



**ERASMUS JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY AND ECONOMICS**  
**VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2016**

The Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics (EJPE) is a peer-reviewed bi-annual academic journal supported by the Erasmus Institute for Philosophy and Economics, Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam. EJPE publishes research on methodology of economics, history of economic thought, ethics and economics, and the conceptual analysis of inter-disciplinary work relating economics to other fields. EJPE is an open-access journal. For additional information, see our website: <<http://ejpe.org>>. All submissions should be sent via e-mail to: <[editors@ejpe.org](mailto:editors@ejpe.org)>

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## Science, politics, and the economy: the unintended consequences of a diabolic paradox (editorial)

The year 2014 marked the 300th anniversary of the publication of Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the bees, or private vices, publick benefits*. To celebrate this occasion, as well as its own centennial, the Erasmus University Rotterdam organized an international conference on the work of Mandeville, its historical and intellectual context, and its present relevance, on June 6, 2014. The conference was organized around three keynote lectures,<sup>1</sup> which discussed a different field Mandeville worked on or influenced: science and medicine, moral and political philosophy, and political economy. Papers presented at the conference ranged thematically from the co-evolution of commerce, medicine and moral philosophy in the Dutch Republic, via Mandeville's attitudes to religion to the social and intellectual context of his analysis of the passions.

This special issue on Mandeville presents a selection of the twenty-two papers presented at the conference. The papers have been selected both for their quality and for their thematic diversity. They thus indicate the range of conference themes as well as the multifaceted nature of current Mandeville scholarship. All papers went through the normal process of blind review before being accepted for publication by this journal.

Mandeville was born to a family of city physicians in Rotterdam in 1670, in an age when science, politics and commerce were rapidly changing in their methods and substance. These revolutions forced men of science and letters to reflect anew on the nature of economy, state and society. Mandeville was undoubtedly one of the most radical of these thinkers, proposing controversial new ideas about human motivation, the relationship between individual behavior and the

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<sup>1</sup> These keynotes were delivered by the historian of medicine Harold Cook (Brown), known for his acclaimed *Matters of exchange: commerce, medicine, and science in the Dutch golden age* (2007), philosopher Margaret Schabas (University of British Columbia), author of *The natural origins of economics* (2005), and historian of economics Neil De Marchi (Duke), known for his innovative work on art markets in the Dutch Republic.

common good, and the role of the state in society. Politically, the Mandeville family were affiliated with the States Party, which favoured economic, political, and religious liberty, as opposed to the Orangists and the allied conservative Calvinists. In the aftermath of the so-called Costerman riots in October 1690, the family was banned from Rotterdam. Bernard Mandeville, who had been educated in medicine at Leiden, ended up in England where he started publishing pasquils and pamphlets, while practicing as a physician.

The famous *Fable of the bees* elaborated one of these pasquils, the poem *The grumbling hive, or knaves turn'd honest* (1705). Published in 1714 (shortly after Lord Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of man, manners, and morals* [1711]), the *Fable* could not have been more at odds with Shaftesbury's claim that mankind's virtues automatically align with the common good. Mandeville promised to unveil man's true nature by observing the "trifling films and little pipes" of the human frame (Mandeville 1988, vol. I, 3). He claimed, provocatively, that it was human wickedness from which social benefits were to be expected. Luxury, though a private vice, contributes to a nation's prosperity; frugality leads to public ruin. Mandeville published several other increasingly philosophical works, the most important being the second volume of the *Fable* (1729), which substantially altered its earlier message, and *An enquiry into the origin of honour, and the usefulness of Christianity in war* (1732).

After the *Fable* was condemned in 1724 by the Grand Jury of Middlesex for its "diabolic attempts against religion", Mandeville's notoriety increased sharply. His shocking paradox that mankind's vices contributed to the common good has haunted moral philosophers, social scientists and economists ever since. In a famous lecture on the Dutch philosopher, Friedrich Hayek wrote that Mandeville, in his efforts to understand modern commercial society, was "asking the right questions" (1967, 127). But as Hayek's political antagonist the Cambridge economist Joan Robinson noted, the main question "has never been properly answered" (1962, 19). The papers in this collection reveal that Mandeville's lasting importance cannot be reduced to what Hayek considered his most important insight: that the unintended consequences of self-interested human actions can be mutually beneficial.

In the two opening contributions, Harold Cook and Rudi Verburg invite us to reconsider the medical, social, and political background of

Mandeville's work. Their papers re-examine the medical and political context of Mandeville's writing. Drawing on Mandeville's personal experiences in Rotterdam and London, Cook develops a new interpretation of the links between Mandeville's most important medical tract, the *Treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick passions* of 1711, and the *Fable*. In England Mandeville became acquainted with an intriguing group of medical innovators who opposed the opening-up of contacts between the London medical establishment and the rapidly expanding London publishing press. These acquaintances and the sting brought to his family by its banishment from Rotterdam, Cook argues, help explain Mandeville's views of politicians and medical doctors as "high-flying hypocrites".

Cook uses Mandeville's biographical trajectory to re-examine Jacob Viner's thesis about the importance of the "skilful politician" in Mandeville's political economy. Not incidentally, Hayek (1967) saw in the *Fable* a "talking cure": a therapy not unlike the one Mandeville developed in his *Treatise* on hypochondria. Just as a physician cannot contravene the human passions, so a politician can and should set up incentives aligning the passions with the common good. What the various passions are and how they are structurally related thus became a matter of great scientific as well as political concern.

As Mauro Simonazzi shows in detail, such an examination acquired great urgency for Mandeville. In the second volume of the *Fable*, as well as in the *Enquiry into the origin of honour* (1732), Mandeville distinguished with increasing clarity between self-love and self-liking, a distinction discussed in many of the other contributions to this volume as well. Mandeville linked the distinction to self-preservation and over-estimation of one's own worth. Self-liking, rudimentary present in Mandeville's earlier short writings according to Cook, transforms in the later works to the driving force of what Kant so pointedly labelled man's "unsocial sociability" (Kant 1968, 37-38). Mandeville's elaboration upon the meaning of self-liking brought him closer to the distinction between the 'violent' and 'calm' passions. This distinction, Albert Hirschman (1977, 63-70) duly pointed out, was of great importance to the Scottish enlightenment's philosophy of mind. Simonazzi stresses the influence of Mandeville's *Treatise* on Scottish medical discourse, especially through the work of Robert Whytt, president of the Royal College of Physicians at Edinburgh in the mid-eighteenth century.

While Cook and Simonazzi's contributions move us forward in time and invite us to rethink the relation between Mandeville's writings on medicine and moral and political philosophy, Rudi Verburg reverses the historical direction with his detailed examination of the political background of Mandeville in the Dutch Republic. While some of the best scholarship over the past decades (including E.G. Hundert's 1994 monograph) displays awareness of the influence of the political writings of the brothers De la Court, the general tendency has been to highlight Mandeville's indebtedness to the French Augustinian tradition and in particular to the Jansenists. Verburg does not deny the latter's well-established influence, but emphasizes how the commercial republicanism of the De la Courts and other Dutch thinkers also influenced Mandeville's central thesis: that selfish passions may lead to positive outcomes for the commonwealth (Weststeijn 2012). Unlike the De la Courts, Mandeville did not seek to align the individual and the common good; he deemed this an idea only "silly people" could maintain (Mandeville 1953, 45n1). Instead, Mandeville explored how individuals could be nudged to act for the common good by the "cunning Management" of "dextrous politicians". He thus anticipated recent interventions of behavioural economists in the policy domain.<sup>2</sup> The common link between the De la Courts and Mandeville is, in Verburg's view, the idea that human beings, unsociable by nature, have to be made fit for society: they should be turned into "Disciplin'd Creature[s]" (Mandeville 1988, vol. I, 347).

The two articles written by Francesca Pongiglione and Mikko Tolonen, and by Renee Prendergast, suggest what this process of disciplining might look like. Their conclusions are mixed and somewhat contradictory. Pongiglione and Tolonen's careful examination of Mandeville's essay on charity schools reveals that Mandeville overstretched his arguments when unmasking the selfish motives behind charity. They read Mandeville as arguing, rather unconvincingly, that a general education would be wasted on the poor. All education does is instill false hopes for a betterment of their condition unlikely to eventuate. According to Pongiglione and Tolonen, Mandeville's reasoning leads him to make an almost categorical distinction between rich and poor, turning the latter almost into creatures of another race.

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<sup>2</sup> Though for different reasons. See the recent literature sparked by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's (2008).

This position is, however, at odds with his commitment to the universal nature of man developed elsewhere in his writings.

Prendergast proffers a more benign reading of the same essay on charity schools. She reads the essay in light of the scholarly literature on Mandeville's stance of what came to be referred to as *laissez-faire* (with Jacob Viner and Friedrich Hayek taking opposing sides). Prendergast argues that Mandeville seems to have followed the "new liberal spirit" of the seventeenth century: any market transactions in which both parties benefited from the exchange were regarded as just. In this context, Mandeville's argument against the education at charity schools should be seen not as an argument against education of the poor per se, but against education that would fail to benefit the poor in the marketplace. Seen from this perspective, Mandeville did not conceive of the poor as categorically different by nature, but only by training; division of labour assigned the poor and the rich to different ranks. Mandeville considered the back-breaking toil of the poor inevitable and relief from need a blessing.

Pongiglione and Tolonen note that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a coherent position on poverty in Mandeville's works. The lack of coherency may be explained more generally as follows. As already noted by Hayek, the generally hostile reception of the *Fable* induced Mandeville to search for increasingly philosophical arguments—arguments that don't always chime with his earlier, brusque pronouncements. Moreover, Mandeville employed different genres of writing that don't always easily fit together. When the Grand jury of Middlesex committed the second edition of the *Fable* to the flames, this was primarily because of his acerbic criticism of charity and charity schools added to the second edition, rather than because of the *Fable* itself—prior to this it had received a modest, but not hostile, welcome in the periodical press.

The sixth and final article by Matteo Revolti examines how the same periodical press—which had helped him to publish initially—took the opportunity to use Mandeville's ambiguous mixture of genres against him after the Grand jury's indictment. Mandeville was portrayed as an unrepentant supporter of the Whigs, as an atheist, and as a corruptor of morals. In the press, Mandeville's work came to serve as a stand-in for party political conflicts and purposes that were only marginal to his own agenda, if at all. A more engaged and honest reception of his work was found primarily in France and Scotland, well beyond the political



turmoil of the London based Tories and Whigs. However, by concentrating on the *Fable, part I*, this later reception obscured the intricate relations between Mandeville's medical and socio-political works, and overlooked his fine-grained analysis of the human passions, particularly the distinction between self-love and self-liking, developed in his subsequent more philosophical works. These latter works developed ideas in ways not dissimilar to those of Scottish literati like David Hume and Adam Smith, and less dissimilar, perhaps, than they themselves realized.

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## 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 chylickation, 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

<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

<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,

<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, Entitled, 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

<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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# The Dutch background of Bernard Mandeville's thought: escaping the Procrustean bed of neo-Augustinianism

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**Abstract:** This paper argues that the neo-Augustinian outlook of the French moral tradition has been used for too long as a Procrustean bed, thereby depreciating the Dutch background of Mandeville's thought. In particular, Johan and Pieter de la Court were an important source of inspiration for Mandeville. In trying to come to terms with commercial society, the brothers developed a positive theory of interest and the passions, emphasizing the social utility of self-interest and honour in securing the health and wealth of the commonwealth. By combining elements from neo-Augustinian and Dutch commercial republican discourses, Mandeville devised a new logic for interpreting the nature and growth of commercial society, which was to inspire intense debate.

