in a manner proportionate to the importance he accorded himself, vengeances became terrible, and men bloodthirsty and cruel (SD, 48/OC3, 170).

Consideration and mutual appreciation ended the innocent days when an act did not hold within it the promise of contempt. Notice that Rousseau speaks here of voluntary wrongs, thus distinguishing it from the accidental harms people might do to one another in any social environment. But voluntary wrongs express more than an intention to harm; they reveal a basic contempt for the person against whom the harm is delivered, that she has no standing, or at least, not one enough to dissuade the decision to cause harm. Intention is an important aspect of inciting amour-propre: ‘In all the evils which befall us, we look more to the intention than to the effect. A shingle falling off a roof can injure us more, but does not grieve us as much as a stone thrown on purpose by a malevolent hand. The blow sometimes goes astray, but the intention never misses its mark’. For Rousseau, ‘offenses, acts of revenge, slights, insults, injustices are nothing for the person
who, in the evils he endures, sees only the evil itself and not any intention’ (RSW VIII, 72-74/ OC 1, 1080-1082).

Rousseau’s discussion here is open to the objection of a muddle. The language of desiring to be esteemed for certain qualities or excellences, like singing or dancing, is quite different from the kinds of considerations he discusses immediately after. The distinction, we might say, is one between esteem and respect, where respect refers to ‘an intrinsically moral form of valuing persons’ which ‘consists, roughly, in according equal moral status to the interests or ends of all individuals. To respect a person in this sense is to regard him as possessing a set of rights that all persons possess simply in virtue of being human’ (Neuhouser, 2008: 62). Esteem, by contrast, is the admiration or approval granted to others on the grounds of their particular qualities and excellences, merits and achievements, comprehensively, distinctions, to which they are not entitled, but for which they may be eligible. Rousseau never makes this distinction, as Neuhouser correctly points out, but there is a sense of a recognizable transition in his ideas from those of esteem to ones of respect, as expressed in the demands of civility, however basic they may be. But even here, it is not entirely obvious if the intentional wrongs Rousseau has in mind are just those we would call violations of respect, nor is it clear if he means to suggest by injury something like the harms we would associate with that particular way of valuing others. For the duties of civility were rather broad at his time. And Rousseau would later include, under the notion of attracting consideration, qualities of the mind, beauty, strength, skill, merits and talents (SD 51, OC 3, 174).
The absence of a definitive distinction between respect and esteem can in any case be profitable. For one thing, it allows us to see, perhaps with greater clarity, how respect on its own is insufficient to satisfy the _amour-propre_ of individuals, their need to count for something in the eyes of another. For another, _amour-propre_ is no longer just about the notion of equal or unequal moral worth. A prevalent, Kantian reading of Rousseau, contrived with consummate skill by Joshua Cohen, holds that _amour-propre_ corresponds to two ways of self-valuation. ‘A person with the first form – call it the egalitarian form – regards his own worth as equal to that of others ...The second, inegalitarian form of self-regard is to think oneself more worthy of regard than others, and find it insulting if they reject this elevated conception – if they reject the view that one is more worthy of consideration and respect than they are themselves’ (Cohen, 2010: 102-103). But this misses the complexity of _amour-propre_, given that it goes beyond the mere need for considerations of equal respect, and it obscures the first point as well, since it fails to recognize that respect is in the end insufficient, and there can be ways in which people might satisfy their need to count for something that might not take egalitarian forms. In saying this, however, it should be noted that Cohen’s reading is not entirely false. For Rousseau does attempt to raise Emile to look upon his fellow human beings as his equals, and to understand his privileges as the work of contingency rather than an innate worth or quality that extends beyond the rest. But Emile’s need to count for someone will indeed go beyond this.

\[^{90}\text{Cohen also says that Rousseau never considers a third possibility, that one thinks oneself inferior to others, but this is false.}\]
It might be thought that with these statements Rousseau has explained how inflamed *amour-propre*, has come about. Yet he will tell us almost immediately that what follows from this is the golden age of human history. So is the view of *amour-propre* we have encountered up until now of its more pernicious forms? There are two options in answering this question. The first is to take this as sufficient proof that the desire for esteem and for greater standing is not necessarily inflamed, which means, further, that Rousseau does not envision a world where greater standing is to be denied or rejected. Moreover, on this view, egalitarian conceptions of *amour-propre* can be shown to have gotten things wrong. A second option, although a less convincing one, is to say that *amour-propre* is at this point already inflamed, but given the more, shall we say, primitive conditions of such social entities, the worst effects of the passion remain hidden from view, and it will take further development, and more complex conditions, before we can see it in its even darker proportions. But there is no evidence to suggest Rousseau thought this. In fact, there is at least one more thing that has to occur before we exit this natural and happy state of affairs, which for Rousseau is one of the greatest misfortunes to have befallen us, and that is, the creation of dependence.

It is important to note that in the golden era of human history, human beings were still considered by Rousseau to be more or less self-sufficient. He places the introduction of dependency after its establishment, and tells of its great significance:

As long as [human beings] applied themselves only to tasks that a single person could do and to arts that did not require the cooperation of several hands, they lived free,
healthy, good, and happy insofar as they could be according to their Nature, and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse. But from the moment one man needed the help of another, as soon as they observed that it was useful for a single person to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, labour became necessary; and vast forests were changed into smiling Fields which had to be watered with the sweat of men, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow with the crops (SD, 49/OC3, 171).

Even with the emergence of *amour-propre*, so long as individuals were independent, its inflamed forms could still be curtailed. This lends further support to the first of the two views mentioned. Now, the question here is, why does dependence deepen or inflame *amour-propre*? It is worth mentioning, before proceeding, that metallurgy and agriculture were the ‘two arts whose invention produced this great revolution’. As these advanced, the division of labour and private property arose, which further exacerbated matters. But I shall not describe in detail Rousseau’s account of it. More important are his reasons for thinking that the creation of dependence leads to pernicious forms of *amour-propre* taking root. First, through dependency and the division of labour, we are now no longer able to provide for ourselves, which means that our basic living needs are contingent on others. This, together with the creation of more commodities, and with it the multiplication of our needs through the multiplication our wants, makes it more urgent for us to interest others in our fate. To count for something now becomes ever more important if we are to live decent lives. And if we cannot interest them in our fates in more benign ways, then they must be made to be interested in our fates, and this yields the first attempts at oppression.
and domination. Second, with the development of trades (as a result of dependence and a division of labour) new, expanded opportunities to gain esteem materialized. To the qualities of the mind, beauty, strength, skill, merit and talents it is presently possible to add ‘the representative signs of wealth’ and ‘the power to serve or harm’ as ways to win preference for ourselves. And with wealth comes the ability to exploit or dominate others, to subjugate the poor, which further satisfies the desire to seek standing over others. In addition, Rousseau appears to think that domination inspires domination; the desire for standing feeds itself as it is nourished, and ambition swells and craves more for itself. ‘The rich’, he tells us, ‘had scarcely known the pleasure of domination when they soon disdained all others, and using their old Slaves to subdue new ones, they thought only of subjugating and enslaving their neighbours: like those famished wolves which, having once tasted human flesh, refuse all other foods and thenceforth want only to devour men’ (*SD*, 52/ *OC* 3, 175-177).

It is important to see how this desire for recognition differs from other forms of esteem. It is different, for example, from the desire to be esteemed by those for whom we have esteem: ‘we want to be esteemed by the people we esteem, and as long as I could judge men, or at least some men, favorably, the judgments they held about me could not be uninteresting to me’ (*RSW* VIII, 71/ *OC* 1, 1077). The esteem sought by the master is, very obviously, not at all like this. The praise of the slave is, in one sense, worthless (but not even this is certain, since the praise of the slave might have value insofar as it comports with one’s picture of the world which includes oneself). But the revolt of the slave is not without value; it is an expression of contempt by the contemptible. This expresses the complexity
of the relationship between master and slave: the master values and does not value the esteem of the slave, and his contempt for the slave makes the latter’s contempt all the more unbearable.

In any case, the elements discussed all appear, even if put together differently, in Rousseau’s account of how amour-propre gets inflamed in a child’s education. In Julie we are told that ‘by assuming the right to be obeyed children departed from the state of nature almost upon birth, and contracted our vices by our example, their own by our indiscretion (J, 468/ OC 2, 571). Its occurrence arises as follows: ‘the first condition of man is want and weakness’, the child’s tears are an expression of felt needs which he cannot satisfy independently. It is ‘from these tears that we might think so little worthy of attention’ that ‘is born man’s first relation to all that surrounds him; here is formed the first link in that long chain of which the social order is formed’ (E I, 194/ OC 4, 286). Rousseau goes on to say:

The first tears of children are prayers. If one is not careful, they soon become orders. Children begin by getting themselves assisted, they end by getting themselves served. Thus, from their own weakness, which is in the first place the source of the feeling of their dependence, is subsequently born the idea of empire and domination. But since this idea is excited less by their needs than by our services, at this point moral effects whose immediate cause is not in nature begin to make their appearance, and one sees already why it is important from the earliest age to disentangle the secret intention which dictates the gesture or the scream (E I, 195/ OC 4, 287).
Complete dependency alone does not give rise to the desire for domination. Its emergence issues from the way those tasked to raise children react to this dependency. It is at once, then, both social and psychological in its origin. He tells of how a child, in his first attempts at taking hold of an object extended beyond his reach, does so without tears, for he has not yet been caught by the frustration of his coming failure; the distance which separates them is not yet judged as something he cannot overcome by his own powers. Yet we know that this distance stands against his capacities, it is insurmountable without assistance. Once he realizes this, his tears follow, and they represent one of two things: he is, however hazily, either commanding the object to approach, or he is commanding those surrounding him to deliver it into his hands. Recognizing the intention here matters. The command in its second form, if those around him do not decline to consider it, establishes, gradually, the mistaken view that they are but his instruments, to be ‘set in motion’ by his directives. He becomes accustomed to making use ‘of those people to follow’ his ‘inclination and to supplement’ his weaknesses. And it is from this view of the world that children ‘become difficult, tyrannical, imperious, wicked, unmanageable – a development which does not come from a natural spirit of domination but which rather gives one to them’. The experience of ‘how pleasant it is to act with the hands of others, and to need only to stir one’s tongue to make the universe move’, puts the child in the full but false tide of his mastery over the elements of the world (EI, 197/ OC4, 289).

While it might be thought that dominion is the offspring of *amour-propre*, Rousseau tells us, curiously, the opposite. ‘The desire to command is not extinguished with the need that
gave birth to it. Dominion awakens and flatters *amour-propre*, and habit strengthens it’ (*E* I, 197/ *OC* 4, 289). Two things follow from this. First, a child accustomed to having his will obeyed will not leave, as it were, his childish prejudices behind as he matures. It becomes part of his character and the considerable measure of his expectation of the world: ‘induced from their birth by the indolence in which they are nurtured, by the deference everyone shows them, by the ease of obtaining everything they desire, into thinking everyone must yield to their whims, young people enter the world with this impertinent prejudice’ (*J*, 468/ *OC* 2, 571). Second, it is not *amour-propre* that serves as the source of the desire for dominion, but rather dominion that awakens and flatters it. We see here how it is that while *amour-propre* is not a pernicious passion by necessity, it is almost natural, or perhaps even inevitable, that it will become so. If *amour-propre* has its source in comparisons, then the first comparisons the child makes, or is guided to make, is one where he stands at the centre of all things. This, if allowed to continue, leaves him wicked, for ‘the good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself’ (*E* IV, 455/ *OC* 4, 602). But there is a question here of why the child, born only with the passion of *amour de soi*, would find pleasure in acting with the hands of others, and why, in a further sense, dominion awakens *amour-propre*. The answer to this, I think, comes in the way of a reversal of what happens when one meets with an obstacle. As it has been mentioned, Rousseau describes *amour-propre* at one point as emerging from a focus on removing the obstacle to a desired object, where the obstacle is of course another will. In this reversal, it is not an obstacle but rather the habit of recognizing another as an instrument to one’s desired object, or pleasures, that shifts the child’s focus in some respect. If deflection by way of an obstacle produces irascible
sentiments and frustration directed at the obstacle – another’s will – then access to pleasures by way of a felicitous instrument subjected to my control – another’s will – produces pleasure at being able to move that will. This awakens *amour-propre* because the child begins to see, again however vaguely, that he has standing in relation to other wills, and that he has standing in their eyes as well, since they are doing all they can to satisfy his wants. If this awakens *amour-propre*, how then, does it flatter it? For Rousseau, one of the things *amour-propre* seeks is that others prefer us to themselves. When caregivers submit to the child’s desires, when they are seen as, in a sense, submitting their wills to his, the child experiences the sort of preference that Rousseau puts at the bottom of *amour-propre*. This, so it seems, is one way of making sense of Rousseau’s claims, which is not supplied with any sort of thorough argument at all.

But this takes us to the further problem of how the child’s *amour-propre*, assuming it to be awakened and flattered by dominion, turns ever more irascible and becomes (further) inflamed. Once the child begins to see himself as situated amongst other wills, resistance becomes a problem, especially if the child has become accustomed to getting his own way:

The habit of easily getting the objects of his desires leads him to desire much and makes him sense continual privations. Everything that pleases him tempts him: everything others have, he wants to have. He covets everything; he is envious of everyone. He would want to dominate everywhere. Vanity gnaws at him. The ardor of unbridled desires inflames his young heart; jealousy and hate are born along with them. All the devouring passions take flight at the same time. He brings their agitation into the
tumult of society. He brings it back with him every night. He comes home discontented with himself and others. He goes to sleep full of countless vain projects, troubled by countless whims (Etiv, 381/ OC4, 514).

‘As long as children find resistance only in things and never in wills, they will become neither rebellious nor irascible’ (EI, 195/ OC 4, 287). The reason why they become irascible, according to Rousseau, is that the caregiver will have to at some point decline a demand. The child now sees resistance in a will. And as Rousseau explains it (much later), ‘if he is obeyed, as soon as something resists him, he sees in it a rebellion, an intention to resist him’ (Etiv, 364/ OC 4, 492-493). And as we have already seen, witnessing an intention of harm in the act of another is what spurs us to the more hateful passions that have their roots in amour-propre. These reflections show, then, how amour-propre arises, and why once it takes root, it is almost natural for it to take an insidious turn.

III

In this final section, I want to explore some of the problems that issue from an inflamed amour-propre. We have already encountered some of them, but I shall want to stress their character further and highlight other important ones. In the last section, we saw how public esteem comes to have value for those in society, and how, generally speaking, when children are raised improperly, they are led to vice and moral corruption. But the inflamed forms of amour-propre range over a broad spectrum, and some might appear opposed to others. It is important, however, to keep in mind that Rousseau is not contradicting himself
in making such remarks. For *amour-propre* is a passion of great plasticity, and the directions in which it can travel are perhaps measureless. And it is this, in the end, that produces the diversity of our social ills.

I want to begin with a passage that summarizes and captures some of the main elements discussed in the last section, and which will allow us to proceed further:

If you ask me the origin of this disposition to compare oneself, which changes a natural and good passion into another passion that is artificial and bad, I will answer that it comes from social relations, from the progress of ideas, and from the cultivation of the mind. So long as we are occupied solely by absolute needs, we confine ourselves to seeking what is truly useful to us, we scarcely cast an idle glance at others. But as society becomes more closely knit by the bond of mutual needs, as the mind is extended, exercised, and enlightened, it becomes more active, embraces more objects, grasps more relationships, examines, compares. In these frequent comparisons, it doesn’t forget either itself, its fellows, or the place it aspires to among them. Once we have started to measure ourselves this way we never stop, and from then on the heart occupies itself only with placing everyone else beneath us (*D*, 113/ *OC* 1, 806).

Inflamed *amour-propre* is here described as occupied only with placing all beneath us; the place it aspires to is the first rank as an individual. What is sought here is not just being the best in some aspect or another. More interestingly, Rousseau can be read as saying that the aspiration is to become a worthier human being. If human worth is thought of as deeply
connected to excellences or attributes or qualities, rather than the fact of being human itself, then three things might be said of this. One is that human beings tend to identify the worth of their humanity with the particular aspects of their being rather than some universal quality they might share with others. Another is that in doing so they have, perhaps, gotten things back to front. But third, in the shifting complex of human relations, to be told that one is respected as a human being but esteemed for nothing could in fact turn out to be insufferably insulting.

