

## **Treating of bodies medical and political: Dr. Mandeville's materialism**

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**Abstract:** Medicine was one of the chief empirical and philosophical sources for early modern political economy, helping to move analysis from moral to natural philosophy, and Mandeville was educated as a physician. He adopted a materialistic view of the body and passions that could be found at Leiden and a few other places at the time. When he emigrated to London, he also became embroiled in some of the heated political debates about the best kind of medical practice, joining the party that sought new medical methods from the empirical observation of experts like himself, who used their knowledge to intervene in the physical bodies of their patients rather than to persuade them to alter their ways of life. Skilful politicians were like skilful physicians, requiring them to understand the bodily passions. His politics therefore remained concerned with the nature of persons rather than societies.

**Keywords:** London medical institutions, empiricism, passions, remedies

Experience, though noon auctoritee  
Were in this world, is right ynogh for me.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The wife of Bath of Bath's  
prologue and tale*

Bernard Mandeville is correctly known for helping to ground modern ideas of political economy in a naturalistic social psychology, affecting the views of David Hume, Adam Smith, perhaps Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and others. While speaking in his own identifiable voice, as a Dutch immigrant and physician in Britain he articulated philosophical and political positions well known on the continent. The medical flavor of Mandeville's views, which grounded the social in the personal, is not commonly noted, however. The way in which he argued for the physical

nature of human bodies and minds, and by implication the societies in which they live, drew on a line of philosophical materialism well known in medical circles and soon after made famous by the French-speaking *philosophe* Julien Offray de la Mettrie. Such views harken back to the epicurean *libertines érudites* of the early seventeenth century. Through his involvement in professional medical conflicts he came to have both motive and opportunity for exposing the hypocrisy of powerful moralists who were simply trying to oppress innovations that would lead to material betterment. At the same time, however, Mandeville maintained the necessity for intervention in the affairs of the body politic by the “skillful politician” in the same way that he advocated the necessity of experienced medical practitioners for maintaining the well-being of their patients. In both cases, they could enable bodily flourishing, but only if the benefits they gained from doing so were exposed. He came to many of these conclusions from self-reflection about his own circumstances, considering how his own striving for success shaped his own actions and views.

If we take Mandeville’s self-reflection seriously, then a biographical approach to his work has the best chance of coherence, and although very little has been found about his personal life his medical connections can be traced. They throw further light not only on his milieu but on the sources of his ideas. In short, understanding Mandeville as a physician can provide insights into the nature of his political arguments and even point to the general importance of medicine for driving him toward materialism, which in turn pushed moral philosophy toward a branch of natural philosophy soon called political economy.

## **POLITICS AND MEDICINE**

Mandeville’s most famous work down the centuries has been *The fable of the bees* (1714, expanded edition 1723). No doubt its popularity has been helped by the famous maxim on its title page: “Private Vices, Publick Benefits”. It implies that the whole benefits from the private passions of each person: that wealth and power are derived from the ways in which nature drives us. The slogan is new in 1714, but it points back to an understanding of human nature he had forcefully presented some years earlier, in the satirical poem of a decade earlier that is reprinted at the beginning of the *Fable*, ‘The grumbling hive: or, knaves turn’d honest’ (1705). The poem explains that all humans really desire

stem from vanity and the search for pleasure and ease. Consequently, “No Calling was without Deceit”. But although “every Part was full of Vice, / Yet the whole Mass a Paradise”. The apparent paradox of how the general good could come from individual failings could be explained by noting how politicians made virtue and vice friends of one another, so that “The worst of all the Multitude / Did something for the Common Good”. Put another way, “Their Crimes conspired to make ‘em Great. / [...] This was the State’s Craft, that maintain’d / The Whole, of which each Part complain’d”. Tragedy struck this great nation, however, when those who placed moral behavior above all else finally got Jove’s attention, and he agreed to make everyone virtuous; without spending on luxuries the economy shrank and each act of modesty led to further hardship until the few remaining bees ended up living in a hollow tree to avoid their enemies. The grumblers who spoke for honesty were therefore either choosing a life of morality coupled with poverty and weakness, or else were hypocritical knaves themselves. As Mandeville put it, “Fools only strive / To make a Great an honest Hive” (1705, 4, 10-11, 26).

In the work that first published his famous slogan, Mandeville elaborated by expanding on the role of politicians in creating the general good from the personal striving of all the busy bees. He reprinted ‘The grumbling hive’ with an explanatory essay, ‘An enquiry into the origin of moral virtue’, and twenty ‘Remarks’ clarifying some of the passages in the poem. This book, now called the *Fable*, drew attention to the necessary activities of politicians from its opening lines. The ‘Enquiry’ began by arguing that people are governed by their passions, so that humans are like any other animal except for being “extraordinarily selfish and headstrong, as well as cunning”. For anything like the general good to emerge, then, politicians had to persuade naturally obstreperous and conflictive humans that self-denial was the highest good. Over the course of early human history they had found that “Flattery must be the most powerful Argument that could be Used to Human Creatures”. “The first Rudiments of Morality” were therefore “broach’d by skillful Politicians, to render Men useful to each other as well as tractable”. The basic method of government, then, was flattery, which worked because Pride reigned supreme among the passions. The fabrication of moral sentiments constraining the natural desires allowed life in common; persuading people that moral sentiments should govern

them was the trick, made possible only by flattering the pride of the governed.

It was not religion per se, then, but “the skillful Management of wary Politicians” that established collective civilizations. Persuading self-seeking individuals that they could or should seek higher ends made them tractable. Or, to use another of Mandeville’s maxims: “Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride”. The sources of national power and wealth arose only from the discovery of this means of governing the passions, by cultivating the chief among them. Properly massaged, then, personal strivings could lead to the public benefits despite the harm they caused to individual persons. Collective greatness could therefore only be achieved through skillful politicians (Mandeville 1957, 42, 43, 47, 51).

But Mandeville’s analysis of the role of politicians was naturally double-edged. For while he argued that politicians were responsible for developing the means that allowed the state to flourish, he was also identifying them as self-conscious hypocrites who preached the necessary lie. By exposing this political device he could show that they, too, were acting out of self-interested motives rather than virtue. Opening it to public scrutiny allowed criticism of the management of the politicians, placing public constraints on their own passions. They had invented the myth that self-sacrifice was a virtue when in fact the prideful pursuit of self-interest, including their own, lay behind the state’s material flourishing.

Mandeville recognized himself among fallen creatures, but he also wanted to further the collective interest of the groups to which he belonged, making them as great or greater than earlier civilizations. That would require politicians who knew what they were doing and did it well. Skillful politicians practiced a necessary form of priest-craft. The only measure of the good was when material benefits—including their own—increased. But he knew that when politicians lost the plot, thinking that they were virtuous governors who should turn the governed into virtuous creatures, decline would set in. Mandeville had encountered that kind of self-righteous politician in his personal life, too. In London they had taken the form of ridiculous governors of the medical profession, whose failing he had exposed in work he had published a few years before the *Fable*. Giving his earlier views our attention, then, can help to untangle his meaning, for while Mandeville’s

politics were framed as general propositions, they were also felt personally.