**Keywords:** Mandeville, commercial society, Johan and Pieter de la Court, Dutch commercial republicanism, French moral tradition

## I. INTRODUCTION

The grimness of the debates following the publication of the *Fable of the bees* in 1723 is a testament to Bernard Mandeville's provocative originality. However, as Horne described it, Mandeville was "not simply an eccentric who surfaced unaccountably" (1978, 19). Among the intellectual sources from which Mandeville drew inspiration (cf., Horne 1978; Kaye 1988; Goldsmith 1985; Hundert 1994; 2003; and Cook 1999), most emphasis has been placed upon the French moral tradition and in particular to Jansenist philosophy. And sure enough, many of the themes which we find in Mandeville can be traced directly to the French intellectual tradition. Nevertheless, the neo-Augustinian outlook of the French moral tradition should not be turned into a Procrustean bed

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**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** previous versions of this paper were discussed at the Mandeville Conference in Rotterdam 2014 and the ESHET Conference 2015 in Rome. Thanks for helpful comments and suggestions go to the audiences of both events, in particular to Richard van den Berg, as well as to Marianne Klerk and two anonymous referees of this journal.

thereby depreciating the Dutch foundations of Mandeville's thought. This paper advances the argument that what is discarded from the Procrustean bed of neo-Augustinianism tells us something about the origins and originality of Mandeville's thought and that his Dutch background is a neglected part of that story.

In the seventeenth century trade and commerce increasingly came to be recognized as the fountain-head from which the well-being of the commonwealth sprang, generating the means necessary to pay for government, infrastructure, and security. Yet, trade and commerce thrive on individuals' ambitions and desires for gain. In this way, the human passions—which were previously perceived as unruly—became a necessary ingredients of public well-being. The Dutch republicanism of Johan and Pieter De la Court can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with commercial society—i.e., with its opportunities, threats, and conditions. In reappraising the role of man's passions, they emphasized the positive contribution of interest and honour in securing the health and wealth of the commonwealth. It is this positive theory of interest and the passions that formed both the foundation of Mandeville's thought as well as the French moral tradition.

The paper has the following structure: section 2 and section 3 review the French moral tradition and the views of the brothers De la Court, respectively, while section 4 compares and contrasts the logic of both discourses. Section 5 then shows how Mandeville devised a new logic based on ideas taken from both discourses; it is argued that the commercial republicanism of Johan and Pieter de la Court provided Mandeville with a springboard for navigating passage into commercial modernity. Section 6 concludes the paper.

## **II. THE FRENCH MORAL TRADITION**

Following the second commercial revolution in the latter half of the fifteenth century, European society changed gradually but irrevocably. Profound changes in theology, natural science, statecraft, and economic activity increasingly challenged the established world view. As the cohesive force of religious truths broke down, a quest began for a new vision of a peaceful and decent society. By consequence, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the scene of a bewildering array of ideas, views, and propositions. This quest involved a rethinking of traditional ways of self-understanding, including the moral agency of man. Traditional concepts and ideas were fitted to accommodate new

circumstances and new economic, political, social and religious conditions. Novel languages were developed to discuss the terms and conditions of change, to articulate newly found aspirations, and to legitimize change and ideals. There is no doubt that these languages overlapped (as well as conflicted) given their common interest in theorizing about human nature and the good life in a moral community, acquiring their own perspective from discrete assumptions and challenges.

A key issue that preoccupied many during the seventeenth century concerned man's passions and in particular their problematic relationship with reason (James 1998; 2012). Since antiquity moral philosophers have regarded human passions as destructive and, consequently, in need of being tamed; they were understood to be irrational and therefore opposed to reason. Moral philosophers preached that wisdom and reason—the pathways to virtue, harmony, and tranquillity—were the means to regulate unruly passions. Only few people were expected to be capable of such self-management through restraint and the exercise of reason. Once philosophers started to accept the impotence of reason, however, they had to find alternative means to control the passions.

In relation to this, another hotly debated issue concerned the relationship between rulers and the ruled, and the influence of this relationship on the form of government. If the majority of people need the guiding hand of a ruler or ruling elite to control their passions, what assurance is there that government control does not turn into oppression? Views on such guidance ranged between political structures of repression and manipulation (i.e., to refashion the coarse clay of human nature into harmlessness) to providential arrangements (i.e., through which incongruent and disruptive elements were built into a coherent whole to the good of society).

The French moral tradition, which was actively engaged in these debates, had roots in Augustinianism; these roots influenced Mandeville's thought through the work of Jansenist philosophers like Pascal, Nicole, and Domat. Jansenism represented the religious views of Cornelis Jansen (1585–1638), who proclaimed a strict interpretation of St. Augustine's doctrine of grace in his posthumously published *Augustinus* (1640). Jansenist teachings clashed with the humanist views of the Jesuits, resulting in controversies with Jansenist protagonists (Sedgwick 1977).

Jansenists defended the Augustinian theory that God's grace is necessary for the salvation of man; this conflicts with the Jesuit position, which stressed the possibility of salvation by man's own efforts. The latter point of view also features in Aquinas's work who, by allowing man to contribute to his salvation by his own efforts, tied "the natural to the divine by an unbroken rising scale of perfections" (Horne 1978, 21). By contrast, Jansenism stressed the impotence of reason and the all-powerful force of human passions in the fallen state, from which there is no redemption except through God's grace. There is no stairway to heaven for fallen man to bridge the gulf between himself and God. In his fallen state man is driven only by self-love, which corrupts his reason and infects his passions. As humans favour amour-propre while feigning love for God, Pascal states, "[w]e are only falsehood, duplicity, contradiction" (1958, 102). Given such depravity, Jansenist authors sought to expose the way humans masquerade and pretend, pointing out how seemingly virtuous acts are motivated by self-love.

Jansenists levelled their criticism at Stoic philosophy for their belief that virtue was within man's reach. Stoic ethics is founded upon self-love and seeks to subdue affections by acquiring independence from external factors. Although it is in essence an egoistic philosophy, Stoic philosophers argued that self-love was supposed to extend beyond itself and embrace family, friends, fellow-citizens, and the whole of humanity. Acknowledging that such extension grows weaker with social distance, it is the individual's task to love others as oneself.

Given the supposition of man's fallen nature, Jansenists contended that virtue is presumptuous and a sign of the same pride that brought Fall upon Adam (Brooke 2012, xiv). The Stoic belief that humans are capable of practising virtue only proves that humans are incapable of understanding their own self-centred nature. Pierre Nicole (1625-1695), who collaborated with Pascal, described man's self-love as follows:

corrupt man not only loves himself but loves himself beyond measure, loves only himself, and relates everything to himself. He wants every kind of property, honor, and pleasure, and wants them only for himself. Placing himself at the center of everything, he would like to rule over everything and wishes that all creatures were occupied with nothing but pleasing him, praising him, and admiring him (Nicole 1696, III: ch. 1 'Of charity and self-love').

The real motive to act virtuously is the human desire for esteem and glory; by consequence virtue is an act of pretence, a masquerade performed for the sake of hiding underlying motives of self-love.

If virtue is understood as such, and humans are driven solely by motives of self-love, then how to arrive at social order? Elaborating upon Pascal, Pierre Nicole combined Augustinian theory with Hobbesian political analysis. As Keohane described it, "[t]his devout disciple of the bishop of Hippo explored the alleys and byways of the City of the Earth with the author of the *Leviathan* for a guide" (1980, 294). Nicole describes admiringly the way nature providentially makes self-love imitate charity such that the outward effects of selfishness cannot be distinguished from those of charity. Virtuous outcomes result from actions rooted in vicious motives. Although Nicole does not elaborate upon the societal mechanisms that bring such effects about, it is apparent that this is 'private vices, public benefits' in the making.

In this way Jansenism shared fundamental beliefs with scepticism, a philosophy which dates back to classical antiquity, but which had revived with the writings of Montaigne (Burke 1981). Scepticism held that truth is, in the words of Montaigne, "not capable of attainment," and that it is "overbold vanity" to claim to have found it (1957, bk. 2, ch. 12). This means that again and again judgement needs to be suspended. Suspension of judgment also applies to virtue: what appears to be good is not necessarily good. Montaigne portrays humans as engaged in the art of self-deception, which seems to come natural to us given that we often claim to act on more lofty motives than agrees with true self-knowledge. We are keen to present to the world a much more virtuous, other-regarding, and publicly-spirited image of ourselves than truth permits. Montaigne observed that virtue and vice are often difficult to distinguish since behaviour that originates in unsound passions and desires may very well lead to socially desirable results, "as are poisons for the preservation of our health" (Montaigne 1957, bk. 3, ch. 1).

This idea resonates throughout Jansenist thought. In one of his *Pensées* Pascal thus notes that, "[w]e do not sustain ourselves in virtue by our own strength, but by the balancing of two opposed vices, just as we remain upright amidst two contrary gales. Remove one of the vices, and we fall into the other" (Pascal 1958, 99, no. 359). Traditionally, the most widely recommended way to control the passions was by appeal to wisdom and reason, and through self-discipline and education (or divine grace). Given the strenuous demands placed upon rationality, the

seventeenth century witnessed increasing consideration for the possibility of manipulating human passions. To this end, politics were regarded as an art, a means to create a framework of rules to constrain the passions for the benefit of the common good. Pascal and Nicole thus emphasized the need for government regulation to control the human passions, using fear and force, as well as glamour and greatness.

Many of the Jansenist themes concerning social and moral issues make their appearance in Mandeville's work—e.g., the predominant role of the passions in analysing the human condition; the austere definition of virtue; the idea that social benefits may arise from (natural and moral) evils; the hypocrisy of man, and his attempts to masquerade his true, selfish desires. The influence of this tradition on Mandeville's thought is undeniable.<sup>1</sup>

However, this paper contends that we should be careful not to overstate the influence of Jansenist-Augustinian tradition on Mandeville, or to dismiss aspects of Mandeville's philosophy that do not fit the Augustinian frame. In Augustinian thought (and certainly in its austere Jansenist version) there is an unbridgeable gap between the moral standard by which humans are expected to live, and the assumption that the wretchedness of human nature will preclude any such achievement of that standard. The logic of the Augustinian analysis was built upon the fundamental idea that there is a strict separation between the love of God, the heavenly city, and the order of charity *and* self-love, the city of the earth, and the world of concupiscence. Mandeville, by contrast, did not accept the uncompromising existence of two separate worlds but allowed virtue to develop from the wretchedness and presumptuous nature of man. As Colman observed in discussing whether Mandeville's views on morality allowed for the reality of virtue, "[i]t would be a mistake [...] to suppose Mandeville a serious Augustinian in morals" (1972, 129).