Rousseau recognizes that the strivings of *amour-propre* are not to be restricted to the desire for eminence in some one field or another. He speaks in an exaggerated but vivid way of the vast carelessness of its impulse for distinction when he writes:

> Amour-propre is always irritated or discontent, because its wish is that each person should prefer us to all else and to himself, which is impossible. It is irritated by the preferences it feels others deserve even when they don’t obtain them. It is irritated by the advantages someone else has over us, without being appeased by those for which it feels compensated. The feeling of inferiority in a single respect therefore poisons the feeling of superiority in a thousand others, and what one has more of is forgotten in devoting attention only to what one has less of (*D II*, 113/ *OC* 1, 807).

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91 ‘They were carless people, Tom and Daisy - they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made’ (Fitzgerald [1925] 1991, 167).
No one of course can be esteemed in a thousand ways, and anyone who remains dissatisfied after such a conquest must be possessed of an inflamed *amour-propre* given over to madness. But while Rousseau is obviously not to be taken literally, what he says is nevertheless remarkable. For it reveals just how sensitive to inferiority and how incapable of contentment *amour-propre* really is. To be esteemed as superior in a number of ways might still be insufficient to compensate for the feeling of inferiority in a single respect. Moreover, the desire for esteem faces the fundamental problem of satisfaction. For my desire for preference includes a desire for you to prefer me to yourself, which, as Rousseau says, is impossible. In these two elements we see how the desire for standing often involves, to take from Trilling a fitting phrase, a ‘lusting for infinite supremacy’ (Trilling, 1980: 56).

Advantages count for nothing in the light of absence; it is lack that occupies our thoughts. And it is this focus on what one lacks that, according to Rousseau, drags us to the most familiar of the passion’s ills: ‘competitions, preferences, jealousies, rivalries, offenses, revenges, discontents of all sorts, ambition, desires, projects, means, obstacles fill their brief leisure hours with disquieting thoughts. And if some pleasant image dares to appear with hope, it is erased or obscured by a hundred painful images which the doubtfulness of success quickly puts in its place’ (*D II*, 120/ *OC* I, 815).

But the passage also tells of something more: that *amour-propre* gets irritated by the esteem others deserve even if they do not receive them. And this gets us to the question of whether *amour-propre* is always relative in its second sense. For while this does not prove that the passion can be satisfied without the esteem of others, it shows that the passion may,
perhaps, be incapable of satisfaction even with the esteem of others. The point comes out more clearly here:

You will tell me, perhaps, that nothing is more common than fools consumed by *amour-propre*. That is true only when some distinctions are made. Very often fools are vain, but they are rarely jealous, because since they think themselves securely in first place, they are always very content with their lot. A witty man scarcely enjoys the same happiness. He feels perfectly both what he lacks and the advantage in terms of merit or talent someone else may have over him. He admits it only to himself, but he feels it despite himself, which is what *amour-propre* cannot forgive. (*D II*, 113/ *OC* I, 807).

The fool is not jealous, for he thinks himself securely in the first place, and is for this reason rather content with his lot. But he is vain, and, given his vanity, it must mean that his *amour-propre* can only be satisfied with public esteem. But he is not the problem. The problem is the witty man, who feels perfectly his inadequacies, deficiencies, inferiorities, and so forth, all in relation to someone else he recognizes as succeeding him in merit or talent. In short, he suffers from an awareness of his own mediocrity in contrast to another. But the point here is that this is something his *amour-propre* cannot forgive, it makes him know it, feel it, it forces him to admit it in the private spaces of his soul or the exclusive corners of his heart. His inferiority, which he recognizes, is something he cannot accept without resentment; he must be revenged, he must seek revenge, for only if he delivers it will it count. And it seems here that the good sought after is not to be found in recognition, it cannot be satisfied with public esteem, for he may already be recognized as superior to
his rival by an erring public. He desires not just for others to think him superior, he desires to think himself superior quite apart from what anyone else might think. To be sure, if he thinks himself better but is not publically recognized as such, his passion cannot be satisfied. But the reverse holds here as well. If he is regarded by all as better than his rival, he remains dissatisfied, for he thinks or perhaps knows that he is of inferior stock. Of course his reply might be to do better, but if his talents are severely diminished in contrast to those of his rival, then he might never be able to do better, and the only alternative left for him is to harm, in secret. But not even this much will be satisfactory in the end, for whatever harms that may by his hand come to fruition, he remains his inferior in talent or merit. And he knows it. His dissatisfaction is absolute.

The second common problem with inflamed *amour-propre* is one of alienation. This comes in two ways. In our desire to count in the eyes of others, we might end up remaking ourselves entirely in the image of their opinions: ‘the Savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside himself, knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence’ (*SD*, 66/OC3, 193). Or as he puts it in *Emile*, ‘the man of the world is whole in his mask. Almost never being in himself, he is always alien and ill at ease when forced to go back there. What he is, is nothing; what he appears to be is everything for him’ (*E IV*: 383/OC 4, 515). A number of things follow from this. First, it leads straightforwardly to insincerity and falseness, and even a lack of authenticity, for one is now wholly bent to the will of opinion. Second, if I live only in the opinion of others, then not only am I alienated, it is very likely that I will act in ways, determined by public norms, to gain preference. This
is not of course always a bad thing; in fact it is a necessary part of social life. But it leads to the further problem that one might not choose to act well or decently if the right action runs against public opinion, and Rousseau tells of how this enslavement to arbitrary opinion often leads to moral corruption, to ‘so much indifference for good and evil’ (SD, 66/ OC 3, 193). And not only will I decline to do what is right in the face of my desire for the esteem of an erring public, I may do harm, or act in ways that harm others, just so I can win the approval of those around me. Third, in desiring to be esteemed in the sense of being approved of, it may be the case that the individual is not here necessarily striving for superiority, or at least not superiority over all others. If one wants approval, to strive incessantly for superiority, to demand all others prefer us to themselves, is surely self-defeating. This shows at the very least that _amour-propre_ is not necessarily tied to the desire for supremacy, even if it very often takes that form. It may in fact turn one the other way, where I now act in rather servile ways just to gain approval. One has in this case no true sense of self, and no discernible self-esteem.

It is for these reasons that Emile’s education is directed towards protecting him from such outcomes. But this does not mean that the student holds no concern for counting in the eyes of others. He still has a ‘desire to please others’ which ‘does not leave him absolutely indifferent’ to their opinions, but he ‘values nothing according to the price opinion confers on it’ and ‘will concern himself with opinion only insofar as it relates immediately to his person, and he will not worry about arbitrary evaluations whose only law is fashion’. He will ‘hardly seek advantages which are not clear in themselves, and which need to be established by another’s judgment’ (such as being determined to be of greater intelligence.
than another); nor will he ‘seek those advantages which are not at all connected with one’s person, such as being of nobler birth, being esteemed richer, more influential, or more respected, or making impression by greater pomp’. In the end, the goal of his education is this: ‘he will not precisely say to himself, “I rejoice because they approve of me,” but rather, “I rejoice because they approve of what I have done that is good. I rejoice that the people who honor me do themselves honor. So long as they judge so soundly, it will be a fine thing to obtain their esteem’ (E IV, 511 / OC 4, 670-671). Emile’s education does not leave him without the desire for esteem, but it renders him more discerning about the kinds of esteem he desires, or to put it differently, he wants to count in the eyes of others for things that really count.

But there is a second way in which inflamed _amour-propre_ can lead to alienation:

Remember that as soon as _amour-propre_ has developed, the relative _I_ is constantly in play, and the young man never observes others without returning to himself and comparing himself with them. The issue, then, is to know in what rank among his fellows he will put himself after having examined them. I see from the way young people are made to read history that they are transformed, so to speak, into all the persons they see; one endeavours to make them become now Cicero, now Trajan, now Alexander, and to make them discouraged when they return to themselves, to make each of them _regret being only himself_. This method has certain advantages which I do not discount; but, as for my Emile, if in these parallels he just once prefers to be someone other than himself – were this other Socrates, were it Cato – everything has
failed. He who begins to become alien to himself does not take long to forget himself entirely (E IV, 398-399/ OC 4, 534-535, emphasis added).

Amour-propre in this case leads to alienation but in a different sense. The student regrets that he is only himself, he now desires to be someone else. It might be said that what he really wants is to be admired in the way he admires those illustrious figures, and this may certainly be true. But the problem Rousseau points to here is not a desire to be esteemed in one way or another, it is the wish to be another being altogether. Again, this version of inflamed amour-propre does not look to the esteem of the public directly, nor does it consist in the other problem of alienation, of living solely in the opinion of others. It is his own opinion of himself that he lives in, which he cannot bear. Having made the comparison between his self and the great human beings of the past, he now longs to forget that he is inescapably who he is; he is estranged from his self. There is a sense in which this may merely represent the first step towards the more familiar alienation from the self mentioned above, where one lives entirely in the opinions of the public. But there is also a sense in which alienation already takes root here, and it has nothing to do with public esteem. Public esteem may not ever vanquish the sense that one is not enough, that one’s being is not quite as it ought to be, or as how one wishes it to be.

The last problem of inflamed amour-propre I shall discuss is the problem of dependence, which is closely connected to the points made above. When one acts according to public opinion, one becomes a dependent creature in a very significant way. It represents a loss of freedom, and it happens even to those who dominate others. Rousseau is well-known for
saying that ‘even domination is servile when it is connected with opinion, for you depend on the prejudices of those you govern by prejudices. To lead them as you please, you must conduct yourself as they please. They have only to change their way of thinking, and you must perforce change your way of acting’ (E II, 214-215/ OC 4, 308). In the Social Contract, he tells of how ‘one who believes himself the master of others is nonetheless a greater slave than they’ (SC I:1, 131/OC 3, 351). And Emile towards the end of his education, when he finally turns his eyes towards humanity, comes to this sentiment:

He pities these miserable Kings, slaves of all that obey them. He pities these false wise men, chained to their vain reputations. He pities those rich fools, martyrs to their display. He pities those conspicuous voluptuaries, who devote their entire lives to boredom in order to appear to have pleasure. He would pity even the enemy who would do him harm, for he would see his misery in his wickedness. He would say to himself, “In giving himself the need to hurt me, this man has made his fate dependent on mine” (E IV, 400/ OC 4, 536)

Dependence runs deep here, for even the man who gives himself the need to hurt another has made his fate dependent on that other (and it must be recalled that the need to hurt another itself comes from amour-propre, as discussed above). His happiness now turns on the successes or failures of his endeavours in relation to his enemy. When Rousseau says, then, that ‘what makes man essentially good is to have few needs and to compare himself little to others; what makes him essentially wicked is to have many needs and to depend very much on opinion’, what is at stake is not just one’s character or one’s virtue, but one’s
freedom as well (E IV, 364/ OC 4, 493). And it is for this reason that Rousseau often cautions that one must, as far as possible, ‘draw [one’s] existence up within [oneself]’ (E II, 214/ OC 4, 308).
The claims of man and citizen are often considered irreconcilable in Rousseau’s philosophy. According to Mira Morgenstern (1996: 154), for example, ‘political and personal authenticity will admit of no divided loyalties’; individuals in Rousseau’s philosophy ‘can be either individual men or citizens, but not both’. Similarly, Victor Gourevitch (1997: xxix-xxx) writes that being a man and being a citizen ‘make for fundamentally different economies of the soul, and fundamentally different ways of life’. The ‘competing claims of the two ways of life and the tensions between them’, which Rousseau illustrates in one way through the distinctive educations for man and the citizen, ‘is the central theme of his work, and it is the organizing principle of his writings’. Margaret Canovan (1983: 288), in her delightful essay on Arendt and Rousseau, describes the
Genevan not only as one ‘who claimed that upon each man’s conscience were inscribed basic rules for individual moral conduct’, but also as one who ‘did not think that these sharp rules sufficed for the citizen. On the contrary, he made a sharp distinction between “man” and “citizen”’. And more recently, Karen Pagani (2015: 3), in her study on the significance of anger and forgiveness in Rousseau’s thought, speaks of the ‘impetus behind’ her work as proceeding from ‘the observation that Rousseau’s thoughts on both anger and forgiveness were deeply influenced by the very important distinction between man and citizen that underpins his political philosophy and the radically different ethical imperatives regarding how one could and should respond to conflict that resulted on account of it’.

But the most famous statement of this idea comes, of course, from Judith Shklar. She argues that a ‘strikingly novel’ aspect of Rousseau’s thought lies in ‘his insistence that one must choose between the two models’ of man and the citizen if one ‘is to escape’ from the ‘disorientation and inner disorder’ caused by living in modern society. These afflictions partly result from ‘our mixed condition, our half natural and half social state’, which attempts to harmonize two incompatible modes of existence. Natural man is a ‘numerical unity, the absolute whole which is relative only to itself or its kind’. The citizen, in contrast, is ‘only a fractional unity dependent on the denominator; his value is determined by his relation to the whole, which is the social body’ (E I, 164/ OC 4, 249). To forestall the development of discord within, one must decide between a private education directed ‘against society, in isolation from and rejection of all prevailing customs and opinions’ and a
public education that allows one to ‘lose oneself in a collectivity’ (Shklar, 1969: 5). In short, one can make a man or a citizen but never both.

This view has recently been challenged by Frederick Neuhouser (2008: 20-24, Chapters 5, 7). He points out that Rousseau’s most explicit statement on this issue contains an important but often overlooked qualification. In that statement, Rousseau rejects not the possibility of reconciling man and citizen in a single individual but the simultaneity of educating an individual to be both. As he describes it, when one is ‘forced to combat nature or the social institutions, one must choose between making a man or a citizen, for one cannot make both at the same time’ (Emile, 163/OC 4, 248, emphasis added).

The reconciliation of man and citizen is possible but only if the education of each is performed in the absence of the other. Neuhouser (2008: 20, 172) suggests that ‘Rousseau alerts us to the existence of “two contrary forms of instruction” not with the purpose of identifying Emile with one of the alternatives – an education that produces hommes’ – but rather to ‘define its aim as the overcoming of that opposition’. Such an overcoming finds its solution in the creation of a successive system of education that proceeds first with the ideal of man and later with the ideal of the citizen. This, Neuhouser asserts, corresponds to the education of Emile, who is raised to be a man (Books I-IV) before his subsequent instruction in citizenship (Book V). Put differently, the final goal of Emile’s education is to produce a ‘man-citizen’, an individual who possesses the capacities required to embrace the general will of his polity as his own – the virtue essential to citizenship – while at the same time embodying a certain version of the ideal of self-sufficiency that

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9 In her final analysis, however, Shklar argues that we could be neither.
defines men: the freedom to ‘see with one’s own eyes’, to ‘feel with one’s own heart’, to be governed only by ‘one’s own reason’ rather than being compelled always to conduct oneself, or to judge, as others see fit (Neuhouser, 2008: 20-21).

On Neuhouser’s view, the moi humain is not entirely crushed by the demands of citizenship but is instead suitably revised and embodied by the moi commun. This version of independence is compatible with, and indeed a part of, the modern ideal of citizenship as developed by Rousseau but not with the ancient ideals of Rome and Sparta. For Neuhouser, the ‘common characteristic’ of citizenship in Rome, Sparta and even Plato’s Republic is to be found in the ‘circumstance that members of the state think of themselves first as citizens – as Romans or Spartans – and only secondarily (or perhaps not at all) as individuals’. This, he maintains, differs from Rousseau’s republican vision. And from this distinction he concludes that ‘when Rousseau denies that Emile can be educated both as man and citizen “at the same time”, he is asserting the incompatibility of Emile’s education not with citizenship tout court but only with citizenship in its ancient form’ (Neuhouser, 2008: 20).