It is noticeable that the *Fable's* 'Enquiry' directly echoed language Mandeville had used in his witty medical dialogue of 1711, *A treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick passions*.<sup>1</sup> The illnesses he dealt with in the earlier work were rampant among the well-to-do, and he specialized in their treatment, publishing his book to entertain and instruct as well as to make himself better known to a potentially large clientele.<sup>2</sup> In its preface, he began by bluntly noting that Pride was inseparable from human nature, having been used by Satan to attack Adam, bringing sickness and death in his wake. Pride also served as the principle obstruction to "the progress of the glorious Art that should teach the Recovery as well as Preservation of Health", for it was pride that "makes the Physician abandon the solid Observation of never erring Nature to take up with the loose conjectures of his own wand'ring Invention, that the World may admire the Fertility of his Brain". And it was "pride in the Patient, that makes him in love with the reasoning Physician, to have an opportunity of shewing the depth of his Penetration" (Mandeville 1711, iii-iv).<sup>3</sup> Among the generations following Milton not one among Mandeville's readers could have been surprised at his condemnation of pride, present in each and every one. But he promised to show how pride not only obstructed the paths of physicians and patients, but could open their ways.

It was, then, his experience in the medical underworld of London that allowed Mandeville to turn the failures of pride into goods, as he would soon also do in his 'Enquiry'. He made the turn through self-

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<sup>1</sup> The full title is *A treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick passions, vulgarly call'd the hypo in men and vapours in women; in which the sympotoms, causes, and cure of those diseases are set forth after a method intirely new. The whole interspers'd, with instructive discourses on the real art of physick it self; and entertaining remarks on the modern practice of physicians and apothecaries: very useful to all, that have the misfortune to state in need of either. In three dialogues.*

<sup>2</sup> He later published a much enlarged edition, with two printings in 1730; I have treated them as if they were both a 'second' edition: *A treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick diseases. In three dialogues.* This edition cut a few passages, added many, and supplied translations for the many Latin quotations of the first, in the process trying to make the work more appealing to the London wits who had little in the way of a sound classical education. Note, too, that the first edition uses the word "Passions" in the title, when the second edition uses the word "Diseases".

<sup>3</sup> For other interpretations of the *Treatise*, I recommend: Francis McKee (1995) for his analysis of contemporary views of hypochondria that remains sensitive to Mandeville's literary qualities and aims; Hilton (2010) for the book's intellectual history; and generally Hundert (1995) for probing its intellectual infrastructure, especially its Epicurean and naturalist origins.

reflection, beginning with a defense for publishing his medical book. Every reader would suspect pride to have been one of Mandeville's chief motivations for writing. Worse, in the public imagination pride and vanity were common attributes of quacks, and he therefore expected to be charged by the medical conservatives with quackery.<sup>4</sup> Mandeville had lived through a period of intense medical conflict over the past two decades in which those kinds of accusations had been commonplaces, and he had personally been warned by the senior officers of the College of Physicians of London against practicing within their remit. More recently, Mandeville had publicly praised another Dutch-born physician who had been singled out as a scapegoat during a period when the Censors of the College were actively trying to reassert their authority: he had invented a new remedy but they had accused him of dangerous quackery and tried to make a public example of him, only to be mocked in turn. With the publication of his own book, Mandeville could expect the senior politicians of the London medical establishment to accuse him, too, of quackery.

Mandeville therefore made a most interesting move: he accepted self-interest as a motivation for his work. He began by charging the conservative physicians with "a Romantick Pretence" about human nature. Their false and romantic view held "that neglecting their private Interest, Men ought only to labour for the Good of Others". In the *Fable* this would be identified as necessary hypocrisy; here, the problem was that the medical politicians believed it themselves. Because of this Romantick Pretence about the public good, "it is become the fashion among the Censorious to give the name of Quack Bills to all the Writings of Physicians, by which it is possible, that besides the common welfare of the People, they can have any By-end of increasing their Reputation and promoting their own Practice". If self-interest coupled with successful innovation defined a quack, however, he stood among them: "If a Regular Physician writing of a Distemper, the Cure of which he particularly professes, after a manner never attempted yet, be a Quack, because besides his Design of being instructive and doing Good to others, he has likewise an aim of making himself more known by it than he was before, then I am one". In other words, it was common to treat authors who might benefit personally from their publications as quacks even when the general good might be advanced by their publication of

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<sup>4</sup> I have argued that personal character rather than medical outcome was the chief marker for an early modern quack, in Cook (1994a). More generally, see Porter (1989).

effective methods for the care and treatment of the ill. Mandeville took a different view, like many other medical innovators in his day: by their works you shall know them. In other words, even bad motives might accomplish good things. It was not the motive, however, but the result that determined the good. He had found better ways to preserve health and treat illnesses. He and his friends, therefore, were doing well by doing good. “Wherefore, as Times go, and the World is degenerate, I don’t think, that he is either a bad Subject or a useless member of Humane Society, who, without detriment to the Publick, serves his own Ends, by being beneficial to those that employ him: More I don’t pretend to”. Quackery was, then, a word that did not apply to self-interest or innovation, only to pretense and deception. In fact, he went on, since many of “the most Learned Practitioners” published medical books during their lifetimes, “I don’t think it worth my while to make the least Apology for it” (Mandeville 1711, xii-xiv).<sup>5</sup> He had only to show that his recommendations were good.

Having offered the view that goodness must be judged on the result rather than the intention (a point he expanded in the body of the work), Mandeville returned briefly to the critique of the merchants of virtue. In doing so, he offered two sporting analogies that would have been familiar to his comfortable readers, the first from the hunting park and the second from the village green. In the first, he commented that “The common good and Benefit of Mankind are Stalking horses, made use of by every body, and generally most talk’d of by those that least regard them”. His audience knew a stalking horse to have been trained to walk peaceably next to a crouched hunter, its body shielding him from his quarry and allowing him to come close before being observed. By Mandeville’s day the phrase had also become a general metaphor for deception: someone trusted by one party but working in another’s interest could get close to the intended victim before the hunter popped up out from behind and took close aim.<sup>6</sup> In other words, virtue-talk simply concealed other, deadly-real interests, and those who spoke most of the common good were least likely to know that they were being gulled. In the second comment, Mandeville wrote that “whoever understands any thing of a Green knows that every Bowl must have a

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<sup>5</sup> These remarks are removed from later editions.

<sup>6</sup> On the history of the phrase, see the *Oxford English dictionary*.

Bias, and that there would be no Playing without it”.<sup>7</sup> He referred to the shape of the bowls, which are not perfectly spherical balls but somewhat flattened on two sides; when their forward motion slows, they therefore begin to lean to the left or right, turning them from the line they had previously traveled. The game could not be played with perfectly round balls, for the essence of the game was to work with the bowl’s bias.

Mandeville recognized, then, that in hunting or bowling—or in racing or any other “sport” of the time<sup>8</sup>—no play was the same. Being able to work with the biases of the moment determined the outcome. The winner of the game emerged not from a display of virtue but by getting the best result. His readers would understand that he was writing out of his own self-interest while also being concerned with their own, flourishing in his practice by helping them find solutions to their illnesses. They could work perfectly well with his bias.

### PERSONAL POLITICS

In his medical *Treatise*, which begins to develop the chief arguments that would appear in the *Fable*, Mandeville drew on the knowledge his audience would have of the bitter political debates that had long embroiled medical London. While probing for common truths he spoke to the moment. He was no disinterested observer, but a participant. After the first shock from a metaphorical slap by the medical politicians, Mandeville emerged as an advocate for a particular approach to medicine that took the side of the reforming party.