In many ways Augustinian theory voiced concerns about change and its effects upon man and society, uncomfortable with the way moral

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<sup>1</sup> This influence was immediately identified by contemporaries like Blewitt and Law (Horne 1978, 19). Kaye emphasized Mandeville's indebtedness to the French moral tradition, bluntly stating that, "[t]he great source of Mandeville's psychology was France" (Kaye 1924, xciv). Such claims usually include a reference to Pierre Bayle, an Augustinian-Calvinist who fled France because of its religious intolerance and dogmatism, who lectured at the 'Illustre School' in Rotterdam in the 1680s and early 1690s (Cook 2007, 398-399). In *Free thoughts on religion, the church and national happiness*, Mandeville stated that he had "made great use of Monsieur Baile" (1720, xx; see also James 1975). More recently, Mandeville was put firmly in the camp of the neo-Augustinians by Pierre Force (2003).

views were adapted to changing conditions. Jansenists were wary of society and its ideals, and thus were critical of notions of politeness, glory, and honour among the political aristocratic elite, denouncing its underlying self-regarding and self-congratulatory nature. Mandeville, by contrast, accepted that society had irrevocably changed, thereby putting strain upon traditional views and beliefs. Commercial society did not fit the traditional Augustinian scheme of interpretation and so the exploration of new ideas would induce conflict. Uncomfortably, the commonwealth became rich and powerful from the bustling commerce of greedy and ambitious individuals, defying any direct link between private morality and the public good. With the rise of a commercial and professional class, commercial society also dismantled the traditional distinction between the ruling elite and mass of labouring poor. All of these developments required new answers to old questions. Debate focused on the measure of self-love compatible with peace, order and commodious living rather than the choice between two worlds. Given that reason was increasingly deemed inadequate for controlling drives and desires, a reformulation of the function and role of the passions took place. Far from being vice-ridden and disruptive, passions were increasingly seen as instruments of virtue. With this reassessment of the passions, debates gradually shifted and focused on the question of how to encourage the 'good' passions and discourage and divert the 'wrong' passions.

Given the extenuating implications of such accounts, claims were carefully scrutinized and the same passion could be assigned a taming role as well as a disruptive one. This fate befell the passions of ambition, vanity, honour, and glory, all lumped together as the love of praise or pride, expressing one of man's most defining features: the need for approbation. Differently assessed, the same need for approbation inspired diametrically opposing views (Lovejoy 1961). One view took the need for the approbation of others as intrinsic motivation to comply with norms and rules. As such, pride or the love of praise was a useful substitute for virtue and, even though the motive may be questionable, the effects of such self-serving motives were indistinguishable from that of virtuous motives. Efforts to satisfy one's need for approbation, moreover, brought about public benefits, which in turn strengthened rule-following and mutual trust. Others, however, viewed the need for approbation unfavourably as it tended to transform itself ever so smoothly into self-aggrandizement, and further, into a

desire for distinction and superiority. This paved the way for such passions as jealousy, envy, and hypocrisy to arise and facilitated emulation, discord, and moral corruption in society as people tried to exploit one another's desire for praise and esteem.

In sum, if the French moral tradition is seen to represent a grim social and moral philosophical standard, the brothers De la Court (as the next section aims to show) represent the converse position, arguing for a positive theory of man's drive for honour and pride.

### **III. THE BROTHERS DE LA COURT, PASSIONS, AND POLITICAL THEORY**

The issue of the regulation of human passions was often investigated, and hence associated, with the issue of the relationship between rulers and ruled, forms of government and public spirit. With regard to these issues, the seventeenth century hosted several discourses, each with its own assumptions and specialized vocabulary.

Classical republicanism, for example, is committed to the ideals of virtue and liberty, and seeks to identify the conditions under which the politics of the organization of society is conducive to each individual's quest for virtue and happiness (Pocock 1975; 1985). It heralds active participation in public life as well as the government of the (city) state, and focuses on man's political personality. Humans are political animals and therefore must be active in the public domain in order to reach their potential. Virtue consists in the practice of reason and self-government; this is the key to regulating one's impulses and subordinating their own interests to the greater public good. Citizens in a free political community ought to be not only publicly-spirited, but also need to be capable of participating in the public domain without being tied down by efforts to secure subsistence. If private interests infringe on public duties, the political community may become corrupted, undermining community welfare. As such, classical republicanism was hostile towards the commercial society: the seeking of wealth and luxury undermined the civic virtues that were seen as necessary for the realization of a free and virtuous political community. The poet John Milton, who celebrated the agrarian, anti-commercialistic spirit of Sparta over the commercialistic Athens, argued that the commercial man set "the Common-wealth behind, his private ends before, to do as his profit or ambition led him" (quoted in Pincus 1998, 714). Thus, commercial society and its political economy was condemned for enabling men to



become engrossed by the pursuit of private gain to the neglect of the public good.

Jonathan Israel (2004) has argued that Dutch republicanism should be carefully distinguished from Anglo-American republicanism, and that it is to be understood as the prime root of modernity, due to its commercialism as well as its anti-hierarchical and anti-monarchical views. Furthermore, it has been argued that commercial republicanism regarded trade as the true basis and safety of any commonwealth (Weststeijn 2012). Trade, and the flows of income it generated, was the means to the ends of civil liberty, power, and wealth. Trade was the true interest of a country and, on the basis of this belief, praises for merchants and tradesmen increased as their importance for commonwealth was recognized (Pincus 1998). Authors enlarged upon the social benefits of trade, some anticipating Montesquieu and Hume in arguing that "care to increase manufacturie ought to be had, for that enricheth and civilizeth the people" (Streater, quoted in Pincus 1998, 722).

Whereas classical republicanism considered interest to be incompatible with the virtues of civility and public spirit, commercial republicanism adopted the spirit (and language) of interest. Commercial society required its own politics. Nedham recorded the rationale for the language of interest. Virtue, he felt, probably was an unreasonable ideal; but if man could not be made virtuous, he could be (made) useful. "The greater part of the world," he wrote, "[was] led more by appetites of convenience and commodity, than the dictates of conscience," so why not tell "men what will be profitable and convenient for them to do, than what they ought to do" (quoted in Pincus 1998, 729). Such ideas, Pincus adds, were accompanied by the notion that "virtue is a contingent concept, contingent on social, economic, and geopolitical considerations" rather than "a timeless concept with a precise set of classical or Christian meanings" (1998, 729n128). The brothers De la Court had a prominent place in the development of (Dutch) commercial republicanism and their writings are widely recognized as key texts in republican discourse (Wildenberg 1986).

Pieter (1618-1685) and Johan de la Court (1622-1660) were born in Leiden. In the first part of the seventeenth century Leiden was a prominent industrial town, which had built its prosperity upon the textile industry. Following in their father's footsteps, the brothers became cloth manufacturers and merchants, and "part of the intellectual and

entrepreneurial avant-garde of the period” (Blom and Wildenberg 1986, 195). Though they were successful merchants, they lacked the background and clout to join the political elite; nevertheless, they called for freedom from the regulations and control by the Leiden authorities, corporations, and guilds, posing a challenge to preferential arrangements and privileges. Shortly after Johan's death in 1660, Pieter published anonymously a manuscript largely written by his brother. In the following years Pieter revised and extended their views,<sup>2</sup> gaining a reputation as a missionary of commercial republicanism. After the murder of the brothers De Witt in 1672, Pieter fled to Antwerp, only to return to Leiden a year later, where he died in 1685.

The brothers De la Court developed their commercial republicanism by drawing ideas from various sources, ranging from authors in the republican tradition as well as new ideas and visions that developed with changing circumstances in the seventeenth century: from Guicciardini, they learned to apply the concept of interest to politics; from Machiavelli, they understood politics to be about the effective use of power to manipulate fortune and to serve the commonwealth rather than the art of governance to promote virtue and justice; and, with Hobbes, they agreed that humans are natural egoists, and that a political society is necessary for cooperation and growth.

Intent on explaining the best form of government to maintain the commonwealth in a healthy condition, the De la Courts embraced a Cartesian psychology as expounded in his *Les passions de l'âme* (1649; cf., Kossmann 1960; Cook 2002; 2007). Descartes regarded the passions as the intermediaries between body and soul, motivating humans into action and directing them towards that which nature deems useful to us. Nevertheless, Descartes acknowledged that the passions may easily lead

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<sup>2</sup> He published various editions of *Consideration van staat, ofte polityke weeg-schaal* (Considerations of state, or political balance) in 1660-1662, *Politike discoursen* (Political discourses) in 1662-1663, *Interest van Holland, ofte gronden van Hollands-welvaren* (Interest of Holland, or foundations of the well-being of Holland) in 1662 (with two chapters written by Johan de Witt), of which a revised edition was published in 1669 as *Aanwysing der heilsame politike gronden en maximen van de republike van Holland en West-Vriesland* (Demonstration of the beneficent political foundations and maxims of the republic of Holland and West Frisia), and *Sinryke fabulen* (Significant fables) in 1685. Given their close collaboration, it is often impossible to say which part was written by which brother. In this paper I consequently follow common practice to refer to 'the De la Courts', while referring to 'de la Court' *only* when dealing with revisions made (*politike weeg-schaal*) and new material written by Pieter (*Interest van Holland, aanwysing*, and *Sinryke fabulen*) after Johan's death in 1660.

one astray.<sup>3</sup> Consequently he emphasized the need to control the passions through experience, reason and by pitting passions against passions.

Building upon the Cartesian theory of the passions, the De la Courts agreed that it is only by nurturing the passions through a process of learning and socialization (education, experience, and reasoning) that man learns the true use of his passions; this is how the passionate man becomes rational. Nevertheless, they were less optimistic about the success of the individual's own efforts. Biased by self-love, man cannot be relied upon to control his passions (Johan and Pieter de la Court 1662a, II.1:13-15) from which the brothers deduced the need for the state to create a framework of reason to reign over the passions (1662a, II.3). The quality of government is thus measured by the extent to which it is capable of controlling the passions (1662a, II.5:33). Some forms of government are better than others at creating an institutional structure that promotes the 'right' passions and discourages destructive passions. As such "passions and institutions are interdependent", whereby the De la Courts emphasized "the social setting of the passions" (Blom 1995, 177).

The De la Courts elaborated further on the idea of the neutralizing effect of pitting passions against passions by taking it from the level of the individual to the level of political society. The best state is that state in which the passions of its members constantly clash, thereby rendering them harmless. As the Scottish philosopher Adam Ferguson stated in his *Essay on the history of civil society*: "The public interest is often secure, not because individuals are disposed to regard it as the end of their conduct, but because each, in his place, is determined to preserve his Own" (1980, prt. III, sect. II:128). Divergent interests mutually check each other and force upon one another arrangements which safeguard the public interest: discord is the linchpin of the health of the commonwealth:

in an assembly of equally powerful Members, there is always a large variety of passions, which keep each other in check without insight of own benefit. Thus, when it comes to political matters, reason finds

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<sup>3</sup> In medicine, health was considered to depend upon the proper balance of mind and body. Disease was the result of an imbalance, arising from errors of judgments that led the individual to act in ways that are not beneficial. It is one thing to know what is right and in accord with reason; it is quite another to act in accordance with reason. This is only possible by controlling the passions. A good life and health, which lead to both physical and moral goodness, were thought to require that one's physical and mental life (mind, passions, and body) was regulated adequately. Such ideas proved attractive as metaphors and were useful to discuss the state of the commonwealth in terms of the health of a political body made up of various interacting parts (Cook 2002; 2007).

always more place in legitimate assemblies than in one man, whose judgment is frequently stunned by the passions (Johan and Pieter de la Court 1662a, II.I.3:320-321; transl. in Weststeijn 2012, 264-265).