Neuhouser’s argument is certainly persuasive. It clarifies the almost sudden turn in Rousseau’s thought where he unexpectedly suggests the possibility of fashioning men and citizens despite his initial repudiation of this possibility (E I, 165-166/ OC 4, 251). This said, what is less clear is whether citizen formation is fully realized at the end of Emile. Contrary to Neuhouser’s remarks, there is little evidence to suggest that Emile becomes a fully formed citizen upon completing his education – one capable of willing the general will
of his republic. Upon returning from a two year tour of Europe designed to verse the young pupil in ‘all matters of government, in public morals, and in maxims of State of every kind’, Emile responds to the tutor’s request for his observations by asking ‘what difference does it make to me where I am?’ And as Jean-Jacques himself declares, Emile will ‘on leaving my hands ... be neither magistrate nor soldier nor priest. He will in the first place, be a man’ (EV, 649, 666; I, 166/ OC 4, 836, 857, 251).

This description of Emile also brings into question Neuhouser’s other claim that Rousseau’s model of citizenship differs from its ancient counterpart in that members of the latter think of themselves first and perhaps only as citizens. It is true that Rousseau’s citizen is partially constituted by the self-sufficiency definitive of man, yet it must be emphasized that he does often speak of identity in terms of place. Not only does Rousseau criticize he who ‘wants to preserve the primacy of the sentiments of nature’ within a civil order as one who ‘does not know what he wants’, he also criticizes the gradation where ‘each man is first of all himself, and then a magistrate, and then a citizen’ as one that is ‘directly opposed to that which the social order demands’ (EI, 164, V, 657/ OC 4, 249, 845; SC III:ii, 170-171/ OC 3, 401, emphasis added). In Rousseau’s ideal republic, members ought to see themselves first as citizens, just as in Sparta and Rome.

Below, I argue that although Neuhouser is indeed correct to argue for a successive system of education, the making of a citizen is not completed in Emile but extends into the Social Contract. His account diminishes the crucial role the Lawgiver (Législateur) plays in the fashioning of citizens capable of discerning the general will. An important aspect of the
Lawgiver’s work lies in ‘changing human nature; of transforming each individual, who by himself is a perfect and solitary whole, into a part of a larger whole from which this individual receives, in a sense, his life and his being’ (SC II:vii, 155/ OC 3, 381). This transformation, fundamental to the making of citizens, is not performed by the tutor. Yet only natural man (or those approximating that condition) may be denatured, and it is precisely this feature of Rousseau’s thought that brings Emile and the Social Contract together.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that it is necessary to raise a community of Emiles if the project of founding a republic is to be made possible. Responding to the question ‘what people, then, is suited for legislation?’, Rousseau writes that it is ‘one that, though already bound by some union of origin, interest, or convention, has not yet borne the true yoke of laws’ and ‘that has neither customs nor superstitions that are deeply entrenched’ (SC II:xi, 162/ OC 3, 390). This shows that a people fit for legislation need not be one composed of individuals raised under private instruction, although it must be emphasized that such instances are extremely rare. The question here, however, is whether those raised under private instruction are precluded from becoming citizens, and if not, whether it alone is sufficient. I want to suggest that private instruction does not preclude, but that it is also insufficient – in Emile the essential groundwork for citizenship is prepared but it is only

93 Nicholas Dent uses this quote to suggest that the Lawgiver is unnecessary, since no reference to the Lawgiver is made here. Yet in the preceding chapter, before this statement, Rousseau discusses the importance of the Lawgiver. What Rousseau has in mind here is the distinction between being fit for legislation, and becoming capable of it. The latter requires, as we shall see, the Lawgiver’s work in order to arise. Nevertheless, my concern is whether one raised under private instruction is thereby precluded from being made into a citizen, which differs from this specific issue, which is beyond the scope of this essay. See Nicholas Dent’s (2005) excellent Rousseau. New York: Routledge, pp.140-144.
completed by the work of the Lawgiver in the *Social Contract*. In saying this, I also mean to suggest that private education can serve citizen formation. As we shall see, it does so primarily by cultivating its student’s reasoning and judging capacities, and his conscience. These qualities not only prevent arbitrary opinion from influencing his imagination and inflaming his *amour-propre*, they also develop the student’s sense of justice, both of which are vital to discerning the general will. Moreover, this means that the project of making citizens (outside those rare instances mentioned above) requires that the two forms of education proceed temporally, that is to say, education as a citizen has to take place after private education.

Crucially, then, the making of a man and citizen are, *in principle*, not rival enterprises. Yet what is at stake here is not just the possibility of reconciling man and citizen but the overall coherence of Rousseau’s philosophy. On the view that one has to choose between the two forms of education, *Emile* and the *Social Contract* must be understood as competing alternatives. But in a letter addressed to Duchesne, Rousseau writes that the *Social Contract* ‘must pass as a sort of appendix to’ *Emile*, and that ‘the two together make a complete whole’ (Rousseau 1762; Ellis 1977: 1). Moreover, Rousseau considers his ‘three principal writings’ - *Emile* and the *First and Second Discourse* - as forming ‘a same whole’ (*MB*, 575/*OC* 1, 1136). These remarks recommend reading *Emile* and the *Social Contract* not as rival enterprises but as complementary texts that contribute to the overall unity of Rousseau’s
philosophy." To understand how they may be read together, I shall begin by examining Rousseau’s account of the different forms of education.

II

Because natural man is a ‘numerical unity’ who is ‘entirely for himself’ and civil man is ‘only a fractional unity’ whose ‘value is determined by his relation to the whole’, good social institutions are those ‘that best know how to denature man, to take his absolute existence from him in order to give him a relative one and transport the I into the common unity, with the result that each individual believes himself no longer one but a part of the unity and no longer feels except within the whole’. The contrasting ends of citizen and man necessitate the contrasting forms of public and private education, with Plato’s *Republic* standing out as an exemplary treatise on the former. But ‘public instruction no longer exists and can no longer exist, because where there is no longer a fatherland, there can no longer be citizens’. For Rousseau, the words ‘fatherland’ (*patrie*) and ‘citizen’ (*citoyen*) ought to be ‘effaced from modern languages’ for true republics are but the faded memories of a distant past (*E I*, 164-165/*OC* 4, 249-250). This explains why the countries which Emile visits in his travels do not suffice to instruct him in citizenship: tourism cannot make a citizen, nor can mere intellectual apprehension of the principles of citizenship. If Emile’s own country is not a true fatherland, he cannot be made a citizen merely by maturing within it; still less can he be made so by traveling among countries that are not true fatherlands, though even if they were, he would not be made a citizen by mere travel there. In short, a system of

94 See Masters (1968).
95 Or Rousseau says in the *First Discourse*: ‘We have Physicists, Geometers, Chemists, Astronomers, Poets, Musicians, Painters; we no longer have citizens; or if a few of them are left, dispersed in our abandoned countryside, they perish there indigent and despised. Such is the condition to which those who give us bread and who give milk to our children are reduced, and such are the sentiments we have for them’ (*FD*, 19/*OC* 3, 26).
public education is contingent on a flourishing republic. In the absence of a fatherland no system of public education can prevail, and no true citizen can be raised.⁹⁶

It appears, then, that one must decide upon a private education. Designed to mirror nature’s instruction, private education attempts to preserve one’s ‘original dispositions’ – the dispositions to seek or flee objects that produce sensations – from the corruption of opinion. These dispositions, initially guided by the pleasantness of the sensations produced, are subsequently directed ‘according to the conformity or lack of it that we find between us and these objects, and finally according to the judgments we make about them on the basis of the idea of happiness or of perfection given us by reason’ (E I, 163/ OC 4, 248).

Private education is chiefly concerned with making its student cognizant of man's true relations – regarding the species and himself as an individual – and with ordering ‘all the affections of the soul according to these relations’ (E IV, 370-371/ OC 4, 500-501). Achieving this requires delaying the inevitable development of amour-propre, which if developed too early and under a misguided view of human relations, becomes inflamed and thus the source of moral corruption. Amour-propre should not, as we have already seen, be confused with amour de soi, which is the ‘source of our passions, the origin and principle of all the others, the only one born with man’ and ‘of which all others are in a sense only modifications’ (E IV, 363/ OC 4, 491). ‘Always good and always in conformity with order’, it is self-regarding and is content upon the satisfaction of one’s authentic needs – needs

⁹⁶ I am grateful to Melissa Lane for a discussion and clarification of this point.
relating (in its most natural form) to self-preservation \( (E IV, 363-364/ OC 4, 491-492; SD, 91-92/ OC 3, 219-220) \). *Amour-propre* is instead the desire to be respected and esteemed by others that often becomes manifest in each person’s desire ‘to claim first rank as an individual’ \( (SD, 44/ OC 3, 166) \). It is ‘only a relative sentiment, artificial and born in society’ that, in making comparisons, is ‘never content and never could be, because this sentiment, preferring ourselves to others, also demands others to prefer us to themselves, which is impossible’ \( (E IV, 364/ OC 4, 493; D, 100, 113/ OC 1, 789-790, 805-807) \). Clearly stated, the problem with *amour-propre* is that ‘as soon as one adopts the habit of measuring oneself against others and moving outside oneself in order to assign oneself the first and best place, it is impossible not to develop an aversion for everything that surpasses us, everything that lowers our standing, everything that diminishes us, everything that by being something prevents us from being everything’ \( (D, 112/ OC 1, 806) \). For Rousseau, ‘this is how the gentle and affectionate passions are born of self-love, and how the hateful and irascible passions are born of *amour-propre*’ \( (E IV, 364/ OC 4, 493) \).

The transformation of *amour de soi* into *amour-propre* is not necessarily morally corrupting, however. Despite its obvious danger, *amour-propre* is also considered by Rousseau to be a ‘useful instrument’ that is able to produce the ‘gentle and humane’ passions of ‘beneficence and commiseration’ \( (E IV, 389/ OC 4, 523) \). Elsewhere, he speaks of the love of fatherland as that which combines all ‘the force of *amour-propre* with all the beauty of virtue’ \( (PE, 151/ OC 3, 255) \). And most emphatically, Rousseau writes that it is possible to transform this passion into a virtue by extending it to other individuals, or, more specifically, ‘transform into a sublime virtue this dangerous disposition *amour-propre* from which all our vices
arise’ by directing it towards the fatherland (E IV, 409/ OC 4, 547; PE, 155/ OC 3, 259).”

For Rousseau, it is not the passions themselves but the ‘errors of imagination which transform into vices the passions of all limited beings’. Although the ‘source of all the passions is sensibility’, it is the imagination that ‘determines their bent’. Beings who are able to sense their relations with other similar beings are affected by their understandings of these relations and changes to these understandings invariably alter the nature of such relationships. Exposed at an early age to the ‘pomp of Courts, the splendor of palaces, or the appeal of the theater’, individuals are often left with a distorted image of man’s relations. Allowing the imagination to be seduced by such illusions causes *amour-propre* to lead individuals astray by engendering vanity, pride and envy within their hearts, for it is ‘not in the human heart to put ourselves in the place of people who are happier than we, but only in that of those who are more pitiable’ (E IV, 373-375/ OC 4, 504-506). But men are neither rich nor naturally kings, lords, or courtiers. ‘All are born naked and poor; all are subject to the miseries of life, to sorrows, ills, needs, and pains of every kind. Finally, all are condemned to death’. These are, for Rousseau, enduring features of the human condition from which there is no possibility of exemption. The sociability of the human being stems from his weakness, and we ‘are attached to our fellows less by the sentiments of their pleasures than by the sentiment of their pains, for we see far better in the latter the identity of our natures with theirs and the guarantees of their attachment to us’ (E IV, 372-373/ OC 4, 503-504). Because everything surrounding an individual influences his imagination such that the flood of prejudices is able to carry him away from a precise

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understanding of man’s true relations, it is necessary that he be given the resources required to resist these influences. Imagination, then, must neither be left without the restraints of sentiment nor those of reason if it is to remain free from error.

Rousseau thus devises an educational scheme which, according to Ryan Hanley’s (2012) extremely sophisticated treatment, proceeds in three stages (sensory education, judgment or reasoning, conscience and willing), each stage building on the preparatory work completed in the former.98 Again, its aim is to ultimately cultivate the student’s reasoning and judging capacities, and his conscience, such that he is able to see the truth of man’s relations, look past the appearances, arbitrary opinions, and prejudices circulating in society, and so prevent them from influencing his imagination and inflaming his amour-propre.

Very briefly, the process begins with sensory education, as the senses are, for Rousseau, ‘the instruments of all our knowledge’ from which ‘all our ideas come, or at least all are occasioned by them’ (ML, 183-184/ OC 4, 1092). Through sensation, objects are presented to us as ‘separated, isolated, such as they are in nature’, giving rise not to ideas but images, ‘absolute depictions of sensible objects’ without relational property (E IV, 430/ OC 4, 571; II, 243/ 4, 344). Given, however, that simple and complex ideas, reflection and reasoning, all build out from the synthesis, comparison, and conjunction of the materials of sensory impressions, education must watch over this stage of passive reception carefully. The goal is to present sensations to the student ‘in an appropriate order’ which ‘prepare[s]
his memory to provide them one day to his understanding in the same order’ (E I, 193/OC 4, 284). Following this, the second stage focuses on cultivating judgment, the capacity to compare. From the conjunction and synthesis of several sensations we form simple ideas, and from the conjunction and synthesis of several simple ideas we form complex ideas. Ideas, unlike sensations, are relational. But with this relational dimension, the prospect of error is raised, since we may make erroneous judgments regarding these relations, leading to erroneous ideas. Since ideas formed on the basis of real relations make for a solid mind, and a precise mind sees relations as they are, the cultivation of judgment here involves training the pupil’s ability to compare and order the relations between sensations and ideas correctly, to see true relations as they are (E III, 353/OC 4, 481). This is an important stage in the development of the moral agent, since amour-propre is itself a comparative sentiment, and whether it becomes inflamed or not is contingent on our capacity to judge, and judge human relations accurately.

The third stage involves transferring the student’s ‘cultivated capacity for the judgment of physical relations to the judgment of moral relations; indeed Rousseau is explicit in insisting that the study of “real material relations” is the necessary preparative for “bringing him ever closer to the great relations he must know one day in order to judge well of the good and bad order of civil society”’ (Hanley, 2012: 255). To cultivate Emile’s reason and judgment of human relations, Rousseau turns to history, specifically Plutarch. Why? Because the attempt to understand moral relations only through actual experiences in a corrupt environment leads quickly to deception, and ‘if men deceive [Emile], he will hate them; but if, respected by them, he sees them deceive one another mutually, he will pity them’.
History allows Emile to ‘read the hearts of men’ and see them as ‘a simple spectator, disinterested and without passion, as their judge and not as their accomplice or as their accuser’ (E IV, 391-392/ OC 4, 526). Through this cultivation of reasoning applied to moral relations, Emile is brought to understand man’s true relations and to know of good and bad, concomitantly developing, or perhaps, becoming aware of, his sentiment of conscience, ‘an innate principle of justice and virtue according to which, in spite of our own maxims, we judge our actions and those of others as good or bad’ (E IV, 452/ OC 4, 598; ML, 198/ OC 4, 1112-3).” Although conscience is here described as innate, Rousseau speaks of it elsewhere, as we have already seen in the last chapter, as something which ‘develops and acts only with man’s understanding’, that ‘it is only through this understanding that he attains a knowledge of order, and it is only when he knows order that his conscience brings him to love it. Conscience is therefore null in the man who has compared nothing and who has not seen his relationships’ (LB, 28/ OC 4, 936). In fact, however, a similar remark can be found, perhaps puzzlingly, in Emile itself: ‘Reason alone teaches us to know good and bad. Conscience, which makes us love the former and hate the latter, although independent of reason, cannot therefore be developed without it. Before the age of reason we do good and bad without knowing it, and there is no morality in our actions’ (E I, 196 / OC 4, 288).