Before returning to his medical writings, then, it is helpful to summarize the state of play to which they spoke. To be brief, the College of Physicians of London defended the preeminence of physicians educated at or affiliated with the traditions of Cambridge and Oxford; but given the political changes resulting from the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 they were fighting a rear-guard action. The College’s chief advocates considered that their profound learning in the texts made them morally responsible men who would do no harm to their patients and would reason with them about how best to regulate their individual lives, advising them on how to maintain or regain their

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<sup>7</sup> On “bias”, the *Oxford English dictionary* says that the figurative use of the word, taken from the game of bowls, to indicate a human inclination or bent, had become common by the late sixteenth century.

<sup>8</sup> The word “sport” implies singular rather than common events; also see Findlen (1990).

health. They were suspicious of all others, whether physicians who were educated in other methods and values, surgeons and others who applied standardized rather than individualized methods of treatment, apothecaries who (in England) visited the sick and took money for the drugs they prescribed, or male and female empirics who sold their services or medicines directly to the public. All of those kinds of practitioners—more numerous than the physicians themselves, and sometimes much better rewarded—seemed to be motivated by monetary profit, whereas in principle the learned physicians simply accepted freely given gifts, or honoraria, for their personal advice. The learned physicians were publicly resisting the rapidly developing medical marketplace in the name of a higher good. To defend their colleagues, the College's President and the committee of Censors had juridical powers to fine and banish from the city anyone who practiced without their license or caused harm to patients.<sup>9</sup> Their ability to police medical practitioners in London had been growing before the Glorious Revolution; then a period of legal confusion resulted; but soon enough the College's Censors were again vigorously reasserting their powers.

Just then Mandeville arrived in London, badly bruised by recent events at home. He had entered the world among a family of well-respected Dutch physicians and merchants who were also mid-level political officials.<sup>10</sup> But they had received a terrible blow during a political conflict in Rotterdam. Mandeville's family had been involved on the side of a large group of citizens who were trying to rid Rotterdam of someone they considered to be governing with overweening arrogance. In 1690 that senior official, Jacob Van Zuijlen van Nievelt, had obtained the death penalty against a young militiaman, Cornelis Costerman, who was charged with killing a taxman in a public brawl over a cask of smuggled wine. The penalty was carried out and Costerman was put to death despite his respectability. Civic sentiment clearly thought the penalty did not suit the crime. Riots followed, in which the Mandevilles were involved on the side of the activists (Dekker 1992). Following the riots, an angry poem appeared with the title 'The sanctimonious atheist', which accused Van Zuijlen of being, among other things, a "Money-grubbing tyrant, spawn of hell". The author of the poem was apparently the twenty-year-old Bernard Mandeville himself.

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<sup>9</sup> The distinction between illicit (unlawful) practice and malpractice (bad practice) was not always clearly in the mind of the public, but had been defined judicially in Bonham's case early in the seventeenth century, see Cook (1985).

<sup>10</sup> On Mandeville's family, see Mandeville (1957, xix-xxi).

In the end, Van Zuijlen was brought to trial, but the stadholder-king, William III, moved the proceedings to a friendly court, which acquitted him. Van Zuijlen was subsequently reinstated as bailiff and took revenge on his enemies, including Michael Mandeville, Bernard's father, who was banished from the city early in 1693, ending his life not many years later in Amsterdam (Dekker 1992, quotation from 488). The younger Mandeville was still feeling the personal sting of this political fiasco twenty years later when he published the first edition of his work on the hypochondriac and hysteric passions: in the preface he stated that his father had lived in Rotterdam for over thirty years "in Repute [...] and for the greatest part of that time more in Request" as a physician "among the better sort of People than any other; as no body can be ignorant of, that lived there before the Year 92, and knew any thing at all" (Mandeville 1711, xii).<sup>11</sup>

In other words, Mandeville had grown up in a civic culture accustomed to combining medicine, business, and political office, but he had also been shocked to have his family's good reputation sullied by a corrupt official backed by the authorities.<sup>12</sup> It is a reminder that Mandeville was no encourager of corruption, only an analyst of it. The poem he authored had painted Van Zuijlen as a hypocrite who cloaked his actions in religious virtue when he was personally irreligious. Mandeville must have felt a powerful sense of his own feelings of justice thwarted by a sanctimonious clique. It must have hurt badly, and confirmed the fallen nature of humankind.

By the time of this political and personal crisis Bernard, following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps, had received a medical doctorate from Leiden (Mandeville 1957, xviii-xix).<sup>13</sup> But with his physician father now banished from Rotterdam, he too left. Like so many other Netherlanders in the period he headed for England. In mid-November of 1693, however, his name appeared in the records of the London College of Physicians. He had inadvertently stepped into yet another confrontational political world.

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<sup>11</sup> Also see p. 40, where Mandeville says that his father had been a physician for over 38 years in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and had had success in treating hypochondriac and hysteric passions.

<sup>12</sup> Publications on early Dutch politico-religious history have been energetic in recent years. For some recent examples with bibliography see Somos (2011); Koerbagh (2011); Weststeijn (2012).

<sup>13</sup> Mandeville defended an undergraduate thesis in 1689 on the subject of insensibility of animals; he then obtained his medical doctorate in 1691 on corrupt chylification, which needed to be rectified by balancing exercise and thinking.

The first record we have of Mandeville's presence in England is of the warning he received from the College of Physicians in mid-November, 1693. He had arrived in the city just as the Censors were trying to reassert their legal rights, his name appearing on a list of eight practitioners who were to be summoned to the College to explain themselves (*Annals of the college of physicians*, vol. 6, fols. 88-89). At least one other was of Dutch origin, Dr. "Tenhaullen", who came to the next meeting (on 1 December) to explain that he was a member of the College of Physicians in Amsterdam and a graduate of Leiden, and that he wanted leave of the College to practice among his friends in London until he should return (*Annals of the college of physicians*, vol. 6, fols. 89-90). The College, however, refused Tenhaullen's request, and we hear of him no more. Mandeville himself never appeared, nor is there word of him in the city for many years to come. He seems to have understood the threat and kept away.

In all likelihood Mandeville settled for a time outside of London, most probably among the Dutch-speaking community of Colchester. He is recorded as being in London for his marriage to Ruth Elizabeth Laurence, at St. Giles-in-the-Fields, as well as for being present at the baptism of their son in the same parish in the month following (Mandeville 1957, xx).<sup>14</sup> That London parish must have been home to his wife. But the College's remit ran to seven miles from the walls of the city and Mandeville was never formally threatened again, suggesting he was not ordinarily living there; moreover, in his medical work of 1711 Mandeville tells his readers that he and his family lived outside of London.<sup>15</sup> A few years previously he had translated into English a sermon by a new minister of the Dutch Reformed church in Colchester, suggesting he was known there as a good linguistic intermediary.<sup>16</sup> (Years afterward he disingenuously explained that he had come to England "to learn the Language; in which having happen'd to take great delight" he stayed on (Mandeville 1730, xiii)). Colchester was inhabited by significant numbers of Dutch weavers, which would have made it

<sup>14</sup> The marriage was 1 February 1698/9, the birth and baptism of his son Michael on 1 March 1698/9.

