

He wasn't vain. Or at least so he would argue. Vanity in the personal sense may express the futility of taking an interest in one's ephemeral appearance (one will soon enough be a cadaver), but there's a connotation of unseemly pleasure, of self-approval—complacency, even pride in the image.

It would be strange, he thought as he checked himself out in the mirror above the downstairs toilet, doing his first business on this chill November morning, to be proud of such an agglomeration of shriveled muscles, frozen joints, enervated organs and wizened flesh.

Once, maybe. But even then he hadn't been so much titillated as... curious. Simply... curious. As in "idle curiosity," *idle* being another synonym for vain.

And what in life isn't, according to Ecclesiastes, basically synonymous with vain?

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