Conscience develops with reason because it is through reason that we compare and order relations, and thus come to know of good and bad (when applied to human relations and assuming a successful education), which conscience then loves and hates respectively. But it

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99 Conscience, like reason, is heeded in the ‘silence of the passions’, Dialogues, p.22/ OC 1, p.687
is worth mentioning that Rousseau does not consider conscience to be any less innate just because it requires reason for its “development”. In fact, immediately after he makes that statement with respect to the necessity of reason in our coming to know of the good and the bad, he says, ‘do not believe ... that it is impossible to explain, by the consequences of our nature, the immediate principle of the conscience independently of reason itself’ (E IV, 453/ OC IV, 600). His views on this are immensely difficult, but one way to make sense of it is to say the following: conscience, as Rousseau describes it, is a ‘divine instinct’, an ‘immortal and celestial voice’, the ‘certain guide of a being that is ignorant and limited but intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and bad which makes man like unto God’. It is conscience that makes for ‘the excellence of [the human being’s] nature and the morality of his actions’ (E IV, 454/ OC 4, 600-601). God, as he tells us elsewhere, is good, ‘nothing is more manifest’. While the goodness of human beings lie in the love of their fellows, ‘the goodness of God [consists in] the love of order; for it is by order that he maintains what exists and links each part with the whole’ (E IV, 448/ OC 4, 593). The love of order, on the other hand, involves two things. The ‘love of order which produces order is called goodness, and the love of order which preserves order is called justice’ (E IV, 444/ OC 4, 589). So God is good and just. Now, since God just loves order in both of these ways, and conscience is a celestial voice, then conscience in us will, upon our coming to know of the good and the bad, immediately love it as well. Once this love of order and justice is cultivated, it in turn acts as a check on reason, preventing it from being led astray by the passions. We will come back to the relationship between reason and conscience, and the general will, later in the following section. But for now, let us turn to the figure of the Lawgiver to see

100 See Williams (2007: Chapters 3-4); Marks (2006)
why private instruction alone cannot form ideal citizens.

III

Discovering the ‘best rules of society suited to Nations’ requires a ‘superior intelligence’ who sees ‘all of men’s passions yet experienced none of them; who had no relationship at all to our nature yet knew it thoroughly; whose happiness was independent of us, yet who was nevertheless willing to attend to ours’ (SC II:vii, 154/ OC 3, 381). This enlightened Lawgiver is needed as a ‘blind multitude, which often does not know what it wants because it rarely knows what is good for it’, is incapable of performing ‘an undertaking as vast and as difficult as a system of legislation’ without first being cognizant of its corporate will. A people must be guided to will ‘the good it does not see’ and ‘be taught to know what it wants’ (SC II:vi, 154/ OC 3, 380). In other words, Rousseau is fully aware that for ‘a nascent people to appreciate the healthy maxims of politics, and follow the fundamental rules of reason of Statecraft’ in the absence of a Lawgiver, ‘the effect would have to become the cause; the social spirit, which is to be the work of the institution, would have to preside over the institution itself, and men would have to be prior to laws what they ought to become by means of them’ (SCII:vii, 156/ OC3, 383).

The Législateur must ‘feel capable of changing human nature, so to speak; of transforming each individual, who by himself is a perfect and solitary whole, into a part of a larger whole from which this individual receives, in a sense, his life and his being’. He must be able to alter ‘man’s constitution in order to strengthen it’ and substitute ‘a partial and moral
existence for the physical and independent existence we have all received from nature’ (SC II:vii, 155/OC 3, 381). A careful reading of this passage reveals that the individual who can be denatured cannot be the civil man of modern societies. He must be a ‘perfect and solitary whole’ who draws the sentiment of his existence independently. But civil man, as Rousseau observes, always lives ‘outside of himself’ and ‘knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence’ (SD, 66/OC 3, 193, emphasis added).

Living exclusively in the opinions of others is a sign of moral corruption from which recovery is impossible. ‘No one has ever seen a corrupted people return to virtue. You may pretend to destroy the sources of the disease, but to no avail ... You may restore men to the primordial condition of equality, but in vain ... their hearts, once spoiled, will remain so always’ (OC 3, 233; Starobinski, 2006: 343). Similar to men, peoples are ‘docile only in their youth’ and become incorrigible with age. And ‘once customs are established and prejudices have taken root, it is a dangerous and vain undertaking to want to reform them’ (SC II:viii, 157/OC 3, 385). It is this corruption that prevents the ties of citizenship from being cultivated and established in the hearts of men: ‘how could the love of fatherland develop in the midst of so many other passions stifling it? And what is left for fellow citizens of a heart already divided between greed, a mistress, and vanity? (PE, 155/OC 3, 260)

Thus understood, raising individuals under a system of private instruction does not preclude their transformation into citizens but makes such a transformation possible.
Because it prevents men from becoming enslaved by arbitrary opinion, private education forms men who can be denatured by a Lawgiver. Crucially, the Lawgiver can denature but cannot uncorrupt, and his presence is a necessary but insufficient condition for the successful founding of a republic. As Rousseau notes, ‘what makes success so rare is the impossibility of finding the simplicity of nature together with the needs of society’ (SC II:x, 162/ OC 3, 391). Equally important, citizenship consists in making an individual a part of a larger whole from which he receives his life and his being. Yet private education is conducted without relating its student to this whole according to the requisites of citizenship, thus making it impossible for those raised under its instruction to become cognizant of the general will. Emile’s education does not make him the ideal citizen, but it does make him the perfect candidate to become one.

A significant aspect of the Lawgiver’s work involves making a people cognizant of its volonté générale by way of strengthening moeurs and initiating laws reflective of this will. Despite its importance, the general will is never explicitly defined by Rousseau (Ripstein, 1999: 220). Yet understanding the general will and the Lawgiver’s role in making individuals cognizant of it is crucial to understanding why private education cannot make ideal citizens, and since it is the legislative expression of the Sovereign, I shall begin with the latter concept.

The Sovereign is a moral being ‘to whom the social pact gave existence, and all of whose wills bear the name of laws’ (SW, 73/ OC 3, 608). Sovereignty lies with the people – the body politic composed of citizens joined in a social compact. The government is merely the executive branch of the state, tasked with the interpretation and execution of the laws

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101 See also Riley (2001), Williams (2007) Chapter 4
defined by a general will expressed through the legislative powers of the Sovereign. The general will, which tends to the common good, must not be confused with the will of all, which is merely the sum of individual preferences that ‘considers [only] private interest’ (SC II:iii, 147/ OC 3, 371). The rectitude and generality of the laws are preserved only when they issue from and apply to all. The laws are articulated through the private deliberation of citizens who are asked not for their approval or disapproval of initiatives raised in the assembly specifically but, rather, if the proposed laws conform to the general will ‘that is theirs’ (SC IV:ii, 201/ OC 3, 441).

There are two reasons why voting in accordance with the general will does not result in the sacrifice of either personal interest or volition. First, the general will is a reflection of the common good which, by virtue of being common, is one that we all share in. In Rousseau’s words, ‘let us not forget that the public good ought to be the good of all in something or it is a word void of meaning’ (PF, 41/ OC 3, 511, emphasis added). Second, the general will ‘is not some mystical faculty of a collectivity that exists independently of the individual wills of its members’ (Noone, 1980: 73). Rather ‘each individual can, as a man, have a private will contrary to or differing from the general will he has as a Citizen’, and when ‘subjects are subordinated’ to the general will ‘they do not obey anyone, but solely their own will’ (SC I:vii, 140-141, II:iv, 150/ OC 3, 363, 375). More expressly, Rousseau remarks that ‘one is free although subjected to laws, and not when one obeys a man, because in the latter case I obey the will of another, but when I obey the law, I only obey the public will which is mine as much as anyone else’s’ (PF, 28/ OC 3, 492; emphasis added).
In authentic acts of legislation, a citizen does not vote for all by voting for himself but votes for himself by voting for all. This is possible because, for Rousseau, ‘our sweetest existence is relative and collective, and our true self is not entirely within us’ (D, 118/ OC 1, 813). To become cognizant of the general will, however, each individual must be denatured to the extent that he ‘receives, in a sense, his life and his being’ from the ‘larger whole’ (SC II:vii, 155/ OC 3, 381). Each must no longer feel ‘except within the whole’ and it is only when ‘each Citizen is nothing, and can do nothing, except with all the others, and if the force acquired by the whole is equal or superior to the sum of the natural forces of all the individuals’, that legislation may be said to have reached ‘its highest possible point of perfection’ (SC II:vii, 155/ OC 3, 382; E I, 164/ OC 4, 249). The social bond underlines each citizen’s ability to discern the general will. And when ‘the social bond is broken in all hearts ... the general will becomes mute’ (SC IV:i, 198/ OC 3, 438). From this, it may also be said that the general will remains mute in the absence of this bond. The office of the Lawgiver, tasked with engendering civic virtue and corporate unity, is therefore fundamental to the making of citizens capable of discerning the general will.

Relatedly, the general will is also often presented as a purely rational will (in the sense that its content can be apprehended, known, or discerned through reason alone) but this is not the case. In citing Rousseau’s discussion of the general will in the Geneva Manuscript, for example, Neuhouser (2008: 195-196) writes that ‘we are told’ that ‘discerning the general will is an act of the understanding that takes place in the silence of the passions’ (GM, 80/ OC 3, 286). Notably, Rousseau is here quoting Diderot’s definition of the general will in

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102 The phrase ‘votes for himself by voting for all’ is from Putterman.
his *Encyclopédie* article on natural right.

More importantly, Rousseau immediately follows this quotation by questioning it, asking: ‘but where is the man who can thus separate himself from himself and, if concern for his self-preservation is nature’s first precept, can he be forced thus to look at the species in general in order to impose on himself duties whose connection with his particular constitution he does not see?’ (*GM*, 80/ *OC* 3, 286).

Crucially for Rousseau, ‘the mistake of most moralists has always been to consider man as an essentially reasonable being. Man is a sensitive being, *who consults solely his passions in order to act*, and for whom reason serves only to palliate the follies his passions lead him to commit’ (*PF*, 70/ *OC* 3, 554). Elsewhere, he stresses that ‘sensitivity is the principle of all action’ and that it is ‘passion’ that ‘leads us’ (*D*, 112/ *OC* 1, 805). In his most explicit statement relating the will to affect, Rousseau writes that ‘reason chooses the feeling’ that the ‘heart prefers’ in ‘all deliberations where judgment is not enlightened enough to reach a decision without the help of the will’ (*D*, 170/ *OC* 1, 879). Notably, ‘we cannot philosophize with so much disinterestedness that our will does not have a little influence over our opinions’ (*LF*, 262/ *OC* 4, 1137).

In an ideal republic, the common good is ‘clear and luminous’, ‘clearly apparent everywhere, and requires only a good sense to be perceived’ (*SC* IV:i, 198/ *OC* 3, 437). Cognizance of the general will is not the result of a purely ratiocinative process but is instead the result of a combination of judgment and feeling accessible to all. Lawmaking forces each citizen to ‘act upon other principles and to consult his reason before heeding to his inclinations’ but does not demand that reason be consulted instead of inclination (*SC* 103

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103 Neuhouser notes this: n.17, p.195.
Following Alexander Kaufman (1997), Ethan Putterman (2010) suggests that reason acts as a corrective to the passions but does not supplant them. As he describes it, ‘the tension between passion and reason during lawmaking’ is ‘resolvable to the extent that the latter acts to universalize the particularity of the former to make the laws moral’ (Putterman, 2010:18).

Yet it would appear that reason cannot universalize the passions without being undergirded by sentiment and a sincere love for one’s fellow citizens. In his discussion of natural law, for example, Rousseau argues that ‘even the precept of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us has no true foundation other than conscience and sentiment; for where is the precise reason for me, being myself, to act as if I were another, especially when I am morally certain of never finding myself in the same situation?’ (E IV, 389/ OC 4, 523). More emphatically, he asserts that ‘by reason alone, independent of conscience, no natural law can be established’ and that ‘if natural law were written only in human reason it would hardly be capable of directing the majority of our actions, but it is also engraved in man’s heart in indelible characters and it is there that it speaks more strongly than do all the precepts of Philosophers’ (E IV, 389/ OC 4, 523; SW, 65/ OC 3, 602). Here, Rousseau is making two distinct but related claims. The first is that natural law has its foundations partly in sentiment. In saying this, Rousseau is not simply suggesting that we cannot be motivated to act in accordance with the precepts of natural law by reason alone. He is making the deeper claim that we would not be able to conceive of natural law (as commanding us to do or to forbear from doing something) if we were not beings of sentiment capable putting ourselves in the place of another, where this capacity does not stem merely from a fear that
one could actually, and on some future occasion, find oneself in a situation that presently afflicts another. To put it differently, discerning and grasping the meaning of moral commands – having these commands “make sense” to us as moral commands at all – requires being in a kind of affective state underwritten by sentiment and conscience, because they not only enable us to put ourselves in the place of another, they also enable us to discern what is morally required of us, or understand why a moral command holds (and does still apply to us), in situations we are certain never to find ourselves. The second is that reason alone is incapable of motivating individuals to act in accordance with natural law. If this is true, it would seem natural to conclude that reason alone cannot move citizens to legislate in accordance with the general will, for what would the precise reason be for each individual to vote in accordance with the common good especially when doing so may be antithetical to the individual’s particular interest? Building on Putterman’s point, then, one can agree that reason is able to universalize the particularity of the passions to make the laws moral, but it cannot itself provide the grounds for the activity of universalizing the passions.

Rousseau is clearly critical of the appeal to reason exclusively as a solution to our modern afflictions. Not only does he claim that ‘one of the errors of our age is to use reason in too unadorned a form, as if men were all mind’ and that ‘reason alone is not active ... it sometimes restrains, it arouses rarely, and it has never done anything great’, he also writes that ‘with all their morality men would never have been anything but monsters if Nature had not given them pity in support of reason’ (E IV, 490/ OC 4, 645; SD, 37/ OC 3, 155). Reason itself is often fallible and an important part of Rousseau's philosophy involves
teaching men ‘to return into their own hearts to rediscover the seed of the social virtues they stifle under a false semblance in the misunderstood progress of society’ and to always ‘consult their conscience to redress the errors of their reason’ (D, 22/ OC1, 687, emphasis added).

Despite avoiding all mention of ‘conscience’ in the Social Contract, it appears unlikely that Rousseau would turn exclusively to reason to discover the general will. Conscience may be an affect, but we must not confuse ‘the secret penchants of our heart which lead us astray, with this even more secret, more internal, 
dictamen 
which entreats and murmurs against these self-interested decisions, and leads us back in spite of ourselves onto the road of truth’ (LF, 263/ OC4, 1138). This internal sentiment ‘is an appeal on its part against the sophisms of reason, and what proves it is that it never speaks more strongly than when our will yields most obligingly to judgments that this sentiment persists in rejecting’ (LF, 263/ OC4, 1138). It is ‘the light of our feeble understanding’ that ‘never misleads us’. And it is that which ‘recalls to the bosom of truth and of virtue every man whose badly conducted reason leads astray’ (LF, 263-264/ OC4, 1138; EIV, 449/ OC4, 594).