<sup>15</sup> The preface to his *Treatise* (Mandeville 1711, xiii-xiv) says, "but as I live with my Family out of Town, instead of dating this Epistle from my own House, I shall refer him to the Booksellers and Printer, from whom any one may always learn where to find me".

<sup>16</sup> *A sermon preach'd at Colchester, to the Dutch congregation. On February 1. 1707/8. By the Reverend C. Schrevelius; and translated into English, By B.M. M.D.* (1708). Not everyone thinks that the translation is Mandeville's but I see no objection to the identification.

easy to practice among them while learning English.<sup>17</sup> Mandeville also published a poem “writ at Colchester”.<sup>18</sup> While he does not appear among the records of the Colchester Reformed church, it was in its declining years, and he may have continued to prefer his wife’s Anglicanism for formal occasions (Moens 1905).<sup>19</sup> Or given some of his later views, perhaps he preferred joining no church at all. In any case, for some time he seems to have kept his distance from London although locating himself near enough—Colchester was sixty miles away—to allow visits to patients, booksellers, and other associates there.<sup>20</sup>

Ten years after his first encounter with the officers of the College of Physicians Mandeville was confident enough to take a stand against them, resulting in some of the first words he is known to have published in England. He rallied to the support of one of the most visible opponents of the College’s conservatives, another doctor of Dutch origin, Joannes Groenevelt. A College licentiate, an inventor of new remedies, and an associate of several other anti-establishment medical figures, Groenevelt became the scape-goat for a group of officers who seized on a complaint against him as an example to others. Groenevelt was accused of malpractice on a woman of Southwark whom he had treated for urinary complaints using a remedy of his own invention: cantharides (also known as blister beetle) rectified with camphor (an import from the Dutch East Indies), and taken internally. The College authorities considered the internal use of cantharides to be dangerous and subjected Groenevelt to a series of legal actions; he in turn counter-sued. Although in the end neither side achieved preeminence in the courts, the confrontation was widely reported in the press and discussed in the coffee houses, dividing public as well as medical opinion. In the long run, the cause célèbre helped to undermine the authority of the College to police medical practice and practitioners in London, although at much personal cost to Groenevelt (Cook 1994b).

During the commotion, Groenevelt had published a book in Latin defending his practice, and in 1703, as things began to settle, he issued a new edition (Groenevelt 1689; 1703). It opened with a Latin poem

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<sup>17</sup> For example, see Goose (1982, 272).

<sup>18</sup> Among the often ribald poems he published a few years after is ‘A letter to Mr. Asgil, writ at Colchester’, in Mandeville (1712, 18-23). Also see Goldsmith (1999, 28).

<sup>19</sup> Moens shows that the number of baptisms in the church were sharply declining after 1700, although it limped on until closure in the later 1720s.

<sup>20</sup> Recent evidence shows that from at least 1706 Mandeville lived in outer London parishes south of the Thames: <http://bernard-mandeville.nl/category/view/recent-news-on-mandeville>.

praising the author and mocking those who lacked his skill, composed by B. Mandeville, M.D.<sup>21</sup> The work's translation of 1706, Mandeville's poem included, was dedicated to William Bentinck, Earl of Portland and Baron of Diepenheim and Schoonheten, former favorite of King William (Groenevelt 1706).<sup>22</sup> Mandeville had at last reappeared on the public stage; in doing so, he supported the position of those who wished to substitute a new order of material betterment via a mastery of natural phenomena for that of authorities policing the public in order to instill ideals of virtuous behavior.

The inclusion of Mandeville's laudatory poem in Groenevelt's book means that he and Groenevelt must have been well acquainted, which is not surprising given their common national heritage and professional interests. Over twenty years his senior, and with a rich network of contacts, Groenevelt may have acted as a mentor or patron for Mandeville. The personal connection also places Mandeville not only among Whig sympathizers but among a very intriguing group of medical innovators. For instance, Groenevelt had earlier become a member of a formal association of physicians who banded together to establish a joint practice, which they called the "Repository". They agreed to be present at their rented rooms on particular days, dividing the week's work in order to see walk-in patients. They also published a pamphlet inviting people to answer certain questions and mark the woodcuts of the male and female human bodies according to where the symptoms were located, and to send the marked pages back to them for a diagnosis by mail. They would in turn make up the necessary remedies and send them in return by the penny post.<sup>23</sup>

Among the members of the Repository, together with Groenevelt, were John Pechey, Richard Browne, and Christopher Crell. Crell originally came via Amsterdam from a family of noted Polish Socinians. As is well known, Socinianism was one of the greatest bugbears of the defenders of religious orthodoxy in both England and The Netherlands (Mulsow and Rohls 2005). Browne was a learned surgeon and medical translator very active in producing new medicines and practices. Pechey was both a vociferous medical opponent of the College and a medical translator, best known for his English editions of the works of the

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<sup>21</sup> It does not appear in the 1698 edition; thanks to Francis McKee for drawing my attention to it, and the first notice of it, see Ward (1931).

<sup>22</sup> Both the original Latin and the English translation of Mandeville's poem were included.

<sup>23</sup> On the Repository practice and Oracle, see Cook (1994b, 137-143).

famous Thomas Sydenham. Pechey was probably on good terms with Sydenham, since one of his translations appeared almost at the same time as the original Latin, suggesting that he had an advance copy.<sup>24</sup> (Sydenham in turn is also known for his friendship with Robert Boyle and mentorship of John Locke.) All of the members of the Repository practice were, unsurprisingly, advocates for the new and scientific medicine that focused on the empirical phenomena of nature rather than on a language of abstract powers, but neither were they friendly to simple empirics or quacks, or apothecaries or surgeons lacking in education. For publicizing such reformist views, however, they had all been subjected to harassment by the officers of the College.

The Repository physicians may have been Mandeville's point of contact with the London presses, for just at the time that Mandeville published his poem in honor of Groenevelt he also began to appear as a translator. At first he was Englishing fables: La Fontaine, Aesop, and Scarron's *Typhon*, all printed between 1703 and 1704. Mikko Tolonen (2013, 106-108, 113-114) has also established Mandeville's role in translating the Latin medical work of Lazarus Riverius in 1706. Browne and Pechey had both published translations into English of important medical works, Pechey so many that he might be said to be a kind of late-seventeenth-century Nicholas Culpeper. Pechey had also already translated considerable portions of Riverius (in his *Collections of acute diseases* of 1691 and *Collections of chronical diseases* of 1692). Mandeville's 1703 translation of La Fontaine's fables has no printer on the title page, but carries three pages of advertising at the back for publications by Richard Wellington, one of Pechey's publishers.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Groenevelt's two versions of his Latin treatise on cantharides were published by J. Taylor (who was also among the printers of Pechey's *Compleat midwife's practice* of 1698); it was a W. Taylor, probably J. Taylor's son, who published both Mandeville's *Treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick passions* of 1711 and Groenevelt's *The grounds of physick* of 1715.<sup>26</sup> Mandeville's medical contacts may very

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<sup>24</sup> On Browne and Pechey, see Cook's entry on each of them in the *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (online).

<sup>25</sup> Wellington published Pechey's translation of *The whole works of Sydenham* in 1696 and 1697, Pechey's *General treatise of the diseases of infants and children* of 1697, and probably Mandeville's *The pamphleteers. A satyr* of 1703.