The De la Courts explored whether monarchical or republican rule is best suited to guide passions into useful channels in the long run. This exploration resulted in a rejection of monarchical rule. In a monarchy people are at the mercy of the passions of the ruler. If these passions go unchecked by mutual rivalry, a monarchy fails to create a rational balance; it disrupts the incentives and interests of its subjects, whereby the commonwealth underperforms in terms of its level of wealth and civilization. Given the tendency of persons to use power to their own advantage, a true political system secures itself against the abuse of power. This is only possible, De la Court insists, if the interests of rulers and subjects align:

The interest of every country consists in the well-being of its rulers and subjects together, and it is dependent on a good form of government, and therefore that is the foundation on which the well-being of the commonwealth is built; so one has to understand, that a good form of government is not where the well- or ill-being of the subjects depends on the virtue or vice of the rulers, but (and this should be noted) where the well- and ill-being of the rulers, by necessity follows from, or depends on the well- or ill-being of the subjects (De la Court 1671, 2; transl. in Blom 1995, 178).

Self-interest, properly understood, is defined in terms of an intimate and positive relationship between the well-being of the subjects and rulers alike, between private advantage and common welfare, and implies harmony of interests (Weststeijn 2010, 84). As such self-interest is a basic constituent element of the health of the commonwealth, which should not be upset by the whims of rulers indulging their private passions and securing their benefits at the expense of the subjects.

From this brief description of the De la Courts' political theory one might easily get the impression that *if* Mandeville was influenced by the ideas of the De la Court brothers, it was because he developed his views in contradiction to theirs. For example, instead of emphasizing the public benefits that arise from proper control of the passions, he argued that society benefits from arousing the passions. Furthermore, Mandeville did not insist on the mutual well-being of the individual and collective: "They are silly People who image, that the Good of the Whole is consistent with the Good of every Individual" (Mandeville 1953, 45n1). Moreover,

Mandeville did not share the brothers' belief that only a republican form of government can control the passions properly. The De la Courts took great pains to sketch in stark moral colours the differences between republic and monarchy. They claimed that the latter encouraged, rather than restrained, man's passions to the effect that under monarchical rule "a country will be filled with *Fops, Dancers, Players, Coursers, Fornicators, Hunters, Gluttons, and Boozers &c*" (Johan and Pieter de la Court 1662a, I.I.14:82-83; transl. in Weststeijn 2012, 182). The writings of the brothers De la Court were designed to impress this message upon its readers. If it was not the De la Courts' political theory that influenced Mandeville's thought, what was it that provided Mandeville with the springboard to arrive at his own theory? To answer this question, we first need to inquire into the De la Courts' social and moral theory.

#### IV. THE POSITIVE THEORY OF INTEREST AND PASSION

Mandeville was fascinated by the discrepancies between what people believed in and how they acted, between intentions and outcomes, between motivation and justification and in particular by the way these social mechanisms were founded upon such discrepancies. As such, he was not so much interested in contrasting the "city of God" with the "worldly city" (and thus lamenting the loss of the order of charity), but in questioning how a world of order, peace, and commodious living could emerge from the selfish impulses of men. One does not have to agree with their political ideas to recognize the work of the brothers De la Court as a rich source of ideas; it was this work that provided Mandeville with a positive theory of interest and the passions, thereby complementing the negative theory of the neo-Augustinians.

The use of the concept of interest is usually traced to the work of Guicciardini (1483-1540). This Florentine aristocrat and member of the commercial elite started to apply the language of commerce to political analysis (Gilbert 1965; Viroli 1992). Identifying interest as the driving force in human affairs, he argued that interest was a justifiable principle of human conduct, if restrained and moderated by honour, encouraging actions that promote the public good (McKenzie 1981). Guicciardini emphasized that interest should not be narrowly interpreted as the pursuit of material gain (false interest), but insisted on the need to keep self-interest within the bounds set by the aristocratic code of honour (man's true interest). If interest is the motivating force behind human behaviour, then channelling interest in a socially and politically

constructive direction requires that people be persuaded that honour and its restraining influence upon behaviour serve their purposes. Thus Guicciardini developed the argument that honour is profitable:

In this world of ours, the men who do well are those who always have their own interests in mind and measure all their actions accordingly. But it is a great error not to know where true interest lies; that is, to think it always resides in some pecuniary advantage rather than in honor, in knowing how to keep a reputation, and in a good name (Guicciardini, quoted in McKenzie 1981, 282).

Much like basic conflicts articulated in other discourses (as between passions and reason/virtue, or self-love and love of God), the 'language of interest' also exhibited such a conflict: the disparity between private (self) interest and common interest. Thus, self-love was seen to drive man towards a narrow understanding of (self) interest that puts the individual in opposition to the community. Self-love here portrays the human as an individual with passions and desires that set him apart from others instead of being a cohesive part of a larger whole. Love of self causes individuals to turn inward, causes them to be aware only of their own particular needs and desires (vis-à-vis the needs and desires of others). If self-love dominates behaviour, it tends to focus on gaining profit, or advantage of some form, for that particular self. This tension establishes the need for a distinction between true and false self-love (or self-interest).

By acknowledging self-love as "the true origin of all human actions" (Johan and Pieter de la Court 1662a, II.1:13; transl. in Weststeijn 2012, 169), the brothers De la Court carefully distinguished between excessive and vicious self-love, and between its moderate and true forms. Rather than relying on God's grace to overcome self-love, the brothers argued in Stoic fashion that, "well-founded Self-love is the root of all laudable outward deeds" (*Het welvaren van Leiden*, quoted in Weststeijn 2012, 169). For this reason, the love of the self was to extend itself to embrace family, neighbours, fellow-citizens, and all of humanity. The brothers drew together the two assessments of man's desire for praise and approbation by distinguishing between the desire for honour (true self-love) and the desire to rule (false self-love). The desire for honour, praise, and esteem acts as a powerful incentive to virtuous acts, and therefore induces people to restrain their self-love and to take care not to harm others in the pursuit of private desires. However, this all too human passion may be corrupted and develop into the "desire to rise above those

who are truly *equal* to them” (De la Court 1685, 86-87; transl. in Weststeijn 2012, 171). This excessive form of self-love and ambition turns the ‘desire for honour’ into the ‘desire to rule’. The De la Court brothers emphasized that the “crucial means to overcome the corruptive potential of the passions of self-love lies in the disciplinary framework that is established with the creation of civil society” (Johan and Pieter de la Court 1662a, I.I.3; transl. in Weststeijn 2012, 177). Given man’s self-love, ambition, and greed, the De la Courts describe how, in the growth of society, a political framework is created by common agreement to end conditions of fear and war. This framework allows for civic instruction and the establishment of the rule of law to turn self-love into self-interest (defined as interdependent well-being). The brothers derived much of their perspective on the nature of man and political society from their teacher at the University of Leiden, Marcus Boxhorn.<sup>4</sup>

In his study on Boxhorn, Nieuwstraten has argued that Boxhorn “laid the groundwork for future Dutch political thinkers such as the brothers De la Court and Spinoza” (Nieuwstraten 2012, 243). Boxhorn did away with the customary, Aristotelian claim that man was a political animal, inclined to society from his natural sociability. Instead he explained political society from man’s unsociability and developed a positive notion of the commonwealth, founded upon the self-interest of its members.

Developing independently a similar account of the rise of political society as did Hobbes, Boxhorn reasoned, starting from a few, basic principles, that human nature tends toward a state of war. By nature all humans are equal, free, and driven by egoistic impulses, ridden with ambition and greed: “Where everyone is permitted everything, everyone will want to take possession of everything and will continuously strive for more” (Boxhorn, quoted in Nieuwstraten 2012, 254). Boxhorn described how the golden age comes to an end with the growth of families beyond the means of subsistence, which requires them to split and divide possessions. The introduction of private property required laws for protection. This rule of reason, however, was broken down by dissent and

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<sup>4</sup> Marcus Zuerius Boxhorn (1612-1653) was born in Bergen op Zoom as the son of a minister of the Reformed Church. He enrolled at the University of Leiden in 1626, taking the arts programme first, proceeding to study theology, which he quit within the year. At the age of twenty he became lecturer of eloquence. In 1640 he was appointed professor of eloquence, increasingly extending his field into history. Among his students were the brothers De la Court and Johan de Witt. Boxhorn’s main political works were (both published posthumously) *Institutiones politicae* (1650), partly written around 1641 before Hobbes’s *De cive* (1642) and *Leviathan* (1651), and *Disquisitiones politicae* (1669). This part of the paper relies on Nieuwstraten’s study on Boxhorn (2012).

violations, resulting in factions and war. By nature, humans are least fit to live in society, but are forced to pull together in a commonwealth out of fear and the advantage of numbers: political society is rooted in man's unsociability.

Boxhorn defines a commonwealth as "a body of many that is permeated by the same laws for the sake of the advantage of all together and each individually to recognize the majesty of the power to command over that same body" (Boxhorn, transl. in Nieuwstraten 2012, 258). Boxhorn thus insisted on the intimate relationship of private and common interest to the maintenance of the commonwealth. Arguing the prime importance of the rule of law, Boxhorn warned against "ambitious princes who, poisoned by the adulation of flatterers, seek to enlarge their power and to rule as they please" (Nieuwstraten 2012, 269). Taking the well-being of the commonwealth as the measure of right and wrong, he recommended that political participation would induce obedience (more so than rule of religion and law): stability increases when people commit themselves by being personally involved in government. That is why a commonwealth needs to ensure the advantage of all together, as opposed to the welfare of one at the expense of the many. With such views Boxhorn proposed a positive theory of interest, presenting "self-interest as the pillar of peace" (Nieuwstraten 2012, 282).

Following Boxhorn, the brothers De la Court developed their own theory of interest and the passions, differentiating between true self-love (interest) and false self-love (interest) in connection with various types of government. In this context another key-idea of Boxhorn proved useful: the notion that ideas, institutions, and forms of government, as well as their underlying principles, should be understood as consequences of ever-changing conditions of time and place (Nieuwstraten 2012, 324).

This key idea was also basic to Lambert van Velthuysen's views on man's sociability, another important source for the political theory of the De la Courts. Although he provoked controversy for defending Hobbesian and Cartesian principles (Blom 1995, 106), Velthuysen went beyond both philosophers, thus anticipating Mandeville, by offering a naturalistic and empirical account of sociability.<sup>5</sup> Starting with the assumption that man is

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<sup>5</sup> Lambert van Velthuysen (1622-1685) studied medicine at Utrecht and law in Leiden, receiving his doctorate in 1650. Many of his publications were at the heart of theological and philosophical controversies which raged in 17th-century Holland. Practicing the medical profession left him time for governmental activities, and between 1660 and 1672 he was mayor in Utrecht (Velthuysen 2013; Frijhoff and Spies 2004; Blom 1995).



driven by the passions, which are themselves an expression of self-preservation and selfishness, Velthuysen groped towards a naturalistic account of sociability and morality in response to changing historical formations. Given the historical specificity of conduct, rules, and morality, Velthuysen emphasized the need for empirical facts about man and society rather than reason or revelation.