This said, Rousseau does write that man ‘has, in a cultivated reason, only what is necessary for him to live in society’ (SD, 34/ OC3, 152). It is tempting to conclude from this that the general will is a wholly rational will. But even here, Rousseau references not reason simply but 
cultivated reason [raison cultivée]. In my view, cultivated reason refers specifically to reason guided by conscience. In Rousseau’s account of the latter as articulated through the Savoyard Vicar, he proclaims that ‘without you [conscience] I sense nothing in me that
raises me above the beasts, other than the sad privilege of leading myself astray from error to error with the aid of an understanding without rule and a reason without principle’ (E IV, 454/ OC 4, 601, emphasis added).\textsuperscript{104} Cultivated reason cannot therefore refer to reason exclusively but must refer to reason guided by conscience. In speaking of consulting one’s reason before listening to one’s inclinations in the Social Contract, then, Rousseau must be referring to this particular understanding of reason [cultivated reason].\textsuperscript{105} To put it differently, when each citizen votes in accordance with the general will, he substitutes ‘justice for instinct in his conduct’ and endows ‘his actions with the morality they previously lacked’ (SC Iviii, 141/ OC 3, 364). Yet Rousseau is clear that ‘justice and goodness are not merely abstract words – pure moral beings formed by the understanding – but are true affections of the soul enlightened by reason’ (E IV, 389/ OC 4, 522-523). Significantly, conscience is regarded by Rousseau to be the ‘voice of the soul’ in contrast to the passions, which are ‘voice of the body’ (E 449/ OC 4, 594). This explains, perhaps, why conscience is not textually present in the Social Contract – in speaking of reason, Rousseau is pointing specifically to its cultivated form, one that already presupposes the presence of conscience as its guiding principle. Reinforcing this is Rousseau’s claim that the Social Contract ought to be understood as an appendix to Emile and that together the two form a complete whole. As an appendix, any mention of reason in this text ought to be referenced against what Rousseau says in Emile. It follows that reason in the Social Contract cannot be the

\textsuperscript{104} The question of whether the views of the Vicar are Rousseau’s is much debated. Melzer argues, for example, that they are not, while Cranston and Williams suggest that they are. In my view, the Vicar’s voice, especially his account of justice and conscience, is indeed Rousseau’s own, given that he makes identical claims throughout his works. Moreover, Rousseau says at one point: ‘To the extent that he spoke to me according to his conscience, mine seemed to confirm what he had told me’ (EIV, 458/ OCIV, 606). See Melzer (1990), Cranston (1991), and Williams (2007)
\textsuperscript{105} As Rousseau says at one point, we need to ‘perfect reason by sentiment’ (353).
unprincipled reason that Rousseau rebukes but must be the principled reason he praises there, which is reason guided by conscience.

Rousseau thus presents a sophisticated solution to the problem of modern civil arrangements. He departs from the simple contrast of having reason redeem men from the corruptive sway of the affects. Although each may take on corrupted forms, both are necessary for virtuous citizenship. Ideally, each would serve as a corrective to the other when attempts at determining the public will are made. Although rare, unanimity in legislative decision-making is possible not because reason is consulted exclusively but because affect is also present in any introspective deliberation. It is from this complex interplay of love of one’s fellow citizens, the sentiment of conscience, self-love and reason that the public will is made discernible. This complex relationship may be restated this way: reason and passion are both constitutive elements of the general will. Reason universalizes the particularity of the passions to make the laws moral. Reason, however, is not simply unprincipled rationality but one guided by conscience. And it is the underlying love of one’s fellow citizens that motivates each citizen to reason in a way that universalizes the

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106 Amelie Rorty astutely points out that ‘even for the corrupt social subject, the alleged opposition of reason and the passions is more perspicuously construed set of oppositions: true sentiments and a well-formed principled rationality are allied against the corrupt rationality that is at the service of corrupt passions. Narrowly prudential calculation directed to the satisfaction of subjective interests-interests that rest on a misconception of the true nature of the individual person can be at odds with genuinely self-critical, universalizing rationality. Similarly, the narrow passions of the pre-political self are tensed against the socially informed sentiments that serve the citizen-person. In a corrupt polity, what is commonly thought of as the opposition between prudential reason and the passions reflects what Rousseau sees as the deeper divisions between narrowly calculative and generalized, self-critical rationality, between the passions of the social subject and the sentiments of the civic citizen’. But her analysis seems to suggest that principled rationality stands against unprincipled rationality, with true civic sentiments standing in opposition to our narrow passions. If this is true, her analysis fails to take into account the possibility that principled rationality may stand as a corrective to the passions with true sentiment in turn standing as a corrective to unprincipled rationality.

107 However, prior to assembling everybody simply perceives the general will collectively without discussion; it is more something felt than the outcome of a rational process. See Manin (1987).
The preceding discussion can be summarized in the following three conclusions. First, if conscience is the principle of justice that serves as reason’s guide and prevents it from going astray, a private education that instructs its student to consult both reason and conscience will support, rather than oppose, his ability to discern the general will. Cognizance of a people’s volonté générale requires the exercise of principled reason; as Rousseau describes it, ‘it is only necessary to be just to be ‘assured of following the general will’ (PE, 148/ OC 3, 251). Second, because private education prevents the inflammation of amour-propre thereby safeguarding individuals from the corrupting sway of the passions, it enables the voice of conscience to be heard clearly by those raised under its methods. Although conscience ‘speaks to all hearts’, few are able to hear it for it ‘speaks to us in nature’s language which everything has made us forget’. The ‘noisy voices’ of prejudice ‘stifle its voice and prevent it from making itself heard’ (ML, 198/ OC 4, 1112; E IV, 454/ OC 4, 601). Private education, however, makes it possible for conscience to be heard. And third, if the presence of a social bond is necessary for discerning the general will, and if it is the Lawgiver who is tasked with the responsibility of forming civic virtue and corporate identity, private education alone cannot perform the function of making citizens. As we shall see, the fostering of corporate unity and the edification of a people’s moeurs through the initiation of laws that attend to all the particular features of a nascent people are among the most important aspects of the Lawgiver’s work, without which the voice of the general will can only remain silent.
First among the Lawgiver’s duties is to ‘make the laws conform to the general will’ (PE, 147/ OC 3, 250). Rousseau rejects Diderot’s assertion that there exists a universal general will, arguing instead that the general will of each people is unique. ‘Apart from the maxims common to all, each people contains within itself some cause that organizes it in a particular manner and renders its legislation appropriate for it alone’ (SC II:xi, 163/ OC 3, 393). Although ‘the institution of laws is not such a marvelous thing that any man of sense and equity could not easily find those which, well observed, would be the most beneficial for society’, ‘the problem is to adapt this code to the People for which it is made’. It is less about establishing ‘the best laws in themselves than the best of which it admits in the given situation’ (LA, 299/ OC 5, 60). This explains why the Lawgiver must attend to ‘all that is required by the location, climate, soil, morals, surroundings, and all the particular relationships of the people he was to institute’ (PE, 147/ OC 3, 250). The general will of a people is, as such, an organic will that is not grounded on reason alone. Without the Lawgiver’s expertise in attending to these requirements, the successful founding of a republic remains impossible.

For Rousseau, he who ‘drafts the laws’ possesses no legislative right and the office that ‘constitutes the republic does not enter into its constitution’ (SC II:vii, 155-156/ OC 3, 383). The Lawgiver’s task lies in initiating laws that mirror the general will, with ratification remaining the prerogative of the sovereign solely. Voting on the laws contributes, in part, to the development of civic virtue and corporate identity, and it is owing to this limitation of the Lawgiver’s powers that claims of social engineering and indoctrination may be refuted. As Putterman (2010: 77) remarks, ‘whatever “will-formation” does exist in Rousseau’s
A legitimate state can be said to be too uncertain to determine or decide the outcome of the vote predictably ... Beyond the creating of an entrenched social and political identity there is no effort to secure any distinctive content to the body of the laws.

Alone, the act of lawmaking can neither make individuals cognizant of the general will nor ensure that voting proceeds from a ‘disposition to be just’ (Kelly, 1987: 323). Although legislative decision-making procedurally imposes demands on citizens to consider all who are affected by the laws eventuating in the development of citizens’ perceptions of justice, citizens cannot be moved, at least initially, to vote wisely simply by way of these procedural constraints. In a different vein, even well-disposed individuals may have difficulty discerning the general will owing to its organic nature. On its own, having a disposition to be just cannot guarantee cognizance of corporate identity and will. Crucially, Rousseau does not believe that reason alone is capable of forming civic identity. The Lawgiver can therefore rely on neither force to compel nor reason to convince individuals to act in accordance with the public will (Kelly, 1987: 323-324). Instead, he must ‘have recourse to another order of authority, which can win over without violence and persuade without convincing’ (SC II:vii, 156/ OC 3, 383). This authority is religion.

It is ‘in order to win over’ those ‘who cannot be moved by human prudence’ that the Lawgiver turns to ‘divine authority’ to attain his goal. By setting words ‘in the mouth of the immortals’, the Lawgiver is able to move individuals to place the common good above their particular interests and foster corporate unity by engendering the ‘sentiments of sociability without which it is impossible to be a good Citizen or a faithful subject’ (SC II:vii, 156-157/
Furthermore, religion makes it possible for individuals to ‘obey with freedom and bear with docility the yoke of public felicity’, tempering any difficulty they have in ‘perceiving the advantages’ they ‘should obtain from the continual deprivations imposed by good laws’. Yet it is ‘not every man who can make the Gods speak or be believed when he declares himself their interpreter’. For anyone can ‘engrave stone tablets, buy an oracle, pretend to have a secret relationship with some divinity, train a bird to talk in his ear, or find other crude ways to impress the people’ \((SC II:vii, 156-157/ OC 3, 383-384)\). Employing such methods will, at best, ‘succeed in assembling a crowd of madmen’ who will ‘die along’ with the fraudulent Lawgiver rather than persist to bring him glory in the progress of times \((SC II:vii, 157/ OC 3, 384)\).

The authority of miracles is ‘based only on the ignorance of those for whom they were performed’ \((LWM, 177/ OC 3, 742)\). Miracles cannot be relied upon to fashion civic unity because ‘false tricks can form [only] a fleeting bond’; it is ‘wisdom alone [that] can make it durable’. Consequently, it is the ‘Legislator’s great soul [that] is the true miracle that should prove his mission’ \((SC II:vii, 157/ OC 3, 384)\). It is by way of a combination of a Lawgiver’s ‘veracity’, ‘justice’, ‘pure and spotless morals’, ‘virtues inaccessible to the human passions’, ‘along with the qualities of understanding, reason, mind, knowledge, [and] prudence’ that persuasion can be made successful \((LWM, 167/ OC 3, 728)\). Or, as Christopher Kelly (1987: 325) describes it, ‘the perception of the legislator’s soul secures consent for his institutions and a disposition to follow them’.

\(^{108}\) Other factors such as small republic size, public festivals, and the office of Censor are also important, but a discussion of these elements is beyond the scope of this paper.
It may be said that my earlier presentation of the Lawgiver as tailoring the laws to the general will does not do justice to this discussion of the role of civil religion in Rousseau’s republican thought. Surely the Lawgiver is shaping the customs and mores themselves directly from which the general will eventually flows, rather than simply taking the latter as he finds it and tailoring laws to fit. It is true that the Lawgiver involves himself in the shaping of customs and mores, but whatever shaping the Lawgiver engages in must be referenced against his (apparently) accurate understanding of what the general will of the people he is tasked to institute consists in. The Lawgiver’s work does not result in the creation of a general will but, importantly, results in making a people cognizant of this will by way of fostering an entrenched corporate identity. In other words, by playing on the people’s sentiments and emotions, this wise institution aims to unify the citizenry, making every individual aware of the general will that only he, supposedly, with his wisdom and intellectual distance as a foreigner, is able to perceive before a people’s corporate identity becomes fully apparent to them.\footnote{There is an interesting question, here, of whether the Lawgiver acts just once, setting up good institutions, or if he continues to act once the good society has been set up. If the question is asking whether the Lawgiver continues to initiate laws in a mature republic, the answer is “no”. In the Social Contract, Rousseau is clear that the Lawgiver leaves, although scholarly debate continues on what happens after. However, setting up good institutions is not a single act because state building involves bringing a people together in accordance with the various “maxims of politics”, an endeavour which presumably takes a number of years (the historical cases Rousseau references also suggest that the Lawgiver’s work extends over time). This leads to the related question of what happens after the Lawgiver leaves. For a debate on this latter issue, see Putterman (2003, 2005) and Scott (2005). See also Masters (1968), Chapter 8.}

Using religion to make each individual believe ‘himself no longer one but a part of the unity’ must be distinguished from the idea that the citizen lives only in the opinion of others. Just as a father who feels that his self is made whole only by virtue of his children...
does not live in their opinions, a citizen who feels whole only within the body politic does not necessarily live in the opinions of his fellow citizens. The wise of use religion by the Lawgiver creates an environment where citizens ‘willingly want what is wanted by’ the people they love, which Rousseau associates with the conforming ‘of private wills on all matters with the general will’ (compare \textit{PF}, 59/ \textit{OC} 3, 536; \textit{PE}, 151/ \textit{OC} 3, 254). Yet, Rousseau does speak of opinion as fundamental to the continued success of the state: it is a part of the laws ‘on which the success of all the others [laws] depends’ and ‘to which the great Legislator attends in secret while appearing to limit himself to the particular regulations that are merely the sides of the arch of which morals, slower to arise, form at last the unshakeable Keystone’ (\textit{SC} II:xii, 164-165/ \textit{OC} 3, 394).

Because opinion, above all, forms a part of the laws on which the success of all the others depends, the Lawgiver’s role in engraving it in the hearts of citizens is crucial to the [founding and] flourishing of a republic. Reason and passion may compose the general will, but it is opinion that decides if the laws are obeyed. For Rousseau, it is useless to distinguish ‘between the morals of a nation and the objects of its esteem ... Among all peoples of the world, it is not nature, but opinion [that] determines the choice of their pleasures’. Although ‘one always likes what is beautiful or what one finds to be so’, one is often mistaken in this judgment and it is therefore this judgment that must be regulated (\textit{SC} IV:vii, 214-215/ \textit{OC} 3, 458-459).

‘Neither reason, nor virtue, nor laws will vanquish public opinion’, and force itself is powerless to change it. As the ‘queen of the world’, it is ‘not subject to the power of Kings’
for ‘they are themselves her first slaves’ (*LA*, 302-305/ *OC* 5, 64-68). But how are citizens to avoid being subjected to the will of another when public opinion is to be engraved into their hearts by the secret acts of the Lawgiver? Rousseau’s solution lies in this: in a well-organized state, *public opinion ought to mirror the general will*. When opinion tracks the general will, it is not arbitrary and individuals do not live according to the preferences of others but only their own. It is only in conventional or ‘corrupt’ societies that men find themselves living according to the arbitrary views of others. Public opinion in an ideal republic does not reflect the interests or views of any particular association or individual but only the general will, and in yielding to it, each citizen merely professes to follow his own will. Each therefore still embodies ‘a certain version of the ideal of self-sufficiency that defines men: the freedom to ‘see with one’s own eyes’, to ‘feel with one’s own heart’, to be governed only by ‘one’s own reason’ rather than being compelled always to conduct oneself, or to judge, as others see fit’.

IV

This chapter has shown that contrary to Neuhouser’s view, there is little evidence to suggest that Emile becomes a fully formed citizen at the end of his education. Neither travel nor academic study are sufficient for making a citizen and, as Rousseau remarks, Emile’s education will first and foremost make him a man upon its completion. But rather than force us to choose between raising a man and a citizen, Rousseau constructs a model of private education that allows for the making of citizens by ensuring that its students are not susceptible to the corrupting sway of the passions. Given the condition of individuals in
modern societies and the absence of fatherlands, citizens can only be made out of men untouched by the vagaries of opinion, or again, by men who are not (already) enslaved by an inflamed *amour-propre*. Emile’s education performs this function, thereby making his transformation into a citizen possible. Moreover, private education teaches its student to consult both his reason and his conscience, elements crucial to any attempt at discerning the general will.

Although Neuhouser is indeed correct to argue for a successive system of education, the making of a citizen is not completed in *Emile* but extends into the *Social Contract*. His account diminishes the crucial role the Lawgiver plays in fashioning citizens capable of discerning the general will. The cognizance of a people’s *volonté générale* requires that the social bond be established in all hearts. In its absence, the general will remains silent. Private education, conducted without relating its student to the whole according to the demands of citizenship, does not establish the social bond required for its students to become cognizant of this will. By strengthening *moeurs* and initiating laws reflective of the *volonté générale* of the people he is tasked to institute, the Lawgiver inculcates civic virtue and corporate identity thus enabling the people to become cognizant of their corporate will. And it is by relying on religion, attending to all the particular features of a people and engraving morals, customs and opinion in their hearts that the Lawgiver is able to guide them in performing the great and difficult undertaking of establishing a system of legislation that is suited to them alone.
Chapter 5: Kant

*Unsociable Sociability, Self-Conceit and The Passions*

In his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* Kant makes the rather startling claim that human beings are by nature evil. More precisely, he suggests that the human species has an innate propensity to evil. By propensity (*Hang*) he means ‘the subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination (*habitual desire, concupiscientia*), insofar as this possibility is contingent for humanity in general’. He goes on to distinguish it from a predisposition in the way that a ‘propensity can indeed be innate yet *may* be represented as not being such: it can rather be thought of (if it is good) as acquired, or (if evil) as *brought* by the human being *upon* himself’ (*Rel, 6*: 28-29). He avoids offering any deduction in support of his position, insisting rather that ‘we can spare ourselves the formal proof that there must be such a corrupt propensity rooted in the human being, in view of the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human *deeds* parades before us’ (*Rel 6*: 33). This raises the first question of how it is we can arrive at the judgment that human beings are innately evil,
indeed, possess a propensity to it, from mere empirical observation and a generalization of facts (Louden 2010: 108-115; Bernstein 2002: 34-36). But more unsettling is the question of how we can be held responsible for this evil at all. Even if the propensity can be represented as something that is not innate, it still seems at bottom to be so, and this leaves us once again with the question of moral control. But the problem can be turned in the other direction. As Henry Allison describes it, ‘given Kant’s conception of freedom, what can it mean to claim that we are evil by nature?’ (Allison, 1990: 146). For surely he did not mean to give up on his life’s work on morality and freedom.

