A man who sets out to justify his existence and his activities has to distinguish two different questions. The first is whether the work which he does is worth doing; and the second is why he does it, whatever its value may be. The first question is often very difficult, and the answer very discouraging, but most people will find the second easy enough even then. Their answers, if they are honest, will usually take one or other of two forms; and the second form is a merely a humbler variation of the first, which is the only answer we need consider seriously. I do what I do because it is the one and only thing that I can do at all well. I am a lawyer, or a stockbroker, or a professional cricketer, because I have some real talent for that particular job. I am a lawyer because I have a fluent tongue, and am interested in legal subtleties; I am a stockbroker because my judgment of the markets is quick and sound; I am a professional cricketer because I can bat unusually well. I agree that it might be better to be a poet or a mathematician, but unfortunately I have no talent for such pursuits.' I am not suggesting that this is a defence which can be made by most people, since most people can do nothing at all well. But it is impregnable when it can be made without absurdity, as it can by a substantial minority: perhaps five or even ten percent of men can do something rather well. It is a tiny minority who can do something really well, and the number of men who can do two things well is negligible. If a man has any genuine talent he should be ready to make almost any sacrifice in order to cultivate it to the full. This view was endorsed by Dr Johnson When I told him that I had been to see [his namesake] Johnson ride upon three horses, he said 'Such a man, sir, should be encouraged, for his performances show the extent of the human powers ...'— and similarly he would have applauded mountain climbers, channel swimmers, and blindfold chess-players. For my own part, I am entirely in sympathy with all such attempts at remarkable achievement. I feel some sympathy even with conjurors and ventriloquists and when Alekhine and Bradman set out to beat records, I am quite bitterly disappointed if they fail. And here both Dr Johnson and I find ourselves in agreement with the public. As W. J. Turner has said so truly, it is only the 'highbrows' (in the unpleasant sense) who do not admire the 'real swells'. We have of course to take account of the differences in value between different activities. I would rather be a novelist or a painter than a statesman of similar rank; and there are many roads to fame which most of us would reject as actively pernicious. Yet it is seldom that such differences of value will turn the scale in a man's choice of a career, which will almost always be dictated by the limitations of his natural abilities. Poetry is more valuable than cricket, but Bradman would be a fool if he sacrificed his cricket in order to write second-rate minor poetry (and I suppose that it is unlikely that he could do better). If the cricket were a little less supreme, and the poetry better, then the choice might be more difficult: I do not know whether I would rather have been Victor Trumper or Rupert Brooke. It is fortunate that such dilemmas are so seldom. I may add that they are particularly unlikely to present themselves to a mathematician. It is usual to exaggerate rather grossly the differences between the mental processes of mathematicians and other people, but it is undeniable that a gift for mathematics is one of the most specialized talents, and that mathematicians as a class are not particularly distinguished for general ability or versatility. If a man is in any sense a real mathematician, then it is a hundred to one that his mathematics will be far better than anything else he can do, and that he would be silly if he surrendered any decent opportunity of exercising his one talent in order to do undistinguished work in other fields. Such a sacrifice could be justified only by economic necessity or age.