Blom (1995) relates Velthuysen's views on the passions to the Stoic notion of the purposeful order of nature. However indirect and likely to fail, passions direct us towards self-preservation: they are natural and positive drivers towards the (unknown) purpose of God's creation. With this positive view of the function of man's passions, Velthuysen constructed his naturalistic account of sociability.

One of the issues in his account which intrigued Velthuysen was the question of how to explain sociability given man's essentially egoistic nature. He emphasized the essential role of the passion of shame. Velthuysen separated morality from theology, arguing that, in many cases shame is not related to sin but is a demonstration of (the violation of) the rules of proper conduct, defined in a specific cultural and historical context (Blom 1995, 121). Shame lies at the heart of the mechanism through which sociability is developed. Shameless behaviour gives rise to disapprobation and contempt from others. Such responses conflict with man's sense of worth and self-esteem, and are best avoided. Consequently, Velthuysen "stresses as the dominant mechanism the interaction of men among each other", inducing people to reckon with one another in their decisions and actions (Blom 1995, 123). Velthuysen argued that sociability and morality develop naturally from man's drive for self-preservation in a changing historical context.

Claiming that political society originates in mutual fear (Johan and Pieter de la Court 1662a, I.I.3:21-23), the De la Courts argued in line with Velthuysen that fear may also bring about the sociability necessary to build together a cooperative framework to allow everyone to share in the benefits. Fear awakens a natural reasonableness which brings people to enter into an agreement. Sociability is the natural outcome of man's self-regarding passions, involving a process through which people develop a fitness for society (without the need to have recourse to benevolence).

When driven by self-love, humans become sociable given their common fears and needs. This allows for the rise of a framework of cooperation, which in turn, develops into a political and moral framework that educates people to understand the strict connection between their

own interests and wellbeing and that of the commonwealth. The brothers De la Court emphasized this interdependence of human passions and political institutions; they argued that the destructive / constructive tendencies of the passions vary in accordance with different forms of government. They differentiate it as follows:<sup>6</sup>

<i>True self-love</i> <i>(moderated by the desire for honour)</i>	<i>Excessive self-love</i> <i>(expressed in the desire to rule)</i>
<i>True (common) interest</i>	<i>False (selfish) interest</i>
<i>Frugality</i> <i>Passions properly controlled</i>	<i>Extravagance</i> <i>Wrong passions encouraged</i>
<i>Conditions intimately linked to:</i> <i>Republic without a stadholder</i>	<i>Monarchy</i>

In arguing for commercial republicanism the brothers De la Court defined the conditions under which self-love is justifiable: self-love, as expressed by the passions, needs to be controlled through political organization; different forms of government perform differently in maintaining the health and wealth of the commonwealth. By employing the language of interest, the logic and design of their argument was to identify and link the (moderate, honourable, and true) interests of subjects and rulers, and to unite this relationship with the republican form of government and its institutions. Their claim was that only a republic (without a stadholder) fulfils the conditions to control the passions such that the health and wealth of the commonwealth is secured.

## V. MANDEVILLE'S NEW LOGIC

Although both share the notion of self-love as (fallen) man's basic drive, the brothers' positive theory of self-love and interest contrasts with the neo-Augustinian logic of the French moral tradition. While the De la Courts defined the conditions under which self-love and gain are justifiable, the neo-Augustinians reasoned that however glittering, and to what heights self-love may reach, the self-love of fallen man is fundamentally flawed. This contrast is particularly apparent in the assessment of vanity and pride in both discourses. The desire for approbation and esteem, described by the brothers De la Court as motive

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<sup>6</sup> In his *Sinryke fabulen* (1685; published as *Fables, moral and political, with large explications* in England in 1703) Pieter de la Court offered short stories, in which contrasts are drawn to argue the case for true self-love, interest, honesty, and especially the republican state.

for virtue, is denigrated in the French moral tradition as the desire for distinction and superiority (as it is often masked by politeness and sign of moral corruption). Mandeville's analysis of commercial society is founded upon both the negative and positive theories of interest and passions. He understands both orientations as opposing tendencies that dwell within man and society—these tendencies produce the dynamics which shape society (Verburg 2015). For this reason, it would misconstrue Mandeville's thought to emphasize the neo-Augustinian tradition without giving due consideration to the commercial republicanism of the De la Courts. Let us analyse both approaches in turn to see how Mandeville constructed a new logic of (self-)interest, morality, and society.

Mandeville applied an evolutionary perspective to the positive theory: he argued that the passions gradually acquired a positive social function in society, which was a result of the dynamics between passions, changing circumstances, and institutions. Taking human nature as fundamentally egoistic, Mandeville rejected the Hobbesian claim that, given man's unsociability, political society is a human contrivance. Following Boxhorn, Velthuysen, and the De la Courts, he sketched a theory which depicted the growth of society, and man's fitness for society, as an unintended consequence of human efforts to adjust to a state of association and interdependence, once man is driven towards society from necessity. As the body politic grows in population, commerce, and complexity (due to the differentiation and diversification of tasks and labours), people increasingly depend on one another to satisfy their needs and desires. Dependence works wonders for man's social skills. Mandeville describes human's sociability and susceptibility to social constraints as born out of the need for co-operation in the face of dependence. In this evolutionary process, human's natural and unsocial impulses are moulded and disciplined through an evolving framework of laws and institutions. In the growth of civilization, potentially destructive passions are thus transformed into an integrative force.

However, Mandeville's positive account of interest and the passions does not imply a tendency toward human perfection. Here we encounter the second leg of Mandeville's frame of thought: the neo-Augustinian, negative theory of interest and the passions. Mandeville takes every opportunity to expand upon the hypocrisy, insincerity, discord, and vice by which human behaviour is tainted. People everywhere seem to be motivated to satisfy their selfish desires for distinction and superiority at the expense of others. Moreover, given the division of labour in

society, moreover, people have different interests and consequently are differently affected by events: the loss and misfortune of the one is often the advantage of the other. The interdependence of private well-being and collective well-being that the brothers De la Court emphasize in their notion of interest is wholly absent here. Mandeville ridiculed the view that “the means of thriving and whatever conduces to the Welfare and real Happiness of private Families must have the same Effect upon the whole Society” (Mandeville 1988, I: 354-355). This disparity between the realms of the individual and that of the collective not only exists in the economic sphere but also in the moral sphere. In a large and impersonal society—one in which tasks are differentiated—actions not only have unforeseen and unintended consequences, they also have differential effects across the population. Virtuous actions, and likewise vicious actions, may both harm and promote the public good. As Mandeville contended:

It is in Morality as it is in Nature, there is nothing so perfectly good in creatures that it cannot be hurtful to any one of the Society, nor any thing so entirely Evil, but it may prove beneficial to some part or other of the Creation: So that things are only Good and Evil in reference to something else, and according to the Light and Position they are placed in (I: 367).

In commercial society there is no necessary connection between private morality and public benefits. This characteristic feature of commercial society defies the neo-Augustinian logic based on an unbridgeable gulf between the world of charity and the world of concupiscence, contrasting virtue with self-love. Any appeal to virtue or reason for the purpose of improving public well-being is beside the point. It is equally misplaced to think, as the brothers De la Court did, that any regulative government framework could regulate human passions to make them conducive to public well-being: identification and arrangement of the passions defies human understanding and knowledge. Concluding that private virtue would not secure the benefits of (commercial) society, Mandeville turned the question around. Instead of starting from virtue to inquire into the opportunities and limitations of commercial society, he asked himself whether the passions, desires, and interests that make commercial society work would engender virtuous behaviour. That is, if the wealth and health of commercial society cannot be secured by way of virtue, to what extent can virtuous behaviour be secured by way of the

pursuit of the wealth and health of society? Framing the question in this way, Mandeville constructed a new logic from elements of both constituent logics.

The De la Courts had argued that although humans are not suited for society by their nature, they are made fit for it. Mandeville developed a similar argument. The essence of his argument can be found in his Fourth Dialogue (Mandeville 1988, II: 188-189):

*Hor(atio)*: If I have not misunderstood you, you would insinuate two Things: First, that the Fitness of Man for Society, beyond other Animals, is something real; but that it is hardly perceptible in Individuals, before great Numbers of them are joyn'd together, and artfully manag'd. Secondly, that this real Something, this Sociableness, 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.

*Cleo(menes)*: You are perfectly right: Every Grape contains a small Quantity of Juice, and when great Heaps of them are squeez'd together, they yield a Liquor, which by skillful Management may be made into Wine: But if we consider, how necessary Fermentation is to the Vinosity of the Liquor, I mean, how essential it is to its being Wine; it will be evident to us, that without great Impropriety of Speech, it cannot be said, that in every Grape there is Wine.

Horatio comments that to make the claim that the sociableness of men may be compared to the Vinosity of Wine, requires the identification of an 'Equivalent for Fermentation' in society. In his answer, Cleomenes points at mutual Commerce: "Men become sociable, by living together in Society" (II: 189). Mandeville thus underlines Velthuysen's emphasis on the interaction among men in the growth of man's sociability. How does this mechanism work? How do humans become socialized, moral beings?

Taking man as a "Compound of various Passions" (I: 39) and untainted by illusions about human nature, Mandeville starts from the premise that humans are motivated by self-regarding passions: "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" (II: 178). The growth of civilization, according to Mandeville, is the result of an evolutionary process through which

humans learn to accommodate their passionate drives in the context of increasing mutual dependence and become “a taught animal” (I: 286).

The development of man into “a Disciplin'd Creature” (I: 347) first awaited the rise of political society. In the second volume of the *Fable of the bees* (1727) Mandeville described the rise of political society in three stages. In the first stage families extended into groups or clans for protection against nature; such associations—different in cooperation and organization—generated claims of power and dominion. The resulting enmity (the second stage) required further collaboration out of mutual fear and protection against one another. The final stage in the formation of society is reached when the arts of speech and writing (as instruments of persuasion) enable the establishment of the rule of law by government. This serves as a common measure to settle conflicts and secure the advantages of society. In this way, Mandeville presents a historical account of the formation of society similar to Boxhorn (though in greater detail), arguing that society originates out of fear, necessity, and advantage. While he shared this view on the origins of society with Hobbes and the De la Courts, Mandeville did away with the notion of a social contract upon which society was founded, believing it absurd that man would have the insight to come to an agreement by sheer calculation of future benefits. If man is driven by self-regarding passions instead of reason, man could only become a disciplined creature by those passions. Thus, Mandeville attempted to identify the social mechanisms responsible for disciplining and socializing humans; his naturalistic perspective resembled that of Velthuysen and the brothers de la Court.

Nature, Mandeville informs us, has gifted man with two instincts: self-love and self-liking. Self-love is the emotional source from which all the wants and passions arise, instrumental in human preservation; while self-liking is an instinct “by which every Individual values itself above its own Worth” (II: 130). It was from the instinct of self-liking that politicians and moralists created a system of approbation and disapprobation, to guide humans towards behaviours that went against their natural inclinations.<sup>7</sup> Aware of man's eagerness for praise and

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<sup>7</sup> In *An enquiry into the origin of honour, and the usefulness of Christianity in war* (1971) Mandeville argued through Cleomenes that, in practice, the principle of honour is a much more effective system to restrain and direct human behaviour than Christianity. Honour as a principle of conduct was invented to control people after it had become apparent that other forms of authority, including Christianity, had failed to instil people with a proper regard for that authority out of a fear for death.

esteem, they bestowed upon man so much flattery that he was inclined to overvalue his real worth (leading to excessive self-liking or pride). Equipped with an enlarged sense of self-liking, man becomes increasingly dependent on signs of approval and disapproval as he needs to continue to feed his pride and avoid any form of shame that might devalue his self-esteem.