The question of radical evil in Kant is not, however, my subject. But I shall say something about it below as a way to enter into a broader issue I want to examine, which is the role the desire or need for standing plays in Kant’s social thought. And I want to compare some of his treatments with those already encountered earlier in the dissertation as a way to bring the dissertation to a close. I will be focusing on his writings on anthropology and history, rather than his works on morality, since this aspect of his thought has not received as extensive a treatment as the other.

II

Now, Allen Wood gives us one answer to those questions surrounding Kant’s view that human beings have a propensity to evil. On his reading, the ‘human propensity to evil arises in the social condition, and develops along with the processes of cultivation and civilization that belong to it’ (Wood, 2010: 159). Wood further connects this to Kant’s ideas of unsociable
sociability and self-conceit, the last of which he associates with Rousseau’s view of *amour-propre* (Wood, 1999: 286-290; Wood 1991). And lest there should be any doubt as to whether the doctrine departs radically from Rousseau’s, his answer is that ‘these two doctrines [Rousseau’s view that human beings are naturally good and Kant’s account of radical evil] are actually one and the same doctrine’ (Wood, 1999: 291). In a somewhat similar vein, Sharon Anderson-Gold (1991: 124-125; 2001: 45-46) attaches a social interpretation to the controversial Kantian thesis. As she describes it, the propensity to evil should not be understood as ‘simply “within me” and “within you” but something that operates *between us*. The ‘hope to effect a revolution “within” rests upon the transformation of the social conditions of our existence’.

The suggestion that radical evil resides in sociality itself is not a popular one. Allison (2001: 606) finds Wood’s attribution of radical evil to the historical and social aspects of our beings – that it ‘pertain[s] to us insofar as we are social beings’ – reductionist and ‘objectionable’. He takes it be a transcendental claim rather than an empirical thesis (see also Muchnik, 2010: 116-143). Grimm (2002: 166) thinks that even if social elements are present or involved in the account, it hardly suggests these traits ‘should be thought of as the source[s] of radical evil in human beings’. In a different vein, Jeanine Grenberg (2005) argues for a view of radical evil as something that develops without a social context. It proceeds from our basic finitude and our need for, and so dependency on, things outside us to thrive. Given our finitude, our needs, and our dependency, we are anxious about thriving and securing the conditions and things required for it, and this is enough to get us to radical evil. Or as she describes it later, ‘all we need for the development of a propensity
to evil is the fact of being a dependent being, a desire for happiness, fear of the frustration of that would-be perfect happiness, from whatever source, and a resulting anxiety’ (Grenberg, 2010: 174 n6). On her account, there is a further problem with accepting Wood’s view, a problem she grounds on the issue of moral imputability. If Wood is right that in the absence of a social context we would have been rather peaceful or docile creatures, then this, she says, makes society or its presence a ‘sort of causal or determining influence on our choice, one that undermines our autonomous choice’, which in turn allows us to shift the blame for our moral failings onto it. Moreover, she thinks that the only way to get to the claim Kant seemingly ends with, of mutual corruption through interaction, from Kant’s starting position, that the human being is in this ‘perilous state through his own fault’, ‘is to understand the latter as the conclusion of the self-deceived ramblings and wishful thinking of an already radically evil Rousseauian!’ (2010: 174-178).

To understand her claims better, we need to look at the passage she has in mind, which appears in the *Religion*:

If he searches for the causes and the circumstances that draw him into this danger and keep him there, he can easily convince himself that they do not come his way from his own raw nature, so far as he exists in isolation, but rather from the human beings to whom he stands in relation or association. It is not the instigation of nature that arouses what should properly be called the passions, which wreak such great devastation in his originally good predisposition. His needs are but limited, and his state of mind in providing for them moderate and tranquil. He is poor (or considers himself so) only to the extent that he is anxious that other human beings will consider him poor and will
despise him for it. *Envy, addiction to power, avarice, and the malignant inclinations associated with these, assail his nature, which on its own is undemanding, as soon as he is among human beings. Nor is it necessary to assume that these are sunk into evil and are examples that lead him astray: it suffices that they are there, that they surround him, and that they are human beings, and they will mutually corrupt each other’s moral disposition and make one another evil* (Rel, 6: 93-94, emphasis added).

Let me begin by saying something about her comments directly. Grenberg’s statements are, to an extent, somewhat mystifying, and they are so on two counts. First, and more trivially (perhaps a lot more trivially), it is not entirely obvious what she means by, or who she means to point to when she speaks of, ‘an already radically evil Rousseauian’. If by this she means the individual possessed of inflamed *amour-propre*, which seems to me to be the only sensible option, then the description must surely be false. To describe an individual inflamed by that passion as a radically evil Rousseauian is much like describing an individual who chooses to act on maxims which run against the moral law a radically evil Kantian. Radically evil and inflamed by *amour-propre* this individual may be, but surely that hardly makes him Kantian or Rousseauian in any meaningful sense of the term. Second, Rousseau’s notion that we fall into moral corruption as a result of social commerce does not at all entail the possibility of shifting blame onto the abstraction of “society”. Even on the most cursory readings of Rousseau, his general view is that while our passions do change and alter under the pressures of social life and development, we are nevertheless free in the choices we make, free in our decisions to do some one thing or another, and we are in the end responsible for the actions we perform. When Rousseau speaks of social
corruption, it is not in defense of transporting us away from the scene of accountability. It might even be said, leaving aside the historical inaccuracies of the language, that Rousseau holds a stronger Kantian thesis than is usually supposed: ‘No, man is not one. I want and I do not want; I sense myself enslaved and free at the same time. I see the good. I love it, and I do the bad. I am active when I listen to reason, passive when my passions carry me away; and my worst torment, when I succumb, is to sense that I could have resisted’ (EIV, 440/ OC 4, 583). Finally, there is no reason to think that Kant means for the latter half of his treatment to be understood as implying that society is causally responsible for our actions. As Wood mentions in his reply to Grenberg, the thought as it presents itself to Kant’s mind is that society ‘provides the necessary context for developing our radical propensity to evil’, not that it ‘forces us to choose evil maxims, removing or diminishing our responsibility for these choices’ (Wood, 2010: 168-169). In making this claim, he is, I think, right. For Kant is focused here, in addition, on the passions and their potential to wreak such great devastation on our good predispositions. We shall come back to the issue of the passions later, but for now, it is enough to say that they are in Kant’s thought always relational. In this way, it is strictly speaking not nature’s instigation that arouses our passions, but our interactions with one another.

Before saying more on this matter, I want to turn to two things of more or less importance. The first is Kant’s debt to Rousseau, which comes out most clearly in an early work, the

*Essay on the Maladies of the Head.* There Kant writes:
The human being in the state of nature can only be subject to a few follies and hardly any foolishness. His needs always keep him close to experience and provide his sound understanding with such easy occupations that he hardly notices that he needs understanding for his actions. Indolence moderates his coarse and common desires, leaving enough power to the small amount of the power of judgment which he needs to rule over those desires to his greatest advantage. From where should he draw the material for foolishness, since, unconcerned about another’s judgment as he is, he can be neither vain nor inflated? Since he has no idea at all of the worth of goods he has not enjoyed, he is safe from the absurdity of stingy avarice, and because not much wit finds entrance to his head, he is just as well secured against every craziness ... The means of leavening for all of these corruptions can properly be found in the civil constitution, which, even if it does not produce them, nevertheless serves to entertain and aggravate them (EM 2:269)

This is a clear statement, or restatement, of Rousseau’s basic thesis in the Second Discourse. Foolishness, as Kant describes it, stems from the comparisons human beings make between themselves and their condition. Comparison produces vanity or an inflated sense of self, and it is out of these faults that we fall into moral corruption. The ideas mentioned in this passage mirror closely those found in the passage cited above in the Religion. Kant, I want to suggest, never departs radically, or at all, from this view. I shall say more about this when we turn to his view on unsociable sociability, but let us first begin with another work, Kant’s own conjecture on human history, for it bears some relation to our themes. Now, Kant’s Conjectural Beginning of Human History was published in 1786. It was, in part, a
continuation of his engagement with Herder’s work on the philosophy of history, which he reviewed on two occasions, anonymously, although his authorship was never in question. Kant acknowledged in his first review the depth of Herder’s knowledge and imagination, his eloquence and ingenuity, but expressed concern over the absence of philosophical sophistication and exactitude in what was, ultimately, a work of philosophy. His tone was unusually derisive, occasionally mocking, and Herder was left, quite naturally, rather unimpressed. Kant’s second review contained a hastier summary of Herder’s ideas than the first, intent as he was, perhaps, on responding to his former student’s criticism of his own *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, published in 1784. There, it had been suggested by Kant that happiness was not the end nature had set for human beings, but rather, the development of human capacities. A view with which Herder could not agree.

Kant opens his conjecture by saying that ‘in the progression of a history it is indeed allowed to insert conjectures in order to fill up gaps in the records, because what precedes as a remote cause and what follows as an effect can provide a quite secure guidance for the discovery of the intermediate causes, so as to make the transition possible’. He is quick to distinguish it from ‘the history of human freedom in its progression, which can be grounded only on records’. Rather, he shall offer a ‘history of the first development of freedom from its original predisposition in the nature of the human being’ (*CHH* 8: 109). This ties in with the aims of the *Idea*, even if only to a certain extent, for in that essay we are also led ‘to see history in terms of the natural
Kant begins with the human being (or couple rather) and their natural qualities. Moved initially only by instinct, his reason soon ‘began to stir and sought through comparison of that which gratified with that which was represented to him by another sense than the one to which instinct was bound’. Here, Kant was talking about the human being’s first attempts to use a different sense to represent to himself the things which nourished him (sight instead of taste, for example). The act of using different senses for unusual purposes, in some contrast to their original or at least main function, made comparison possible and marked the first development of reason, which in turn led to the creation of artificial desires. With this use of reason, which, again, was itself in the process of development in the act of comparative thought and engagement, it produced, with the power of the imagination, ‘desires not only without a natural drive directed to them but even contrary to it’ (*CHH* 8:112). The first act of free choice followed from this, for the individual could now compare and then choose, not only between things, for this might still align with his natural impulses, but eventually against the direction of nature itself. The discovery of free choice was on the one hand pleasing, but it was followed immediately by ‘anxiety and fright’, for the individual, ‘who still did not know the hidden properties and remote effects of any thing’, was unaware of how he ‘should deal with this newly discovered faculty’ (*CHH* 8:112). But with this discovery, he could no longer go back to merely acting by instinct. There is no escape from freedom.
With reason in play, the sexual instinct, which was once innocently gratified, also changed. The most important discovery here was that desire could be sustained or even increased by means of refusal or having the object of desire ‘withdrawn from the senses’. ‘Refusal was the first artifice for leading from the merely sensed stimulus over to ideal ones, from merely animal desire gradually over to love, and with the latter from the feeling of the merely agreeable over to the taste for beauty, in the beginning only in human beings but then, however, also in nature’ (CHH 8:113). The move from desire to love and love from the agreeable to a taste for beauty yielded two things. One is that comparison between individuals became more pronounced, and second, individuals would now in turn want to make themselves agreeable to others in order to be preferred. This, together with concealment (withdrawing things from the senses), takes us (although Kant does not quite put the point in this way although it is certainly implied) to propriety, ‘an inclination by good conduct to influence others to respect for us (through the concealment of what which could incite low esteem)’, which is ‘the genuine foundation of all true sociability’, and ‘gave the first hint toward the formation of the human being as a moral creature’ (CHH 8: 113). In one sense, then, it is possible to say that this represents the first springs of morality. But in another sense, this is not, of course, the morality Kant would speak of and defend throughout his career. It might perhaps be in better form to speak of it as coming closer to custom, but it nevertheless represents a necessary preparative stage in human development towards becoming a moral being (reason’s development through this history is important as well, for without the development of reason, we could not, very obviously, be moral beings).
The next step was the development of foresight, or rather, the ‘deliberate expectation of the future’, which forged the human being’s anxieties and concerns over an indeterminate future. The horizon of one’s troubles and afflictions, her awareness of it rather (although the affliction is very much involved in the awareness itself) extended as a result of it. The most tragic thing with regard to this advancement in reason was that the human being could no longer live in the innocence of an approaching death, without expecting or foreseeing a time when the sentiment of her existence would be smothered or extinguished. The last and final step, which ‘reason took in elevating the human being entirely above the society with animals’, was his comprehension of, however vaguely, his place in the natural scheme of things, or if one wants to speak of it in grander terms, his cosmic status. Through his reason he discovered that ‘he was the genuine end of nature, and that in this nothing that lives on earth can supply a competitor to him’. He gained full awareness of his superiority over all animals, his right to and over them, and with this transformation they were no longer considered his peers in nature. They became rather ‘means and instruments given over to his will for the attainment of discretionary ends’. Kant will say, however, that a contrasting thought will arise with this one, ‘that he must not say something like this [that nature has made you for me, which is what the human being said to the animal upon this discovery] to any human being, but has to regard him as an equal participant in the gifts of nature – a preparation from afar for the restrictions that reason was to lay on the will in the future in regard to his fellow human beings’ (*CHH* 8:114).
This last statement represents a great difference with Rousseau’s own treatment. As we saw in Chapter Three, natural man’s recognition of his superiority over animals prepared from afar his desire to gain superiority over those of his kind. Yet it is not at all obvious why Kant thinks this has to be the thought, why in coming to see his superiority over animals, a hazy intuition (I’m using the term intuition here very loosely) of equality will form over his eyes. Kant never gives us an answer to this question, but he will repeat this claim in his discussion of the original predispositions of humanity. From this discussion, two things of note appear. First, comparison forms the grounds of genuine sociability as human beings look to make themselves agreeable to one another, to conceal things about themselves that will inspire disesteem in another. This implies the eventual ability to take up the standpoint of another. And second, a view of human equality emerges from a contrast with the animal world. With this in place, we can go back to the issue of how it is that society renders us intractable. Let us begin with Kant’s full statement of unsociable sociability:

The means nature employs in order to bring about the development of all its predispositions is their antagonism in society, insofar as the latter is in the end the cause of their lawful order. Here I understand by ‘antagonism’ the unsociable sociability of human beings, i.e. their propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up society. The predisposition for this obviously lies in human nature. The human being has an inclination to become socialized, since in such a condition he feels himself as more a human being, i.e. feels the development of his natural predispositions. But he also has
a great propensity to individualize (isolate) himself, because he simultaneously encounters in himself the unsociable property of willing to direct everything so as to get his own way (nach seinem Sinne), and hence expects resistance everywhere because he knows of himself that he is inclined on his side toward resistance against others. Now it is this resistance that awakens all the powers of the human being, brings him to overcome his propensity to indolence, and, driven by ambition, tyranny, and greed, to obtain for himself a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot stand, but also cannot leave alone ... Thanks be to nature, therefore, for the incompatibility, for the spiteful competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess or even to dominate! For without them all the excellent natural predispositions in humanity would eternally slumber undeveloped (IUH: 8:20-21).

