Look at Me!

The Fame Motive from Childhood to Death

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To be rejected by persons and groups close to us creates a sense of being unloved and unwanted. This sparks the fame motive. The yearning to belong—somewhere—causes us to seek fulfillment through the attention and approval of strangers. Fame is expected to bring the comfort and assurance that comes from being wanted, accepted, even admired. We become driven to find audiences whose response to us is positive, so that we can simply leave behind those who rejected us, saying with confidence (if only to ourselves), “I don’t need you, others will have me, you were wrong,” as increasingly we’re talked about, read about, seen, and recognized by a number of people far exceeding the number of those who rejected us. One must quickly set some limits on this generalization. Everyone has experienced some rejection by others, causing mild insecurity, but seldom with lasting effects. It is multiple experiences of rejection and their intensity and duration, especially when young, that cause one to feel unwanted and unloved. It is also not inevitable that being rejected triggers a desire for fame.

For those who suffer from lack of acceptance and approval or feel estranged from other human beings, fame is only one of many possible compensations. Some will find acceptance in the love of God. Others will find it through the deep and unconditional love of another person. A few will have animals that love them. There are also the considerations of
losing oneself in one’s work or a personal passion, such as a social cause or collecting first editions.

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