Mandeville described pride and shame as “two Passions, in which the Seeds of most Virtues are contained” (I: 67).<sup>8</sup> These passions were dictated by the instinct of self-liking and, as such, directed humans to observe rules in order to avoid shame by stifling their appetites and masking their true sentiments. In fact, shame was seen to be such a powerful emotional force that man endeavoured to preclude any attack upon his self-esteem by disguising his pride. Moreover, since brazen pride was offensive to others, man's love of ease accentuates this masquerading inclination. According to Mandeville, human hypocrisy to further self-interest becomes so extreme that some develop the habit of pretending to estimate the worth of others even higher than themselves.

At the same time man becomes increasingly conscious of the fact that his need for esteem is only gratified if he reckons in his competitive efforts with the same need in others. From experience man learns that sociability serves his self-interested purposes. Given that commercial society “is made up of the reciprocal Services, which Men do to each other”, this sociability, called forth by man's need for the approbation of his fellows, is the means “to get these Services perform'd by others, when we have Occasion for them” (II: 349). In this process, man becomes “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 cunning Management are made to Act as one” (I: 347). Man becomes a disciplined, socialized being, and in a way, also a moral being, by discovering the utility of restraining his self-motivated passions in his need for the approbation and assistance of his fellows (Jack 1975, 37-38). By dexterous management of the passions, man is provided with a self-interested reason—the need to feed his enlarged sense of self—to act against his natural inclinations in order to contribute to the public

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<sup>8</sup> Like Velthuysen, Mandeville noted the importance of the passion of shame: “it is incredible how necessary an Ingredient Shame is to make us sociable [...] no Society could be polish'd, if the Generality of Mankind were not subject to it” (Mandeville 1988, I: 68).

good. Mandeville concluded that, "the Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride" (Mandeville 1988, I: 51).

Mandeville then was not so much interested in the character of the ruler and its effects upon the well- or ill-being of the commonwealth. Neither was he concerned with the composition of the ruling elite to guarantee that the interests of the ruler(s) were strictly tied to the interests of the subjects. And, he certainly did not endorse the position that the success of the commonwealth was dependent upon the effective curtailment of the passions by government.<sup>9</sup> It is not by virtue that public benefits are secured. Although Mandeville conceded that man's passions were manipulated into the service of the public good, he argued that wise legislators and politicians utilize the passions by stirring them up, by transforming self-liking into pride, to spur man into being sensitive and responsive to others. People desire things and increasingly they need the help of others to get them, so they need to learn to be polite. The more desires multiply and diversify, the more people are interdependent and need to take one another into account, thereby becoming sociable, moral beings: "the Sociableness of Man arises only from these Two things, viz. the Multiplicity of his Desires and the continual Opposition he meets with in his Endeavours to gratify them" (I: 344). Morality is not absolute but contingent upon social, economic, and political circumstances; it is only when the passions are allowed to flourish and desires are multiplied that a framework of appropriate rules and norms can develop, in turn regulating behaviour. It does not work to suppress passions that motivate undesirable behaviour (De Marchi 2001). One may scare or flatter people into certain behaviours, but one cannot make them act virtuously by design. Even if it were possible to teach virtue it would hurt the public good given that both good and evil are ingredients of public benefits. In this sense he did argue for the necessity of vice. Instead of recommending vice, however, Mandeville claimed that passions and behaviour in all their moral variety enter into the development of sociability and morality. Consequently, one can only learn how interacting passions of individuals work out in practice, from experience and observation.

These ideas can directly be related to views Mandeville developed as a physician (Cook 1999; De Marchi 2001). In his medical writings Mandeville

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<sup>9</sup> Weststeijn (2012, 353) acknowledges that Mandeville "was clearly indebted to the thought of the brothers De la Court" but only repeats Hundert's assessment of Mandeville's intentions as trying to debunk the De la Courts' republican dream (1994, 29).



argued for the need to work with and learn from nature, contending that the proper task of the physician is to support nature in its attempts to cure a disease. Treatment should be based on experience and observation of the normal run of diseases, its natural symptoms, and the ways of nature towards restoration of health. The attending physician needs to build a case history and must be prepared to observe how a disease presents itself in a particular patient before any assistance can be given toward curing the disease. The role of the legislator is comparable to that of the physician. By accepting man's passions and fickle nature, rather than suppressing them, the legislator aims to redirect their course by changing the structure of incentives by way of rules and regulations, when interacting passions have undesirable outcomes.

In pursuing his interests and learning from his experiences (and assisted by the legislator), man spontaneously and tentatively stumbles upon arrangements through which he is induced to restrain his passions in his efforts to pursue his own interests. As unintended consequences of this process of discovery the arts and sciences, as well as trades and manufactures develop and are made to flourish, whereby man may be said to be useful to others. By way of these institutionalized forms of advancing self-interest, a hybrid morality is constituted. Taking pride in controlling their passions, human vanity deceives one into believing that they act as if they have the welfare of others in mind and thereby create advantages to the public good. This mechanism by which men come to practice virtue works in Mandeville's framework thanks to the mutual encouragement of the same passions and desires which earlier were condemned by moralists as excessive and disruptive to the health and wealth of society.

## VI. CONCLUSION

It is typical in the literature on Mandeville's philosophy to reference him as the Dutch doctor. I have argued that it was not only his being a doctor that is relevant. The relevance of his Dutch background, and especially the influence of the brothers De la Court, have been noted but never carefully analysed (cf., Hundert 1994; Cook 1999; Weststeijn 2012). As a result, Mandeville's work is too easily placed in the context of the French moral tradition, while the influence of Dutch authors is usually marginalized. Such an account misses out on a source that became an important springboard for his ideas: the Dutch commercial republicanism of the brothers De la Court.

After all, Mandeville was raised in a republican environment, whose family was associated with members of the city council and merchants in Rotterdam, who also made up the States Party (Dekker 1992; Cook 2007). The States Party, led by Johan de Witt, had controlled the United Provinces after the death of William II in 1650, effectively establishing a republican form of government until 1672 whereby William III seized control of government. Mandeville's grandfather and father were in close contact with Adriaen Paets, a lawyer, city counsellor, and one of the leaders of the States Party in Rotterdam, who knew and corresponded with Pieter de la Court (Cook 1999, 117). In 1685 Mandeville matriculated at the University of Leiden to study philosophy and medicine in the hometown of the De la Courts. At the university "empiricism and biological materialism had a platform in medical Cartesianism" (Cook 1999, 117). Given his interest in Descartes's medical views, his bent for theorizing about society, and his republican background, it seems implausible that Mandeville not be influenced by the De la Courts Cartesian theory of the passions in devising political theory. Although there is no straightforward evidence, it is fair to assume that Mandeville was well-acquainted with the writings of the De la Courts.

And these writings did have something to offer. Indeed, the fact that Mandeville's thought is indebted to neo-Augustinian thought should not make us ignore obvious differences. First, although he agreed on the view that human actions are motivated by self-love, Mandeville did not deny the reality of virtue. The idea that fallen humanity is capable of doing moral good is *not* a delusion predicated upon pride. Second, in contrast to Augustinian moral doctrine, Mandeville's thought is not framed by theological premises but offers a naturalistic account of commercial society (Horne 1978; Jack 1975). Finally, for Mandeville virtue is a utilitarian notion, rather than an unattainable ideal of being good out of love for God.

All of these characteristics of Mandeville's philosophy may be found in the writings of the De la Courts, whose commercial republicanism was an attempt to understand and justify the profound changes in society; an attempt founded upon a positive theory of interest and the passions. Yes, man is driven by his selfish impulses, but with the right kind of self-love virtue is possible. Instead of defining society in opposition to virtue—i.e., as absolute, otherworldly, unattainable—society follows a process of 'moral education', which develops naturally

from man's selfish dispositions and political control. Pride, honour, praise, and shame are crucial elements for learning moral value. Civic virtue is within man's reach and originates in self-interest properly understood rather than some notion of the public good. The desire for wealth does not necessitate moral ruin but, properly managed and controlled, is the basis of true well-being or (self-) interest. In its positive sense then, interest is defined in terms of harmony between individual and collective well-being. As such, it contrasts sharply with the negative connotation of interest in neo-Augustinianism, taken in the sense of narrow self-love. This contrast reappears in the way both accounts view the desire for esteem and admiration. Whereas the one account takes vanity and pride as a restraining force that induces individuals to act virtuously, the other interprets the same passions as a vehicle of hypocrisy and vice. These two interpretations are joined together in Mandeville's notion of self-liking:

we are all born with a Passion manifestly distinct from Self-love; that, when it is 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 (Mandeville 1971, 6-7).

By integrating the positive and negative theories of passions and interest, Mandeville built a naturalistic account of the rise of society on the basis of the interaction of passions and institutions, exploring the mechanisms of praise, pride, and shame in shaping the sociability and morality of individuals within society. Thus Mandeville developed a new logic of (self-)interest, morality and society. Sharing the Augustinian belief that (fallen) man is driven by his selfish passions, Mandeville rejected the idea that passions undermine morality. Instead, he went along with the De la Courts by arguing for the moral potential of the passions, while dismissing their argument for the contractual basis of society, (through which, the brothers believed, rational control of the passions would be possible). Thus carving out what he took to be empirically sound, Mandeville argued that man was disciplined and socialized precisely because he is driven by passions and considerations of (private) gain. Removing the last traces of the elevated nature of virtue, he made the scandalous claim that moral virtue arises unintentionally out of efforts at gainful convenience.

Mandeville went beyond the vision of the brothers De la Court by doing away with attempts to define self-love, interest, and welfare as dichotomously either false or true; such passions can only be evaluated against the backdrop of the form and conditions of government. One cannot reason from basic principles to arrive at some understanding of which passions to suppress and which to encourage. Understanding the passions required empirical observation and experience to build a case history of society, starting from (changing) circumstances and evolving social patterns and practices, thereby tracing and observing how passions work out in a process of socialisation and 'moral education'. Interested in this naturalistic process of moral education of man's passions, Mandeville inquired into the extent to which commercial modernity, with trade and commerce as the new basis of wealth and power, provided a context for virtue. In building such a new logic, he may be said to have presented an agenda for debate. Rejoicing in pointing out the discrepancies and contradictions in what was professed and what was done in practice, Mandeville framed his famous paradox. His rigorist notions of virtue and vice, as Kaye observed, "[i]s simply a final twist given to his thought after it has been worked out in harmony with the opposite or empiric viewpoint. It is a suit of clothes made for some one else which he has put on the living body of his thought" (Kaye 1988, liii). This twist, however, placed emphasis on (neo)-Augustinianism at the expense of that other intellectual source of Mandeville's thought.