<sup>26</sup> Groenevelt's two Latin treatises on his remedy using cantharides published by J. Taylor; J. Taylor was also among the printers of Pechey's *Compleat midwife's practice* of 1698, Mandeville's *Treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick passions* of 1711, and Groenevelt's *The grounds of physick* of 1715.

well, then, have been the persons who introduced him to the possibilities of Grub Street.

Even if this were so, we cannot be sure of the causal steps. Mandeville had languages and probably could use an additional income (there is no good evidence that he ever practiced comfortably among the great and the good). He might also have been eager to find an outlet for his satirical wit. In that case he might well have used his medical contacts in London to find his way to their printers. Or perhaps his medical friends were simply recruiting allies and put him in touch with a publisher merely as an author of a laudatory poem, and in conversation the printer discovered in him the kind of satirical wit that spoke perfectly to the current market. In either case, in both high politics and medical politics Mandeville had felt the cut of the whip wielded by high-flying hypocrites who looked after themselves by pretending that personal virtue was more important than the real world. He took it personally. He started to write.

Between 1703 and 1705, then, Mandeville came out into the public eye as a supportive medical colleague and a translator of fables and satires, then quickly adding short and pointed works on current events. Mandeville's laudation appeared in 1703, but probably earlier in the same year he had published a small satirical poem of twelve pages, *The pamphleteers*.<sup>27</sup> The death of William III early in 1702 must have brought a shudder of fear to those like Mandeville who hated the sacerdotal universalism of Louis XIV and all it stood for. He had been just two years old in 1672 when the French led an allied invasion of the United Provinces that almost extinguished the Republic. It was saved only after a bitter fight led by William III, Prince of Orange, who spent the rest of his life fighting the French king and who, in the so-called Glorious Revolution, had secured England on his side in the struggle for Europe. On the other hand, the new queen, Anne, surrounded herself with Anglicans and Tories. Mandeville praised Anne for taking up the legacy of William by continuing the war in Europe, but clearly he was worried (Mandeville 1703, 12). He fumed against the "villans" who were now undermining William's reputation in England and reminded his readers that their own country had been attacked by an alliance of Rome and France (which he termed "the Holy Cause"), intending "t' inslave this

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<sup>27</sup> Groenevelt, *Tutus cantharidum* was registered in the Term Catalogues in December 1703: Arber (1903). *The pamphleteers. A satyr* (1703), is sometimes attributed to Mandeville, and is accepted as such in Tolonen (2013, 105). The title page bears a date of 1703, but it may have appeared in the last quarter of 1702.

Island, and subvert its Laws” (1711, 4). People might dislike how some officials had converted some of the vast sums of money raised for the war effort “to private Use”, and he agreed that such profiteers should “be Punish’d for the vile Abuse” (1711, 9). His support for virtue and impartiality also extended to urging the clergy and judges to remain upright and correct. But he thought that such concerns should not divert attention from the main game, which were moves to undermine the Act of Settlement that had secured the Protestant succession. Those challenging the act were simply “Traitors” to Queen Anne (1711, 9). And he railed at the attacks on religious dissenters being made by irreligious “Profligates” in the Parliament, which he equated with an open declaration of “Popery” (1711, 10).<sup>28</sup> In other words, Mandeville felt a real threat from the Jacobites and their fellow travelers among the Tories who trying to neutralize England’s opposition to France. He was adding his voice to the cause of the Whigs.

Not surprisingly, then, his *Some fables after the easie and familiar method of Monsieur la Fontaine* also mocked hypocrites.<sup>29</sup> It was mostly a translation, but he added two new fables of his own: “The Carp”, about a fish who travels abroad ignorant of languages and politics and so returns having acquired only foreign vices, and “The Nightingale and the Owl”, which shows how pride comes before a fall (Mandeville 1999, 18-19). Moreover, as Istvan Hont (2006, 388) recently pointed out, buried in the moral to the fable on wolves and sheep was a further warning about how the peace offerings of the moment showed Louis XIV to be yet another wolf in sheep’s clothing. Mandeville’s *Typhon* of 1704 was a plain-spoken “burlesque poem” that attacked the purveyors of virtue as disturbers of the peace.<sup>30</sup> Even fiercer was a poem of 1704 under the title of *The planter’s charity*, chastising the American planters for their cruelty toward enslaved Africans and condemning a sermon recently preached in London that had argued that bringing the enslaved to Christianity would not lead to their liberation. That, Mandeville thought, was even worse than Louis XIV’s treatment of Protestants in the wake of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, since if they converted to

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<sup>28</sup> The threat came from the Occasional Conformity Bills of 1702 and 1703.

<sup>29</sup> A year later it was republished with a new title and 10 additional translated fables: *Aesop dress’d or a collection of fables writ in familiar verse. By B. Mandeville, M.D.* (1704a).

<sup>30</sup> *Typhon: or the wars between the gods and giants: a burlesque poem in imitation of the comical Mons. Scarron* (1704b), on which see Goldsmith (1999, 20-22).

Catholicism they could go free (Mandeville 1704c).<sup>31</sup> All these texts point to Mandeville as a person who hated the hypocritical message of the self-proclaimed party of godly virtue, who in his eyes were clearly in bed with the “holy party” of France and Rome.

But in a period of coffee-house wits, everyone came in for ridicule, including the physicians. In their failed attacks on Groenevelt and other medical innovators they were depicted as dull pretenders to knowledge, or as overly erudite classicists defending the wrong side in the battle of the books.<sup>32</sup> Doctors and lawyers were subjected to lampoons in broadsides, handbills, newspapers, and pamphlets. When the College persisted in trying to restore its authority, their attacks on the apothecaries blew up in their faces, causing them bitter disappointment in 1704 when the House of Lords decided that something like *laissez-faire* should rule in medicine. Apothecaries and others could now practice freely without the College’s license (Cook 1990a; also 1990b; 1990c). The medical marketplace had suddenly become almost unregulated in England. Mandeville could not refrain from jumping into the fray in 1705 with his ‘The grumbling hive’, where he described physicians as valuing “Fame and Wealth / Above the drooping Patient’s Health, / Or their own Skill”. He also accused them of cultivating “Grave pensive Looks, and dull Behaviour” to give a false impression of learning. Their manner might impress patients and nurses, but not people like himself who could see through their cloaks of virtue, making them appear naked (Mandeville 1705, 5-6).

### MEDICINE AND PHILOSOPHY

Where, then, could he stand? Among the Whigs who fought the High Church sympathizers of Louis and James and needed to strengthen Britain’s power even when it drew on the sources of human vice, yes. Among the practical innovators in medicine and science, yes. But those stances placed him among the clever politicians of state and medicine, too, as subject to the passions and hypocrisy as anyone else. Could he find certain ground on which to stand, a place that would yield the kind of truth that accumulated over time, bettering the material condition of humankind? Yes, he had found that in the approach to knowledge that had taken many of the Continental medical faculties by storm,

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<sup>31</sup> My thanks to Jack Greene for altering me to this tract: see Greene (2013, 61-62).