There are a few questions that may be raised here about what exactly Kant means. Now, Wood constantly emphasizes that Kant draws the term unsociable sociability from Montaigne’s essay On Solitude, a view supported by Schneewind. What Montaigne says there is this: ‘There is nothing so unsociable and so sociable as man: the one by his vice, the other by his nature’ (Schneewind, 2010: 319). It is important to see here that Montaigne attributes our sociability to our nature, and our unsociability to our vices. Strictly speaking, then, the discussion is not about how our sociability is unsociable in the sense offered by Mandeville. Closer to what is being said is that we are both sociable and unsociable, and that we are sociable, again, because of our good natures, and unsociable because of our vices. But Mandeville’s thesis is that we are sociable principally because of the hateful passions, because of our vices; his point is not that we are both sociable and
unsociable creatures in the way described by Montaigne. If Kant is in his description of unsociable sociability expressing the idea offered by Montaigne, then it seems that while he is reproducing a paradox in name, it is not at all what the term *means* (especially if we take Mandeville as the reference point). The full sense of the paradox of our sociability being unsociable, which Mandeville raises to good effect, appears to be lost. In one sense, there is in Kant’s treatment no paradox at all, but merely an antagonism.

Wood and Schneewind occasionally leave the impression that this is how we ought to read Kant. Schneewind tells us, for example, that ‘what in our make-up favours sociability’ is our ‘tendency to seek friends’. He goes on to add that according to Kant, we are disposed to love our fellow human beings and disposed to have sympathy for them. These virtues draw us closer to others, but they are balanced by respect, since love ‘urges us to “come closer to one another”’, while respect leads us to keep ourselves “at a distance from one other”, where we do not “make excessive demands on others – that we show modesty toward them’. And he ends his discussion of this subject by saying that ‘all these virtues plainly belong among our tendencies to sociability’ (Schneewind, 2010: 331-332). Kant does not give us very much to go on, but he does seem to suggest this. For example, and as we can see from the quoted passage, he describes the human being as having an inclination to become socialized, for it is in this social condition that he feels himself to be more of a human being, that is to say, he feels ‘the development of his natural predispositions’. We shall come back to the issue of the human being’s natural predispositions, but if this is indeed Kant’s position, then it seems to me that Kant offers a much weaker (and perhaps poorer) version of the paradox than it is as described and defended by Mandeville.
Before turning to the issue of our natural predispositions, I want to address a second question that may be raised about the passage. What exactly does Kant mean when he says that the human being is engaged in ‘willing to direct everything so as to get his own way’? This is important, moreover, since it is to this willing that Kant attaches the property of unsociability. And understanding this, so it would seem, should help us make sense of the propensity to isolate ourselves.

Why, then, is unsociability a property of our willing to direct everything so as to get our own way? An answer to this requires that we first account for what the subject clause means. In the catechism of the Doctrine of Method in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes:

1. Teacher: What is your greatest, in fact your whole, desire in life?
   Pupil: (is silent)
   Teacher: That *everything* should *always* go the way you like it to.

2. Teacher: What is such a condition called?
   Pupil: (is silent)
   Teacher: it is called *happiness* (continuous well-being, enjoyment of life, complete satisfaction with one’s condition). (*MM* 6:480)\(^{110}\)

\(^{110}\) A moral catechism should not be confused with the Socratic Dialogue. The distinction lies in the method: in a Socratic dialogue both the student and the teacher raise questions and respond to each other, but in a moral catechism “the teacher alone does the questioning.” More than that, the
The language Kant employs here is not identical to what appears in the *Idea*, but it is close enough. In this respect, willing to direct everything so as to get our own way just is a movement to obtain in the condition of happiness. I have put the point in this rather general way because Kant frequently describes happiness as something which admits only of approximation. It is elusive to the touch or, perhaps, something we cannot hold on to without much difficulty or for very long. Regardless, it is something we are inescapably disposed, or rather naturally impelled, to seek in the course of our lives. Now, Kant very obviously did not mean by happiness what Aristotle had meant by the term *eudaimonia*. He had in mind a sense of ‘happiness’ which is altogether more familiar. Cast in his technical language, happiness (*Glückseligkeit*) involves just the ‘entire satisfaction’ of one’s ‘needs and inclinations’, where ‘inclination’ (*Neigung*) means ‘habitual sensible desire’, and ‘desire’ (*Begierde*), the ‘self-determination of a subject’s power through the representation of something in the future as an effect of this representation’ (*G* 4:405; *A* 7:251). Happiness may be understood to involve the entire satisfaction of one’s inclinations because it is in the idea of happiness ‘that all inclinations unite in one sum’ (*G* 4:399; 12). Certainly, if happiness is the whole, then satisfying some of its parts will only take us down the line without taking us to the end. Which is to say that if we circle around back to the issue of happiness’s elusiveness, it can be explained in terms of the very idea of happiness, which

answer which the teacher “methodically draws from the pupil’s reason must be written down and preserved in definite words that cannot easily be altered, and so be committed to the pupil’s memory”. The catechism is also to be distinguished from dogmatic pedagogy. Kant summarizes these methodological differences in the following way: “the way of teaching by catechism differs from both the dogmatic way (in which only the teacher speaks) and the way of dialogue (in which both the teacher and pupil question and answer each other).” Moral catechism is for Kant “the first and most essential instrument for teaching the doctrine of virtue”. (MM 6:478-479; 222)
obtains only when every held inclination is satisfied, a condition we are quite unlikely to ever meet.

The account of happiness given so far is merely descriptive. Substantively, happiness will carry different meanings for different persons, even for the same person through time, since it is the sum of one’s inclinations, which are in essence contingent and therefore variable. In other words, inclinations can and occasionally drop in and out of one’s “inclinations set”, with the contents of each set varying across subjects. Variation is to be expected, it is indeed verifiably certain, for the things that rouse our desires and aversions, which include states of affairs, are attached to what we severally find pleasurable, painful or distasteful. This, in Kant’s observation, makes happiness unsuitable to the task of grounding morality (Guyer, 2000: 372-408; 2006; Korsgaard, 1996: 28, 111-112, 121-122). Why? Because morality is, if anything, at the very least something objective, that is to say, something that ‘must contain the very same determining ground of the will in all cases and for all rational beings’, and such objectivity cannot be wrought from what is essentially contingent. We may register our dissatisfaction and appeal the case by moving to ground morality on the form of happiness rather than on its substance. But this will not get us very far. For although it is doubtless that happiness is sought after by each, and that ‘the concept of happiness everywhere underlines the practical relation of objects to the faculty of desire’, it is nevertheless ‘only the general name for subjective determining grounds, and it determines nothing specific about it’. Or, as he goes on to say:
Where each has to put his happiness comes down to the particular feeling of pleasure and displeasure in each and, even within one and the same subject, to needs that differ as this feeling changes; and a law that is *subjectively necessary* (as a law of nature) is thus *objectively* a very *contingent* practical principle, which can and must be very different in different subjects, and hence can never yield a law because, in the desire for happiness, it is not the form of lawfulness that counts but simply the matter, namely whether I am to expect satisfaction from following the law, and how much (*CPrR* 5:25).

The clearest path back to unsociability from this picture of happiness is before us. If happiness consists in the condition of having everything go the way we like it to, then willing to direct everything so as to get our own way is the enterprise of its realization. And if we are all (naturally) caught up in this enterprise, we should expect no less than disagreement and conflict. In a social world where every exercise of choice is directed at appropriating all things sought after, at instantiating states of affairs according to visions of the good separately held, at accomplishing projects individually conceived, a clash of wills appears straightforwardly unavoidable. Each offers up resistance and each must be resisted in turn. But what is it exactly to resist? In a minimal sense, this could mean nothing more than going about meeting our wants or fulfilling our projects. To act on these considerations is to act on the world, to shape and transform it, in ways which could immediately or eventually frustrate the like occupations of others. Resistance is here consequence rather than motive, effect rather than cause. In a further and less minimal sense, resistance might mean a refusal to give up on one’s projects and desires, regardless of their consequences. But this is
not the complete picture, and to see why, we need to return to the question of our natural predispositions.

According to Kant, human nature possesses an original predisposition (*Anlagen*) to good, which can be divided under three headings. The first is the predisposition to animality. This predisposition, he tells us, involves ‘physical or merely mechanical self-love’, a kind of self-love that does not involve reason. It consists in, very roughly, our basic animal instincts and impulses that tend not only toward self-preservation, but also toward species propagation through sexual reproduction, which includes the general care one will take of the offspring produced from the procreative endeavour, and a general drive towards community with other human beings. The second predisposition is the one to humanity. It ‘can be brought under the general title of self-love which is physical and yet involves comparison (for which reason is required); that is, only in comparison with others does one judge oneself happy or unhappy’. From this species of self-love, we desire to ‘gain worth in the opinion of others, originally, of course, merely equal worth: not allowing anyone superiority over oneself, bound up with the constant anxiety that others might be striving for ascendancy’. Out of this initial concern of losing out on equality, Kant suggests that we will strive in turn to gain superiority for ourselves, which leads to our vices. For Kant, it is a distinctive feature of human beings that our happiness or unhappiness is determined by comparative standing and worth. This predisposition further includes a technical predisposition, very basically, certain rational capacities to manipulate things in undetermined ways for whatever ends we might have, that in summary relates to the acquisition of skills; and a pragmatic predisposition, which is prudence, the capacity to use
our reason to meet our desires. The basis of culture, and of us becoming civilized through
culture, lies in the predisposition to humanity. The final predisposition is the one to
personality. It is the ‘susceptibility to respect for the moral law as of itself a sufficient
incentive to the power of choice’ (Rel 6:26-27). In his discussion of the second of these
predispositions, we see clearly how it continues the same line of thought we saw earlier in
the conjecture. For Kant thinks that what we basically desire and want is equality, and to be
seen as equals, but it is the fear of losing out in a social setting that moves us to seek
superiority. This marks his difference from Rousseau. For in Rousseau’s account, our first
desires for comparative standing, and for the recognition of our comparative standing, are
bound up in the notion of esteem, that is to say, to have greater standing. While Kant
moves from the notion of equality to inequality, Rousseau begins with the idea of esteem
inequality as the first consequence of social commerce.

Two things follow from this account of the predispositions. First, it can be seen that
happiness, or willing to direct everything so as to get our own way, is not just about
satisfying our plain, non-comparative desires. It involves a view of happiness as deeply
connected to our comparative standing with one another. It might be further said that for
Kant, the fact of sociality alters our notions of happiness. For it no longer consists in just
the attempt to satisfy our inclinations, but now takes on a comparative tone, and as we shall
see below, our conceptions of happiness changes as it is modified by the passions. But for
now, we can see how happiness is concerned with comparative standing in a rather famous
and humorous example Kant gives in his lectures:
The greatest source of happiness or unhappiness, of faring well or ill, of content or discontent, lies in the relationship to other people. For if everyone alike in the town is eating rotten cheese, I eat it too, with satisfaction and a cheerful mind, whereas if everyone else were well-fed, and I alone in sorry circumstances, I would deem it a misfortune (*LE* 27: 367).

Secondly, it is perhaps possible to rethink what Kant means when he says, in his account of unsociable sociability, that the individual is inclined ‘to individualize (isolate) himself’. For now that it has come to light that happiness pertains not just to the satisfaction of desires, but to our comparative standing, it is possible to suggest that by the notion of “isolate”, or the individualizing of the self *in a social context*, Kant means to suggest raising ourselves above others. This is particularly the case if Kant is indeed drawing on Montaigne’s essay *On Solitude*. For Montaigne writes there that ‘let us tell ambition that it is she herself who gives us a taste of solitude; for what does she so much avoid as society? What does she so much seek as elbow-room?’ (Montaigne, 1910: 11). Ambition, the desire of human beings to tower over their peers, is described by Montaigne as what brings us solitude; it is an avoidance of society, so to speak, precisely because it seeks to separate the self from the crowd by elevation. By isolate, then, Kant might not have meant only that one desires to step away from society, to find solitude in a quiet space, but to outdo others, to stand above them, and so stand apart from them. It is as Wood describes it: ‘the fundamental cause of social antagonism [unsociable sociability] is a basic human desire to achieve superior status in comparison with others’ (Wood, 1990: 394).
It is in the social condition that we begin to compare ourselves endlessly with others, and it is in this state that the artificial passions arise, that is to say, ‘passions of inclination that result from human culture (acquired)’ (APV 7: 265). Kant offers his most detailed account of the passions (Leidenschaften) in his Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View, where he describes them as ‘cancerous sores for pure practical reason, and for the most part incurable’ (APV 7: 266). Or as he tells us elsewhere, ‘inclination that can be conquered only with difficulty or not at all by the subject's reason is passion (APV 7: 251). Passions are not to be mistaken for affects (Affekte). Affect is ‘related merely to feeling’. It is ‘surprise through sensation’, a quick transitory rush of feeling ‘that makes reflection impossible’ when it strikes. Some examples of affects are fright, anger or shame (CPJ 5: 272; APV 7: 252)). Shame for Kant can in fact be either an affect or a passion. It is an affect when it takes the form of ‘anguish that comes from the worried contempt of a person who is present’. But it is a passion when one feels it in the absence of the relevant person, it represents a ‘tormenting [of] oneself persistently with contempt, but in vain’ (APV 7:255). The passions, on the other hand, ‘belong to the faculty of desire, and are inclinations that make all determinability of the faculty of choice (Willkür) by means of principles difficult or impossible’ (CPJ 5: 272). This seems to suggest that the passions can actually interfere with, or get in the way of, our freedom, since acting on principles is, very roughly, what practical freedom consists in. But this should not be taken to mean that we do not act freely when acting from passion. Rather, the point is that because the passions ‘always presupposes a maxim on the part of the subject, to act according to an end prescribed to
him by his inclination’ and is ‘therefore always connected with his reason’, it is, unlike the affects, something that can, as it were, lead to the perversion of practical reason (APV 7: 266).\footnote{\textit{Kant’s account of the Wille - Willkür distinction is highly complex, but here I shall follow Allison’s construal of it. Very roughly, ‘the freedom of Willkür consists in spontaneity rather than autonomy ... the positive concept of the freedom of Willkür is its capacity to act on the basis of the dictates of pure reason, or, equivalently, pure Wille. To say this is to say that it has the capacity to select its maxims in virtue of their conformity to universal law, which is, of course, precisely what the categorical imperative requires. Insofar as it does so, pure reason is practical and Wille (in the broad sense) autonomous; but the basic point is that this is the result of the spontaneity of Willkür being exercised in a particular way ... deviation from the law constitutes a misuse of such freedom rather than the absence of it because, as we have seen repeatedly, even our heteronomous actions involve the spontaneity of Willkür’} (Allison, 1990: 132, 136).} ‘The calm with which one gives oneself up to it permits reflection and allows the mind to form principles upon it and so, if inclination lights upon something contrary to the law, to brood upon it, to get it rooted deeply, and so take up what is evil into its maxim’ (MM 6:408). A maxim for Kant is ‘the subjective principle of volition; the objective principle (i.e., that which would also serve subjectively as the practical principle for all rational beings if reason had complete control over the faculty of desire) is the practical law’ (Gr 4: 400n). Elsewhere, however, he tells us that:

A \textit{maxim} is the subjective principle of acting, and must be distinguished from the \textit{objective principle}, namely the practical law. The former contains the practical rule determined by reason conformably with the conditions of the subject (often his ignorance or also his inclinations), and is therefore the principle in accordance with which the subject acts; but the law is the objective principle valid for every rational being, and the principle in accordance with which he ought to act, i.e., an imperative (Gr 4: 421n)
The two accounts Kant offers may look rather similar, but he is not saying the same thing twice. The first introduces the practical law itself as something that can be made into a maxim for the subject. The second distinguishes between them in a much larger way: a maxim is related to the conditions of the subject and just is the principle on which she acts. The law, by contrast, is not just an objective principle but an imperative, and imperatives are second-order principles rather than maxims (imperatives prescribe the proper first-order principles on which one ought to act). In this case, maxims can only conform to practical laws (Beck, 1960: 81; Allison, 1990: 87). Attempts to shed greater light on the notion of what exactly a maxim consists in for Kant have led to, very obviously, different accounts. Onora O’Neill takes a maxim to be what we might call an intention, but a deeper lying one, from which more specific intentions may derive (O’Neill, 1983). She has moved away from that view to an extent, for she now holds maxims to be ‘practical principles that may be adopted by agents at or through various times, that are apt for both reasoning and for practical purposes’ (O’Neill, 2013:16). Patricia Kitcher, building on O’Neill’s ideas, suggests that a maxim takes the form ‘in C, I to do A for purpose P, because that would be G’; where C refers to the circumstance, A the action, and G happiness or duty (Kitcher, 2004: 559). I shall not attempt to resolve these differences. Whatever the case, it can be said that in spite of them, when Kant says that the passions ‘make all determinability of the faculty of choice (Willkür) by means of principles difficult or impossible’, he can be taken to mean two things: first, that it makes maxim selection in conformity to the moral law difficult, or, further, that under its influence, we engage in an improper ordering of principles where we give priority to the principle of happiness (where happiness is understood also in comparative terms) over the demands of duty. But second, the passions
prove problematic for prudence as well, for passion is also for Kant an ‘inclination that prevents reason from comparing it with the sum of all inclinations in respect to a certain choice’ (APV 7: 265-266). Kant gives the example of how a human being’s ambition may be approved of by reason, and of how the ambitious person still desires to be loved by those surrounding him and to enjoy the pleasing effects of social interaction. But if he is passionately ambitious, ‘then he is blind to these ends, though his inclinations still summon him to them, and he overlooks completely the risk he is running that he will be hated by others, or avoided in social intercourse’. He describes this as ‘making part of one’s end the whole’, which is in direct contradiction to ‘the formal principle of reason itself’. Passions are, then, both ‘pragmatically ruinous’ and ‘morally reprehensible’ (APV 7: 266).