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# Bernard Mandeville on hypochondria and self-liking

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**Abstract:** This article analyses how Mandeville's *Treatise of the hypochondriack and hysteric passions* (1711) was received in the medical environment, and I show that this work, in spite of being unusual and of a satirical nature, was seriously read and studied by eighteenth-century physicians. In the second part I will describe hypochondria as it is intended in the *Treatise*, with particular attention to talking therapy. In the third part I will show that in the *Fable of the bees* and in the *Enquiry into the origin of honour* hypochondria is associated with a frustration of the desire to be esteemed, and that in light of the theory of self-liking expressed in the *Fable*, it is possible to account for talking therapy's effectiveness as theorised in the *Treatise*.

**Keywords:** Mandeville, hypochondria, melancholy, talking cure, self-liking, desire to be esteemed

## I. INTRODUCTION

The central theme in Mandeville's works is the acknowledgment of the crucial role that self-liking plays in human matters. Self-liking is a natural passion "by which every Individual values itself above its real Worth" (Mandeville 1924b, 130). Yet, as human beings tend to be insecure about their true value, public image and social appreciation is of great importance to them. Self-liking is the psychological cause of the desire to be esteemed by other human beings. It is the desire for social recognition which allows Mandeville to explain human behaviour at different levels, from everyday social relationships to commercial exchanges, religion, and politics. This is captured in a significant passage in the *Fable of the bees part II*, whereupon Mandeville sums up the results of his studies on human nature: "the most superlative Wish, which a Man possess'd, and entirely fill'd with it can make, is, that he

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**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** my thanks go to Martin Otero Knott for many helpful comments and suggestions. I am grateful also to Andrea Branchi, Harro Maas, Johan Olsthoorn, and the two anonymous referees for their helpful comments.

may be well thought of, applauded, and admired by the whole World, not only in the present, but all future Ages” (Mandeville 1924b, 64). Thus, if human behaviour can be explained by the desire for social recognition, what happens then when such need is not satisfied, or worse, when the interest itself in the opinion of others disappears?

Mandeville argues that when the desire to be esteemed fades the symptoms of hypochondria appear. In this article I show how those same symptoms that Mandeville himself described in his work on hypochondria and hysteria, *Treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick diseases*, are found (at least implicitly) in both the *Fable of the bees* and in the *Enquiry into the origin of honour*.

However, before addressing the central point of this article I will dedicate a few pages to discuss the reception that the *Treatise* received in eighteenth-century Britain. This is important not only because of the lack of studies on this subject, but because this research will show that, in spite of his satirical style, Mandeville was taken seriously by the physicians of his time. I will then move on to examine in detail the *Treatise*, which is very interesting for three reasons: firstly, hypochondria is approached from a point of view that is not strictly medical, but takes into account psychological and existential elements; secondly, great importance is attributed to the relationship between physician and patient; finally, a kind of talking cure is theorised. I proceed to argue that in the *Fable* a moral conception of hypochondria is present, according to which hypochondria is caused by the absence of self-liking. From this perspective, the relationship of trust between doctor and patient, coupled with talking therapy, would re-establish the patient's interest in the “opinion of others”. The comparison between hypochondriac symptoms as described in the *Treatise* and the effects of weakened self-liking as described in the *Fable* constitutes the main evidence for my thesis.

## II. MANDEVILLE AND THE DIFFUSION OF THE TREATISE OF THE HYPOCHONDRIACK AND HYSTERICK DISEASES

Until recently, the *Treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick diseases* was one of the least known of Mandeville's works. However, there has been a change of trend, as indicated by new translations of the *Treatise* into Italian (Mandeville 2009) and French (Mandeville 2012), and by the appearance of several articles on the text, as well as an entire volume



dedicated to the conception of hypochondria in Mandeville.<sup>1</sup> The increasing interest in the *Treatise* is justified for at least two reasons: first, a talking cure is now considered to be fundamental in psychology and psychiatry, rendering Mandeville's *Treatise* an interesting historical document. Second, increasing attention has been paid to Mandeville's medical training and to the influence that his studies on hypochondria may have had on the development of his theory of the passions. Such a theory was gradually put together over the twenty-year span, from the first edition of the *Fable of the bees* in 1714 to the publication of the *Enquiry into the origin of honour* in 1732.

The *Treatise* was first published in 1711, six years after Mandeville had written the apologue *The grumbling hive*. It was then reprinted in 1715, shortly after the publication of the first edition of the *Fable*.<sup>2</sup> In 1730 Mandeville published a proper second edition, expanded in length by about a third and with a slightly changed title.<sup>3</sup> At that time Mandeville had just given to the press the *Fable II* and was presumably busy writing the *Enquiry into the origin of honour*.

Apparently the *Treatise* was quite well received, perhaps exceeding expectations, judging by the fact that the publisher issued a second print only a few months after the first. Besides, while in the first edition the frontispiece contains Mandeville's personal address, in the reprint he decided to omit it, replacing it with a few lines inviting whoever was interested in starting therapy to get in touch with him through the bookseller or the publisher. This little amendment suggests that Mandeville might have been annoyed by readers soliciting his help.

Since there are no studies on the diffusion of the *Treatise* in the eighteenth century, it is difficult to say at this stage if and how Mandeville's theories were discussed by his contemporaries. Some brief observations attest that the *Treatise* circulated among English, Scottish, and Irish physicians.

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<sup>1</sup> See Leigh (1961, 23-28); Veith (1965, 153-154); Rousseau (1975, 11-21); Shoenberg (1976); Carrive (1980, 71-96); Jackson (1986, 287-289); Collins (1988); McKee (1991); McKee (1995); Cook (1999); de Marchi (2001); Branchi (2004, 24-40); Simonazzi (2004, 293-411); Schmidt (2007, 150-162); Simonazzi (2008, 97-151); Hilton (2010); Kleiman-Lafon (2013).

<sup>2</sup> The *Fable of the Bees* was published for the first time in 1714 in the form of a comment to the apologue *The grumbling hive* (1705), and was subsequently expanded in the 1723 edition and in the final one of 1724. In December 1728 (on the frontispiece the date 1729 appears) Mandeville gave to press the *Second Part* of the *Fable* in the form of a dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> Mandeville substitutes the term "passions" with "diseases".

Mandeville's name appeared for the first time in a medical work within the *Observations in physick, both rational and practical*, written by Thomas Apperley, in 1731. Apperley, who was a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, quotes Mandeville in support of his thesis on the function of menstruum in the digestive process (Apperley 1731, 183-184). The *Treatise* was later quoted as an authoritative source on food properties, in particular on fish, by physician Thomas Withers (Withers 1777, 115-116). In 1782, William Black quotes Mandeville three times in his *An historical sketch of medicine and surgery* (Black 1782, 163, 220, 276). Mandeville's name is associated with that of Dr Robert Pitt (1653-1712), author of *Crafts or the frauds*, where he blows the whistle on the business agreement between doctors and chemists, all to the detriment of the patients. In the final pages of his book, Black lists the most important works on various symptoms, and the *Treatise* is quoted next to Cheyne's work. Two years later, Mandeville's name appears as an authoritative source on diet in the London Society of Physicians (A Society of Physicians in London 1784, 6: 119-120). In 1786 *The Yorkshire magazine* quotes Mandeville as the source of the principle according to which "if you like it, it's good for you", which was supposed to demonstrate the existence of a self-regulatory mechanism within the human body (*The Yorkshire magazine* 1786, 1: 50-51). If we look at dictionaries and encyclopaedias, we see that the entry "Mandeville" appears in *A new biographical dictionary* (Jones 1796, 293), and three years later it is included in *Biographia medica* as well (Hutchinson 1799, 2: 115-122). Even in Ireland the *Treatise* must have had a certain resonance, as demonstrated by the fact that the name of Mandeville appears in *Pharmacomastix* by Charles Lucas, published in Dublin in 1741. Lucas denounces the corruption of chemists in the sale of medicines, and the risk that medicines themselves may be adulterated. He repeatedly quotes Mandeville in support of the danger constituted by chemists (Lucas 1741, 38-39).

Nonetheless, it is in Scotland, at the Edinburgh Medicine Faculty, that Mandeville's medical work received acclaim. Mandeville's fortune in Scotland was probably due to Robert Whytt, King George III's physician (starting in 1761) and president of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Whytt began his studies in Edinburgh, but subsequently attended Paris and Leyden universities. In 1765 Whytt published a work on hypochondria in which he quotes Mandeville among the authors who identified digestion as one of the causes of hypochondria and hysteria

(Whytt 1765, 109). The list of these authors includes the most important physicians of the previous century, such as Highmore, Willis, Ettmüller, Sydenham, Boerhaave and Cheyne.

The *Treatise* appears in Edinburgh University Library (*Catalogus librorum* 1798, 234), but only in its first 1711 edition, the same quoted by Whytt. In the timespan from 1766 (the year immediately after the publication of the *Observations*) to 1795, at least three students specialising in nervous diseases quoted Mandeville in their academic dissertations: Jacobus Boswel in 1766 (the year following the publication of Whytt's work); Joannes Cowling in 1768, whose supervisor was William Robertson; and Joannes Haxby, in 1795, whose supervisor was George Baird. The *Treatise* frequently appears in medical libraries and in eighteenth century booksellers' catalogues too. In 1798 Sir Alexander Crichton, a Scottish physician well-known for having described what is now called "attention deficit hyperactivity disorders", quotes Mandeville to describe the digestive symptoms caused by hypochondria (Crichton 1798, 194).

In conclusion, this first reconstruction of the *Treatise's* reception in the eighteenth century demonstrates that Mandeville was taken seriously not only as a philosopher and author of the *Fable of the bees*, but also as a physician specialising in hysterical and hypochondriac diseases. The *Treatise* appears to have sparked interest, above all, through its study of the relationship between hypochondria and digestion, the importance of diet, its censure of chemists, and its attack on drug abuse. There are no references to the talking cure or to a moral etiology of hypochondria. The analysis of the *Treatise's* reception does not supply significant elements to relate the *Treatise* and the *Fable*. On the contrary: the two works were usually regarded separately. Mandeville himself did not mention the *Fable* in the *Treatise* nor the *Treatise* in the *Fable*. However, it is my contention that a point of contact exists between the two works: the theory of human passions. The *Treatise*, for example, not only analyses the hypochondriacs' passions, but also the physicians' passions (in particular "pride") by a method of analysis developed in the *Fable*. And in the *Fable*, Mandeville uses his medical and psychological skills to explain the symptoms of shame and, above all, to advance a theory of the causes of suicide.

### III. HYPOCHONDRIA AND TALKING CURE

What does Mandeville mean when he talks about hypochondria? Mandeville never says what hypochondria exactly is. In a way, the whole *Treatise* can be read as an attempt to find a definition for hypochondria through the description of its symptoms and the identification of its causes (Rousseau 1975, 14-15). Such an attempt, however, is destined to fail for at least three reasons. Firstly, because it is not a disease like any other, but a psychosomatic one, the causes of which are both of a physical nature (such as a digestion problem and indulgence in sexual pleasures) and of a psychological nature (such as fear of poverty and excessive study) (Mandeville 1981, 5-7). Secondly, a specific symptomatology does not exist, and so all cases are different from each other. Finally, because there is a very fine line between a simple, non-pathological *melancholy disposition* of the individual, as defined by Robert Burton in his *The anatomy of melancholy*, and a true *melancholy habit*, that is a proper pathology.