<sup>32</sup> For example, Ned Ward, *The London spy* (1698-1700); on the battle of the books and medicine, see Levine (1977). Also see Cook (1994b, 158-188); Cook (1986, 210-253).

foregrounding empirical experience and deriving materialistic explanations from it. He would use that approach to probe the causes of things human based upon his understanding of physiology; he even gradually came to admit that the mind itself was a product of physiology. His philosophical ground is most clearly stated in the two editions of his medical dialogue, *A treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick passions*. A comparison between the first edition of 1711 and the considerably expanded second and third editions of 1730 (which are virtually identical) clarifies his continued progress toward monistic philosophical materialism, bringing him to the verge of explicit atheism. What are considered Mandeville's political arguments can be seen to stem from similar lines of thought about material human nature.

The medical flavor of Mandeville's general outlook is suggested when, for example, it is noticed that his *Fable* does not propose a remedy for the ills of humanity, only a way toward bodily flourishing despite human frailty. The maxim about "Private Vices, Publick Benefits" is explained further in the fuller subtitle of the 1714 edition: "Containing, several discourses, to demonstrate, that human frailties, during the degeneracy of Mankind, may be turn'd to the advantage of civil society, and made to supply the place of moral virtues".<sup>33</sup> Even the title page therefore suggests that he did not aim at overcoming the "degeneracy of Mankind", since his readers would understand there could be no remedy for that short of a divine miracle. His method simply allowed our miserable state to be managed for the better. In that sense, his treatment of politics was like his treatment for the diseases in which he specialized, hypochondria and hysteria, where he noted that the condition of his patients could be well managed by skillful practitioners like himself, but not cured (Mandeville 1711, 152-153).

Moreover, an important part of Mandeville's method of managing his patients was to draw them toward a better understanding of their illness by discourse as well as treating them with proper medicines. The condition of patients suffering from hypochondria led them toward idiosyncratic reading, reflection, and speculation about the causes and cures of their suffering. In the published dialogue Mandeville represented himself as working with his patients as he found them, seeing how their diseases affected their minds and bodies, answering

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<sup>33</sup> Not all editions contain this title page. The 1714 edition I have in mind was checked on June 22, 2015, at 'Eighteenth Century Collections Online', with the ESTC number T077573.

them according to their own language, and persuading them toward activities that would re-engage them in worldly life. For instance, in the conclusion to his *Treatise* his mouthpiece, Philopirio, explains to his well-educated gentleman patient that “as soon as I heard you was a Man of Learning and lov’d Quotations from Classick Authors, I answer’d you in your own Dialect, and often strain’d my self to imitate, what in you is natural” by replying with Latin quotations; “I would not have talk’d so to a modishly Ignorant Courtier, that would call it perhaps Pedantick”. Put another way, he is eager to “fall in with the Humour” of his patients (Mandeville 1711, 278; 1730, xiv-xv). Moreover, in the discourse he let his patient talk at length, gently leading him to a better understanding of his condition and its remedies by drawing on his experience and reason. His patient reports that in previous encounters with physicians they either instructed him to follow their inexplicable directions exactly or to end up condemned and let go. While his patient has read up on everything about his condition, Philopirio rests his better understanding on experienced judgment, and thus he can demonstrate to his patient why he recommends what he does.<sup>34</sup> His patients needed the help of a physician who attentively observed their circumstances in light of previous cases, not one who simply reacted to a decision-tree recited from memory, nor a practicing apothecary whose interests caused him to prescribe as much as his patients could take, nor simple nurses or empirics who did not have the means to understand the reasons for their often sensible advice. He, Mandeville/Philopirio, had the kind of education, experience, and ability to carefully observe and properly respond to their patients, leading them to as healthy a condition as their weak and mortal bodies had a capacity for. But he could not cure their chronic condition, only help them manage it.

In cases of hypochondria and hysteria, then, only by working with the passions provoked by the disease could he persuade his patients toward a more wholesome life despite their frailties. He refrained from imposing his will or his speculative theories on his patients, eliciting new self-knowledge from them. In *The grumbling hive*, too, he explained that only by accepting our natural condition and working with it could the whole of the body politic be great despite the knavery of its parts. No wonder that the text of his *Fable* reminded Frederick Hayek (1967) of the talking cure of psychoanalysis.

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<sup>34</sup> That is the thrust of the whole *Treatise*, but the critique of the methods of other physicians is especially strong in the first dialogue.

In his medical and political practice, then, Mandeville understood the extent to which people see themselves as virtuous even when they are simply acting from passion. Self-deception is an old literary theme, being perhaps most famously examined in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, but early seventeenth-century French authors had used the term *amour propre* (or "self-love") to indicate the self-esteem that people acquire from the often hypocritical social expressions of regard that occur in daily life (see especially Levi 1964; Lovejoy 1961, 129-193). In recent years, Hont argued that Mandeville introduced a variation on the theme of self-love in his controversy with Shaftsbury in 1723, giving it the technical term of "self-liking". Mandeville's saw self-liking to be the kind of self-regard that seeks the commendation of others, and it gives rise to politeness and sociability without the need for Shaftesburian sentimental education. Hont explained that for Mandeville "fashion" was the "material expression of polite sociability, a means to satisfy a genuine human yearning for self-esteem by impressing others through outward appearance. Fashion was a vehicle of one's psychological well-being, not just an expression of social ambition" (Hont 2006, 399).

Mandeville can be found articulating such a position as early as 1709. In his scathing critique of Louis XIV in *The virgin unmask'd*, he has niece Antonia and aunt Lucinda venture to speak of international affairs. In the spirit of never underestimating your enemies, Lucinda explained that while she knew Louis XIV to be a "wicked Tyrant" she also knew of his great achievements both in war and in the arts and sciences (1724, 127). He may have ruined the people of France and gained a reputation as a "harden'd Monster of Ambition", a "Fiend" who looked on the miseries he had caused his people "with the same Tranquility as I can play a Game at Chess" (1724, 133, 168). But she also knew that Louis had made France a power to be reckoned with. She went on to tell a story about "a nobleman of ancient Family" who came into his inheritance and built a magnificent palace—probably referring to Versailles—and a great library. At first the nobleman governed his servants well and even kept "a dozen Gentlemen" who were among the most learned anywhere in the world, spending his evenings adding to his knowledge and wit by discoursing with them. For the first twenty years he was courteous, generous to the poor, and good to his servants. "[A]t the bottom of all this was Pride". But once the metaphorical nobleman was convinced that the world thought him to be a man of taste, he gave himself to womanizing and gambling, falling deeply into

debt, selling his plate and books. This turn toward the pursuit of pleasure was not, however, because he was “an ignorant Blockhead” or “a sorry Fellow”, but again due to his pride (1724, 161, 165, 166, 166-167, 167). Pride caused him to act in both ways, the first esteemed by others, the second not. So, too, the patient in Mandeville’s medical *Treatise* had begun well but when his pride no longer aimed at the regard of others his health took a turn from which he would never fully recover.