For Kant, ‘passions actually are directed only to human beings and can also only be satisfied by them’. He breaks them down into three main sorts: the passion for honor, for dominance and for possession. They all represent the desire to have influence over others, and for this reason come close to prudence, for to have influence over others, to bring them ‘into one’s power, so that one can direct and determine them according to one’s intentions’, is ‘almost the same as possessing others as mere tools of one’s will’ (APV 7:271). Passions are, moreover, delusions in his view since they consist in ‘valuing the mere opinion of others regarding the worth of things as equal to their real worth’ (APV 7:270). In addition, Kant seems to think that the passions are, while violent, nevertheless weaknesses. Those who suffer from them in the end act counter to their purposes. For in trying to make other human beings their instruments, they themselves become instruments. He describes them as ‘slavish dispositions’ that another, ‘when he has taken possession of it,
has the capacity to use a person’s own inclinations for his purposes’. But it appears that those who find ways to use another’s passions against him in the end suffer from the same effect, since they become aware of having the ability to use another for their ends, and the ‘consciousness of having this capacity and of possessing the means to satisfy one’s inclinations stimulates the passion even more than actually using it does’ (APV 7:272).

I shall focus on the two passions of domination and honour. Now, the human passion for domination begins, as we have encountered, ‘from the fear of being dominated by others’. Out of this fear, human beings eventually become ‘intent on placing the advantage of force over them’. It is both unjust and imprudent, for not only does it attempt to render other human beings merely one’s instrument to be set about for one’s own ends, it raises opposition since others are equally intent on avoiding subjugation. The passion for honour, or the mania for it, by contrast, ‘is striving after the reputation of honour, where semblance suffices’. It involves arrogance, an ‘unjustified demand that others think little of themselves in comparison with us’, and Kant thinks that flattery is all that is needed to bring someone suffering from this passion into one’s power (APV 7:272; MM 6:465). He speaks of how flatterers only have to praise and humour someone filled with this passion to nourish it and eventually take from him his strength. This passion has brought the ‘ruin of the great and powerful who abandon themselves to this spell’. In fact, Kant will tell us that those whose hearts are filled with arrogance are in fact base. ‘Since arrogance is the unjustified demand on another person that he despise himself in comparison to others, such a thought cannot enter the head of anyone except one who feels ready to debase himself’ (APV 7:272-273). He further explains this in the Metaphysics of Morals by saying that such a demand could
not be made unless one knew that if the circumstances within which one found oneself were to change, one would be ready to grovel and ‘waive any claim to respect from others’ (MM 6:466). Although Kant’s views on this comes rather close to Rousseau’s suggestion that even domination involves servitude, and that one can be swayed by flattery, it is not entirely obvious that someone caught in that passion would necessarily be ready to grovel should his circumstances change.

The passion for honour should not be confused with the love of honour, which Kant regards as profitable to human society. The love of honour principally involves ‘a concern to yield nothing of one’s human dignity in comparison with others’ (MM 6:465). But it goes beyond that. As Elizabeth Anderson (2008) points out, for Kant, the ‘love of honour is the constant companion to virtue’ (APV 7:258). In his earlier writings, Kant remarks upon how this might be the case (even though there he does not distinguish as carefully between the love of honour and a lusting after it):

The opinion that others may have of our value and their judgment of our actions is a motivation of great weight, which can coax us into many sacrifices, and what a good part of humanity would have done neither out of an immediately arising emotion of good heartedness nor out of principles happens often enough merely for the sake of outer appearance, out of a delusion that is very useful although in itself very facile, as if the judgment of others determined the worth of ourselves and our actions. What happens from this impulse is not in the least virtuous, for which reason everyone who wants to
be taken for virtuous takes goo care to conceal the motivation of lust for honor. (*OBS* 2: 218)

It is because we desire the esteem of others that we perform laudable actions. It is of course not moral, but it is nevertheless useful. But Kant goes further to say:

The love of honor is distributed among all human hearts, although in unequal measure, which must give the whole a beauty that charms to the point of admiration. For although the lust for honor is a foolish delusion if it becomes the rule to which one subordinates the other inclinations, yet as an accompanying drive it is most excellent. For while on the great state each prosecutes his actions in accordance with his dominant inclinations, at the same time he is moved by a hidden incentive to adopt in his thoughts a standpoint outside himself in order to judge the propriety of his conduct, how it appears and strikes the eye of the observer (*OBS* 2:227).

Our desire for esteem allows us to adopt a standpoint outside ourselves from which we judge the propriety of our conduct. But more than this, in moving to judge ourselves from the standpoint of others, we are in a sense esteeming those with whom we share our world. Kant makes this clear in a fragment, where he speaks of the desire for honour as a ‘spur to science’, which ‘arises from the comparison of our judgment with the judgment of others as a means, and thus presupposes a high valuation on the judgment of others’ (*NF*, 22).
Before concluding this chapter, I want to turn briefly to Kant’s account of self-conceit, which is vaguely although most fully discussed in the Third Chapter of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. There Kant writes:

All the inclinations together (which can be brought into a tolerable system and the satisfaction of which is then called one’s own happiness) constitute regard for oneself (*solipsismus*). This is either the self-regard of *love of oneself*, a predominant benevolence toward oneself (*Philautia*), or that of *satisfaction with oneself* (*Arrogantia*). The former is called, in particular, self-love, the latter, self-conceit. Pure practical reason merely infringes upon self-love ... But it *strikes down* self-conceit altogether, since all claims to esteem for oneself that precede accord with the moral law are null and quite unwarranted because certainty of a disposition in accord with this law is the first condition of any worth of a person ... This propensity to make oneself as having subjective determining grounds of choice into the objective determining ground of the will in general can be called *self-love*; and if self-love makes itself lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle, it can be called *self-conceit* (*CPrR*: 5:73-74).

My interest here lies not in Kant’s claim that the moral law strikes down self-conceit. I only want to pursue the question of whether self-conceit is the same thing as *amour-propre*, as often claimed. Now, Kant’s understanding of self-conceit is more clearly and concisely described elsewhere as a ‘lack of modesty in one’s claims to be respected by others’ (*MM* 6:462). So at the very least, we see here that self-conceit involves a claim to superiority over others, and a demand to be regarded as superior by those others. But self-conceit ‘makes
itself lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle’, which is to say, it deliberately
takes the place of the moral law, and in this sense, it inverts or subordinates the moral law
to self-love in the way we have already seen: the fundamental maxim on which one acts is
not the moral law. This can be further understood, however, as taking one’s interests and
happiness as prescribing laws (authoritative reasons) for everyone else (Reath, 2006: 24). But
self-conceit is also described as a propensity, which, according to Stephen Engstrom, means
that it ‘does not develop from self-love through empirical comparison of one’s own actual
practical judgments with those of others’. While this may be so, he says that self-conceit
should be understood as self-esteem, and that it ‘rests essentially on comparative aesthetic
judgments asserting one’s superiority over others’ (Engstrom, 2010: 109).

So is self-conceit *amour-propre*? We can start with two large differences between them.
First, as we have seen in the last chapters, *amour-propre* is very basically a desire or need
to have comparative standing amongst one’s peers, and to have that standing recognized.
But it need not take a pernicious form. It can redirected or cultivated for good, as
Rousseau tells us. Self-conceit, by contrast, simply cannot be refashioned into something
good. It is in direct contradiction and violation of the moral law, and in fact supplants it
(or tries to anyway, since the moral law humiliates it). Second, even when *amour-propre* is
inflamed, it does not necessarily take the form of self-satisfaction described of self-
conceit. That is to say, it does not necessarily set itself as lawgiving for all (or even for
itself). Alienation, as we saw, was one of the problems that emerged from inflamed
*amour-propre*, and this does not appear to be anything like what self-conceit is involved in.
And so we come finally to the view of what exactly Kant means by propensity. He
mentions in a note that ‘propensity is actually only the predisposition to desire an enjoyment which, when the subject has experienced it, arouses an inclination to it’. He offers the example of savages and intoxicants: ‘thus all savages have a propensity for intoxicants; for although many of them have no acquaintance at all with intoxication, and hence absolutely no desire for the things that produce it, let them try these things but once, and there is aroused in them an almost inextinguishable desire for them’ (Rel 6: 29n). Given this description, and putting it back into the context of the desire for superior standing, Kant appears to be saying this: human beings have a propensity to desire the enjoyment of being superior to others, but it is only after they have experienced it (or perhaps some sort of relational standing) that they develop an inclination to it, an inclination aroused in part from the propensity they have to that particular sort of enjoyment. In this sense of propensity, then, it is not at all clear if Rousseau ever makes any such claim about amour-propre, nor does he appeal to the any notion resembling Kant’s view of ‘propensity’ to explain it. But there is an important sense in which self-conceit and radical evil only actually arise in society, as Wood insists, since it is only in society that we make the sorts of comparisons necessary to arouse and develop them. So while Engstrom may be right to say that self-conceit does not develop from self-love through empirical comparison, it nevertheless develops and is aroused through comparison.
This dissertation has been a study of the views of Mandeville, Rousseau, and Kant on the desire for recognition, and the role this desire plays in their broader social and political thought. In my first chapter, I examined the basic innate passions of self-love and self-liking and arrived at the following conclusions. First, self-love is not straightforwardly connected to self-preservation but is only so under the direction of self-liking. Self-love, under other conditions, can move us to take our own lives out of a general concern for the self. Self-liking, on the other hand, is not strictly a comparative passion. It is partially non-comparative, and has a role to play in our desire for self-preservation. But in its comparative guise, it moves us to seek the high esteem of others in order to confirm the high value we have of ourselves. This desire springs from a diffidence we sense of our own self-valuations. But more than this, self-liking is also the ground of the instinct of
sovereignty, which consists of three things: the desire for uncontrolled liberty, the desire for possession or for things to belong to me, and the desire for others to submit to my desires and comply with my will. In my second chapter, I began with an account of how Mandeville’s genealogy can be seen as a radical project by drawing a contrast with Nietzsche. I then proceeded to explain what exactly his genealogical method involves before going on to account for the origins of society and moral virtue. I ended the chapter with a reconstruction of the duel and a discussion of Mandeville’s puzzling claim regarding the reverence of the self.

In my third chapter, I examined the passions of amour de soi and amour-propre in Rousseau’s thought. I suggested that amour de soi does not consist solely in the self-preservation of the body but also that of the soul. I then examined two views of amour-propre, and suggested that the passion is a relative one rather than one concerned with self-esteem. The next step I took was to account for the social and psychological origins of amour-propre, which was followed by a discussion of some of its greatest ills. In the following chapter, I examined Rousseau’s solutions to the problem. But rather than focus on the details of each, I argued for how they might be read together, bringing the commonly assumed rival enterprises together. In my final chapter, I examined Kant’s views on radical evil, unsociable sociability, the passions and self-conceit. I suggested that Kant drew heavily from Rousseau, but also differed from him in certain ways. Most importantly, while Kant maintained like Rousseau the social circumstances underwriting our conflicts, his notion of self-conceit is not similar to Rousseau’s view of amour-propre, and can at best be seen as one particular expression of it.
In this dissertation, we saw how the desire for the esteem and respect of others in Mandeville is tied to a desire to confirm the value we ascribe to ourselves, a value that, because it is intimately bound to the self, is higher than those we ascribe to others. The desire springs from both insecurity and a sense of superiority, a paradox certainly, but one which perhaps tells of something that may be true of us. In Rousseau, we saw how the desire for esteem arises not from an innate passion, but from the fact of sociality itself. As social creatures, we need to count for something in the eyes of those we share our lives and worlds with. The desperate need to count for something often takes a dark turn, where we either become alienated from ourselves, experience vast losses of freedom, or lose our moors and bearings, and ourselves in the process. Kant follows Rousseau in his account, but explains it as arising from a more basic need to be seen as an equal, a fear of being left behind, which then takes on a life of its own, looking for ever greater ways to sink others beneath the bow.

Their remarks reveal how the good opinion of others is both a basic human need and the reason for social conflict and progress. But they each put their views of the desire for esteem to different uses. In Mandeville, the desire for superiority or esteem stands at the centre of all our arts and achievements, our sciences and technologies, our sociability and our luxuries. It is the basis of society, the foundation of morals, the grounds of manners and politeness. He inventively explains the process of social formation through the use of an imaginary genealogy, one which was seen, and perhaps still might be seen, as radical and unacceptable from certain quarters. He emphasizes how we are unknown to ourselves, to
speak in Nietzsche’s words, and Rousseau and Kant will not disagree. Reason cannot choke the channels of self-liking and self-love. The best we can do is to manage it.

Rousseau will say that the problem lies not in human nature, which is basically good. The problem occurs when we get together, which we must. He uses the genealogical method to put to rout Mandeville’s darker view, but paints in the end a rather similar portrait. Rousseau will of course attempt to provide a way out, to deliver us to freedom and virtue, although his solutions are perhaps far too radical for use. They are outlines of a future we cannot actually live. I have tried to suggest that Rousseau’s private and political solutions are not irreconcilable. That they can be put together, in sequence no less, and that it is perhaps only if they are put together in such a way that true republics are possible again. In the end, given the nature of his solutions, one might have to agree with Shklar that we can neither be men nor citizens, although not for the same reasons.

I have not said much, if anything at all, about Kant’s solutions. But that was not my aim. I intended to speak only of how Kant’s social and anthropological writings, which have received much less attention over the years, do continue the themes discussed in Mandeville and Rousseau. For Kant, our unsociable sociability, our passions, our self-conceit, all conspire to work against the concord of human beings. Kant’s concern with recognition does not merely exist in the realm of Kantian respect, but also in his diagnosis of the ills of modern life. What all three thinkers show is that the struggle for recognition stands at the centre of our social and political lives, and appears to be almost inescapable.
One thing that might be said from all of this is that, leaving aside the question of how it arises, human beings in their social spaces and collective lives find having standing to be of great importance. But if these philosophers are right, then perhaps something more tragic follows. One feels that to count at all one must be unique, and to be unique one must be extraordinary. This is not to say that equality is unimportant, but only that along with its importance, and the recognition of its importance, we look to avoid becoming second amongst equals, to gain entry into the private halls of the privileged whilst speaking with the common. It is, after all, always more comforting to talk about equality from the position of higher exemption. ‘We who are liberal and progressive know that the poor are our equals in every sense except that of being equal to us’ (Trilling, 2008: 173).
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