By the end of the first decade of the century, then, Mandeville was distinguishing between forms of pride, one emerging from self-love and the search for pleasure, the other—which motivated greatness—from the search for the esteem of others, which he would come to call “self-liking”. They had a common source but different expressions. The manifestations of pride were therefore shaped either by social constraints or their absence. That observation about contrasting kinds of pride began, too, to suggest an institutional-political method of achieving collective greatness, when contrived circumstances push pride into the productive channels of self-liking. In the *Treatise*, Philopirio spoke to his patient honestly, but also flattered him, and it was from his patient’s consequent esteem for his physician that he could persuade him to take the proper next steps. His patient said that he was “extremely obliged to you for the Patience and good Humour you have shew’d”, which promised to bring him lusty vigor (Mandeville 1730, 378-379). In other words, Mandeville’s notions of self-liking as a response to flattery were important for his proto-psychoanalytic investigation of the passions and for his critique of the sources of political greatness, arising from his close observations of human behavior long before he used the phrase in debate with Shaftesbury.

As comparisons with psychoanalysis might suggest, too, Mandeville wrote self-reflexively. He did not exempt himself from the human condition that he observed in his patients and everyone else. He understood that his own pride and self-interest gave rise to his particular attempts at self-advancement from doing well by his patients. He did not, therefore, argue that he had something to say because of the enlightened genius of his personal ideas or from his unusually high moral character, only that he had been carefully attentive to some fundamental things because of his place in the world. He therefore turned his understanding back on himself, not hoping for the light of full revelation but accepting the limitations of a human outlook. Real

knowledge, he asserted, emerged from experience—the constraints on human action imposed by nature—rather than from speculation; to generate the kinds of betterment that were in keeping with the “State’s Craft” of *The grumbling hive*, then, there must be ways to channel personal passions into the kinds of activities that encourage “ingenuity” (Mandeville 1705, 13). For him, then, improving the human condition despite our fallen nature depended on clear incentives for clever politicians to themselves benefit from helping those around them through self-liking, just as he himself prospered from properly advising those suffering from conditions he could help. For this to work politically, however, required exposing the mechanisms of the system so that its operations could be kept in view by those most affected.

Again, medicine provided an example. He claimed that his ability to help his patients rested above all on his experience, derived above all from careful observation of material nature. For the neo-Hippocratic Mandeville, experience meant all that could be learned via the senses and what could be known from those investigations. Anything else was simply “speculation”, the result of pride in the ability of our minds to invent causes and consequences. At one point in the second edition of his *Treatise* he called on Sir Francis Bacon for support against relying either on “plausible Suppositions” or on being “over-curious” in the branches of a subject as deep and difficult as medicine (Mandeville 1730, 81). Moreover, in the preface to the first edition he wrote that “to advance this Doctrine is swimming against the Stream in our sprightly talkative Age, in which the silent Experience of Pains-taking Practitioners is ridicul’d, and nothing cried up but the witty Speculations of Hypothetical Doctors” (1711, iv). But most of the time, in both editions, he explained that he was working within the tradition of two of the physicians most famous in his time for grounding their theories in experience: Thomas Sydenham<sup>35</sup> and Giorgio Baglivi.<sup>36</sup> (It should be noted that since Baglivi was the papal physician in Rome, any argument

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<sup>35</sup> By the later seventeenth century Sydenham had gained the reputation for being a close observer of phenomena and a fierce critic of hypotheses and speculations. For a recent interpretation, see Anstey (2011).

<sup>36</sup> Baglivi cited Sydenham with approval while further developing his own position along similar lines. As an example of Baglivi’s views, he says “That part of our Science, which lays too great stress upon Speculations, has no true proper Relation to the Art of Physick: For the Art is made up of such things as are fully Survey’d, and plainly Understood, and of such perceptions as are not under the controul of Opinion” (1704, 5; a translation of Baglivi’s 1696 *De praxi medica*). For more on Mandeville’s appreciation of Sydenham and Baglivi, see the table of contents for either edition, which mention them multiple times.

for experience as tied to Protestantism alone cannot stand.) Mandeville even offered an apology for the ancient empiricists, arguing that the main criticism of them derived from their professed enemy, Galen (1711, 50). He took a further step, in the second edition of the *Treatise*, of arranging a long and scathing critique of the recent fashion for medical Newtonianism, or the application of mathematics to clinical practice: mathematics was a profound science, he acknowledge, but it was best studied by those who loved it, not simply being turned to utilitarian ends, where it became nothing more than a harmful fashion (Mandeville 1730, 172-206).<sup>37</sup>

In other words, Mandeville saw himself as an advocate for empirical science. He argued time and again that physicians had to do the hard work of constantly collecting information by recording the symptoms of each of their patients in all stages of illness; and they needed to share that information in ways that would allow “short and distinct Conclusions by way of Aphorisms without Art or Flourish to serve for standing Rules in Practice”. He applauded Baglivi’s proposal to establish large medical research institutes with many specialist physicians and helpful students as the best way toward medical progress. But since in the absence of such formations it was necessary for each physician to work on his own, he thought that having physicians focus their attentions on one disease—to specialize—would be the best way to collect the necessary number of observations along with the consequent best rules of practice. Just so, he focused his own attention on hypochondriacal and hysterical conditions (Mandeville 1711, 38-40).

Perhaps from such lines of medical reasoning he developed the clear idea that political-institutional arrangements made a distinct difference for both the behavior and the ideas of those constrained by them. For example, in his *Essay on charity, and charity-schools* Mandeville (1957, 322) concluded that “Russia has too few Knowing Men, and Great Britain too many” because its universities were turning out clergymen. Properly recorded experience could be shared and accumulated, but it required intense labor in the world. In medical faculties abroad such as Leiden, the students wrote dissertations on particular subjects, probing one narrow problem rather than trying to encompass all. Such methods advanced solid learning in the collectivity. Might this be a source for Mandeville’s recognition that the division of labor was one of the chief

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<sup>37</sup> For an example of the fashion for Newtonian medicine, see Guerrini (1987).

means by which material flourishing could be advanced (Hayek 1967, 125-126)?

Yet despite Mandeville's strong advocacy for experience and observation against speculation, then, he sometimes pushed far toward general conclusions. Many commentators then and now have, for instance, objected to the *Fable* on the grounds that it preached atheism.<sup>38</sup> As is well known, similar attacks had been made against many proponents of the new philosophy of the period. The philosophy of Descartes, which proposed that everything except reason could be explained by matter in motion, came under particularly vehement attack for leading to atheistic conclusions from its first introduction in academic disputations, in the medical faculty at Utrecht in the later 1630s (see especially Verbeek 1988). Intellectuals such as the English clergyman Henry Moore and the French bishop Pierre Daniel Huet turned from favoring Cartesianism to attacking it in large part because of its materialist implications, which allowed God to disappear from the world. Many of the virtuosi, therefore, from Pierre Gassendi to Isaac Newton, determinedly drew explicit links between their philosophies and a belief in God. But in many late-seventeenth-century medical schools, including that of Mandeville's Leiden, Cartesian philosophy became a fundamental explanatory tool for linking anatomy and other material structures (including foods and medicines) to descriptions of bodily processes in health and disease and to the passions and even minds; it was unnecessary to speculate about primary causes, such as God's intentions. Mandeville's *Treatise* explicitly defended Cartesianism. In the second edition he even came close to offering a confession for materialism and stood as a mortalist. Imagination had to be constrained by the material stuff of which it was made.

When it comes to first principles, then, Mandeville was willing to go only so far as to explain the physical world. Maybe that was all there is. One finds his fundamentals expressed in the 1711 edition of the *Treatise*, where in the second of three dialogues Mandeville's mouthpiece, Philopirio, gives a Cartesian explanation for the hypochondriacal passion. He begins by explaining the contents of his own Leiden medical thesis *De chylosi vitiate* (1691), explicitly praising Descartes for his famous formula *cogito ergo sum* (Mandeville 1711,

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<sup>38</sup> Examples of criticisms of Mandeville along these lines were common; see, for example, William Law, *Remarks Upon a Late Book, Entituled, the Fable of the Bees* (London: Will. and John Innys at the Prince's Arms at the West-end of St. Paul's Church-yard, 1724).

121). This, Philopirio says, allows everyone to agree that body and soul are entangled but at the same time that they are distinct. Aside from “some few Atheists”, he says, everyone agrees “that matter itself can never think”. He admits that how the body and soul “reciprocally work upon and affect one another, ‘tis true, we cannot tell” (1711, 125). But he then goes on to offer an explanation very much in keeping with Descartes’ own *Passions of the Soul*, about how thinking is conducted mainly in the brain by the movement of the animal spirits. Descartes himself had defined the animal spirits as consisting of the finest possible material particles.<sup>39</sup> He seems to have been drawing on the philosophical libertinism of the early seventeenth century, when one of the most visible of the *esprits forts* was a person like Jules-César Vanini, who had studied medicine in his youth and argued that only the material world existed, that all animals (including humans) were generated from it, and that people are morally and physically shaped by their environments.<sup>40</sup> He was eventually executed by the *parlement de Toulouse* for atheism, blasphemy, impieties, and other crimes. Personal connections can be traced from people like Vanini through to eighteenth-century Deists, many of them involving the medical Cartesians.

Mandeville himself compared the spirits to the tools used by an artificer to accomplish a task. But that was as far as he would go: he simply assured his interlocutor that according to the “Principles of Religion” the soul was immortal, and we could know no more, since all we can know directly is derived from material things (1711, 128-129). He added a further discussion of how the stomach and the organs of generation responded readily to the swift and subtle material spirits of our thoughts, and how the spirits had to be composite bodies themselves, thus subject to alteration (1711, 132-139). (To reinforce the point, in the second edition (1730, 235ff) he added a section on how the spirits in opium or wine could much alter one’s mind.) From such a line of evidence and reasoning, he concluded, all the operations of Nature could be explained “Mechanically”, even “all good and ill tempers, passions of the mind, Courage and Fear, Wit and Foolishness, etc” (1711, 140, 142). This then allowed him to discover the material causes of the

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<sup>39</sup> The key text is Descartes’ *Les Passions de l’Ame* (1649); on his definition of animal spirits as “very fine particles of the blood”, see part one section 10. Translation from the now standard English edition, Descartes (1985-1991, I: 331).

<sup>40</sup> For example, see Davidson (2005); Staquet (2009); Thijssen-Schoute (1989).

hypochondriacal passion and its subsequent ill bodily effects (1711, 142-153).

In the edition of 1730 Mandeville went further, fully embracing epicurean materialism. This time there was no Descartes but an open argument about how the cause of thinking was simply matter in motion:

When we have confess'd, what every body must be conscious of, that we are far from knowing all the Properties that may belong to Matter, is it, I beg of you, more easy to conceive that what is incorporeal should act upon the Body, and *vice versa*, than it is that Omnipotence should be able in such a manner to modify and dispose Matter, that without any other Assistance it should produce Thought and Consciousness? Nor is it clashing with Christianity to affirm, that we consist of nothing but what is corporeal, and that Man is wholly mortal (1730, 51).

Given this view, he notes, any idea of life after death would have to be explained by the resurrection of the body. And this idea, which rids the world of anything like heaven or hell, abolished “one of the greatest Difficulties Divines have to cope with; I mean the Question of the Soul’s intermediate State between Death and the Resurrection”. His views on the issue may have been affected by recent arguments about the original scriptures and historical deviations from them. But he concluded on a more medical note: after death humans simply die and “moulder away”, just like any other animal. The common belief in an immortal soul was simply based on “Self-love, their own eager Wishes that it might be so” (1730, 53). The philosophical materialism implied in the first edition was now expressed openly.

## CONCLUSIONS

Mandeville came to England well versed in Dutch Republicanism and in the latest empirical medical learning, which on the Continent had more openly materialistic advocates than in Britain. He would use his understanding of political and natural philosophy in support of the Whig cause, standing among the militants who argued for war to defend the Protestant succession against the “Holy Alliance” of Paris and Rome. What he deftly added to the mix, however, was his view that the fallen condition of humankind, just like the chronically ill patients he treated, could be managed by skillful politicians/physicians so as to better our material condition. To accomplish that end, one had to recognize how to flatter appropriately, working with the kind of pride that seeks the

esteem of others and thereby calling people to the kind of activities that produced collective wellbeing. Politicians needed to be stroked as much as anyone else or they would simply devolve into self-indulgence. To avoid that outcome they needed to be exposed as no better than anyone else, simply occupying a social position that made a larger difference.

Greatness in the state and healthfulness in the individual could therefore be encouraged despite our fallen condition, not by preaching virtue but by using flattery to cultivate the right sort of pride. Such betterment could be produced only if the skillful adviser in politics or medicine paid careful heed to the real conditions of the material world, known from attentive empirical observation. Without material and social constraints, our otherwise too-clever minds simply invented their own worlds and rested in self-satisfaction. Talk of virtue and the soul were unnecessary distractions, mere stalking horses for the enemies of progress.

It is consequently Mandeville's position as a medical practitioner that may provide the best insights into the personal interests behind the *Fable*. In his medical politics he navigated a line between establishment pretense and unknowing pretenders. In the interests of fighting the merchants of virtue and the mere empirics at the same time, he employed methods of close observation and the accumulation of information to arrive at aphoristic truths, and deployed them for the purposes of betterment once he had drawn his patients into wanting to please their physician. His medical practice would provide him with the means of generalizing a method that could also be used by the skillful politician to bring into being a state that would flourish well into the future. Exposing the tricks of the politicians allowed everyone to see the biases in their tools, moving social judgment from personal character to useful expertise. Conflicts in London's medical marketplace therefore helped him articulate a sense of the real motivations of human conduct, to sharpen the edge of his attack on virtue ethics, and to find a way leading to material benefit via investigations of the real world.

Despite the law-like nature of his slogan about "private vices, publick benefits", then, Mandeville was not proposing a kind of impersonal mechanism for socio-economic development along the lines that Adam Smith would suggest with his "hidden hand" (see, for example, Hayek 1967; Goldsmith 1985; also see Goldsmith's important 1987). Mandeville certainly invoked material progress: "Life's Conveniencies" had recently been carried "To such a Height, the very

Poor / Lived better than the Rich before” (1705, 13). But the clockwork mechanisms that made such things possible lay in the personal rather than the political. Nature governed our corporeal bodies, but the ways in which persons were organized into wholes derived from the “State’s Craft”. In offering an analysis of the greatness of Britain, then, Mandeville invoked a view of how persons were driven by natural passions and interests while the collectivity was governed by the clever politicians, themselves subject to the laws of material nature and pride, which needed to be kept on the side of self-liking. He was not analyzing the body politic so much as a political hive composed of bodies. Bodies, passions, and even minds are physiological, all of them governed by material nature, nothing more. That moved the analysis of human society from moral philosophy to natural philosophy, the grounds on which the new political economy would be built.

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