The *Treatise* is written in the form of a dialogue, spread through three days, between a physician called Philopirio, who represents Mandeville himself (Mandeville 1976, xi), and a hypochondriac patient, named Misomedon, and his wife, Polytheca, suffering from hysteria. A fourth character is their daughter, also affected by hysteria, who never appears on the scene.<sup>4</sup> The dialogue form was not an original choice for a medical work, it was nonetheless an original decision to address the patients rather than his medical colleagues: “I conceiv’d it would be less Presumption, if I writ by way of Information to Patients, that might labour under them, than if I pretended to teach other Practitioners, that profess to cure them as well as my self” (Mandeville 1981, ix-x). This choice allows Mandeville “to deviate from the usual Method, and make what I had to say as palatable as I could to those, I had in view for my Readers” (Mandeville 1981, x-xi).

His method consists of making the patient tell his own life story. The importance of telling the disease history had been theorised before by Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689), who had taken inspiration from Bacon’s reflections on the importance of classification and natural history. This method was supposed to be applicable to any kind of disease. It consisted of following the evolution of the various cases, comparing them, and identifying their common elements, so as to

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<sup>4</sup> Hysteria is simply the name given by Mandeville to hypochondria when it affects women.

distinguish what was peculiar to the patient from what was specific to the disease: “The whole philosophy of medicine consists in working out the histories of diseases, and applying the remedies which may dispel them; and Experience is the sole guide” (Sydenham 1696, 518). Mandeville follows in Sydenham’s footsteps who, together with the physician Giorgio Baglivi (1668-1707), is quoted in the *Treatise* as one of his medical references. Sydenham’s narrative of the disease history differs from that of the Dutch physician in many ways. First of all, the hypochondriac patient in the *Treatise* tells a life story, more than a story of disease. It takes into consideration events such as his father’s death, his economic and social condition, occupation, relationship with family and friends, readings, travels, and amusements. As a second instance, Mandeville does not try to identify patterns or to formulate classifications. His interest in the patient is holistic, taking into consideration her history and specific individuality, not her disease, nor her medical history and classification of clinical case: “It is unreasonable to think, that from so general a Rule, sick People, and the several differences between one sick Person and another, or the same Person when sick of different Distempers, should be the only Exception” (Mandeville 1981, 79). Mandeville stresses the importance of psychological factors when building a rapport with the patient: “more especially those, in which the Fancy has so great a Share” (Mandeville 1981, 377). He also emphasizes that the patient must play an active role in therapy (Mandeville 1981, 380).

Therapy, as exposed in the Third Dialogue, does not include the use of drugs. It only requires exercise, healthy food, and a sound relationship between physician and patient, which is predicated on listening and talking:

If your Medicines do me no Good, I am sure your Company will [...]. You can’t imagine, how a pertinent lively Discourse, or any thing that is sprightly, revives my Spirits. I don’t know what it is that make me so, whether it be our talking together, the Serenity of the Air, or both; but I enjoy abundance of Pleasure, and this Moment, methinks, I am as well as ever I was in my Life (Mandeville 1981, 45-46).

Paulette Carrive maintained that by choosing the dialogue form, Mandeville meant to appear like “a man in conversation with his patient, in which patient and physician engage in a discussion about the illness as an issue of mutual concern, but at the same time separate from

both”<sup>5</sup> (Carrive 1980, 78-79). Francis McKee, instead, remarked that “by dramatizing the medical discourse, Mandeville attempts to produce a cathartic effect on the reader and patient. The dialogues ‘divert’ and ‘entertain’, thus combating hypochondria at some degree” (McKee 1995, 226). Surely, the form of a dialogue allows Mandeville to reach three goals: 1) to provide a vivid picture of hypochondria symptoms; 2) to show the subjective perception of the illness; 3) to show the therapy at work.

However, the *Treatise* leaves much to be desired regarding the etiology of its therapy, which is to say, it does not disclose what talking therapy is exactly, nor how it works.

### ***Talking therapy***

Mandeville’s most direct source is probably Giorgio Baglivi, whose work underscores the importance of imagination and emphasized that self-suggestion worsened the illness (Baglivi 1843, 211). Furthermore, he insisted that violent therapies be avoided and urged against the use of pharmacological treatment without joint psychological therapy; this promoted the tranquility and serenity of the patient (Baglivi 1843, 213-214).

In the *Treatise* (1711) frontispiece, Mandeville promises to his readers to reveal “a Method intirely new” to treat hypochondria. However, upon opening the book the reader would have noticed that Mandeville dedicates much space to criticize traditional therapies, while the “Method intirely new” is shown, rather than explained or theorised. The *Treatise* is really the presentation of a theory in progress. Only in its last pages does Mandeville really clarify his new method. The patient Misomedon, voicing the reader’s curiosity and bewilderment, asks Mandeville directly: “Then what is your Secret in the Cure of this difficult Distemper?” (Mandeville 1981, 343). Mandeville replies: “I allow my self time to hear and weigh the Complaints of my Patients” (Mandeville 1981, 343). Misomedon is surprised and disappointed (as Mandeville imagines all his readers will be): “But I meant Medicines, when I spoke of Secrets” (Mandeville 1981, 344). Philopirio replies that, as to the medicines, he has no secrets. He answers Misomedon this way:

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<sup>5</sup> My translation from the original in French: “un homme conversant avec son malade, malade et médecin discutant ensemble de la maladie comme d’une chose qui à la fois les concerne tous deux et qui cependant leur est extérieure.”

“Then I must answer you, that [...] I have no *Nostrums* that I intend either to magnify or conceal” (Mandeville 1981, 344).

Only by radically changing the outlook is it possible to detect the method’s novelty. At the end of the *Treatise*, Mandeville reveals his secrets to his readers. The rules to follow are three. First, to let patients speak, and not to prescribe them useless medicines. The second is a condition of the first: the physician must be ready to listen to his patient carefully, putting himself into the other’s shoes, understanding his idiosyncrasies, getting to know his food aversions and exercise habits and preferences. In short, the physician must use his deep knowledge of the patient to tell which features are only part of human nature and which ones are due to the illness (Mandeville 1981, 344).

Talking therapy implies that the patient must play an active role and gain an understanding of the causes of his own illness. Such understanding is part and parcel with the therapy itself, even though Mandeville himself cannot explain the reason:

I am glad, that at last you are happily enter’d into a Sentiment of things which Words cannot express; and now I hope, looking back on the Passages of your Life, you’ll easily find out your self the Procatartick Causes of your Distemper (Mandeville 1981, 208).

### ***Physiological and psychological causes of hypochondria***

Throughout the *Treatise* Mandeville criticises speculative physicians—i.e., those doctors who ignore experience and let themselves be carried away by “Flights of Invention in Physick” (Mandeville 1981, 95). The Dutch philosopher maintains that it is necessary to adhere to the most rigorous observation. However, epistemological scepticism and the empirical method are incompatible with the passionate structure of human nature. As Misomedon observes:

What I was going to tell you is, that, tho’ I am convinced from what you have said, that Reasoning about Causes is not to be depended upon, [...] yet I find it is impossible to do without. There is a Gap between the Observations made on the Symptoms of a Disease, and what Experience teaches us about the Cure of it: I want to have that Gap fill’d up (Mandeville 1981, 230).

Upon Misomedon’s explicit request the physician Philopirio hypothesises about the cause of hypochondria. Mandeville states that the immediate cause of hypochondria is a digestion defect due to the lack of those animal spirits that constitute a fundamental component of

the menstruum, or ferment, through which foods are turned into chyle and therefore absorbed by the body via an action of blood. The problem is, therefore, to identify the cause of the excessive consumption of animal spirits:

the immoderate Exercise of the Brain, and Excess of Venery, are so generally the Occasion of the Hypochondriack Passions, that in all my Experience I have hardly met with any, where I had not Reason to impute the Distemper, in Part at least, to one or other of these, if not both: I speak of Patients, in whom the Malady has been confirm'd. It was then the Waste of Spirits, that robbing the Stomachick Ferment of what was required for its Volatilization, occasion'd those fix'd acid Salts that gave you the Heart-burning which was your first Complaint (Mandeville 1981, 212-213).

The waste of animal spirits may be due to a multiplicity of causes, from excessive study and sexual activity to “the least Emotion of my Mind” (Mandeville 1981, 215). Mandeville pays particular attention to the relationship between socio-economic status and hypochondria. He claims that wealth is a predisposing factor because, on the one hand, it urges the fear of losing one's belongings and, on the other hand, it stimulates passions and desires that are difficult to satisfy. Fear and dissatisfaction are psychological causes of the loss of animal spirits:

Immoderate Grief, Cares, Troubles and Disappointments are likewise often Concomitant Causes of this Disease; but most commonly in such, as either by Estate, Benefices, or Employments have a sufficient Revenue to make themselves easie: Men that are already provided for, or else have a Livelyhood by their Callings amply secured, are never exempt from Sollicitudes, and the keeping not only of Riches, but even moderate Possessions, is always attended with Care. Those that enjoy 'em are more at leisure to reflect, besides that their Wishes and Desires being larger, themselves are more likely to be offended at a great many Passages of Life, than People of lower Fortunes, who have seldom higher Ends, than what they are continually employed about, the getting of their daily Bread (Mandeville 1981, 219-220).

In this way, hypochondria is connected to passions, wishes, expectations, social condition, desire for social advancement, fear of failure, and self-realization. It is a psychosomatic disease because the psychological dimension acts on the animal spirits, which are involved in digestion and can disturb the stomach. Mandeville, therefore, puts



mind and stomach in strict relation through the mediation of animal spirits.

#### IV. HYPOCHONDRIA AND SELF-LIKING

This section argues that if we want to find a psychological hypothesis regarding the causes of hypochondria we must set aside the *Treatise*, and focus our attention on the theory of passions developed in the *Fable II* and in the *Enquiry*. A psychological or moral etiology of melancholy can already be found in the works of some philosophers such as Michel de Montaigne, Robert Burton, and Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes, in particular, stated in *Leviathan* (1651) that mental health is a matter of balancing the dominant passion, since mental illness is caused by excessive strength or weakness of the *desire for power*. Excessive self-esteem (i.e., vain-glory or pride) is the cause of madness, while an excessive insecurity results in dejection of mind: “The Passion, whose violence, or continuance, maketh Madnesse, is either great *vaine-Glory*; which is commonly called *Pride*, and *selfe-concept*; or great *Dejection* of mind” (Hobbes 2012, 112).

In the beginnings of his career, Mandeville’s interest was mainly of a medical nature, but after 1711 the Dutch philosopher probably neglected the study of medicine (as stated in the *Preface* to the edition of the *Treatise* in 1730) and dedicated himself to developing his theory of the passions (Mandeville 1981, xxii). In particular, his attention was concentrated on the passion of self-liking. In the *Preface* to *Fable II*, Mandeville describes himself (alias Cleomenes) as a man who, after a medical education, dedicated himself to philosophy (Mandeville 1924b, 16). In the second dialogue he reveals an important insight into human nature: the importance of other people’s opinions and the desire to be esteemed (Mandeville 1924b, 64). Mandeville’s emphasis on self-liking is the result of twenty years of reflection, and runs parallel to his studies on hypochondria. We may say that in the *Treatise* Mandeville analyses the pathology of passions, whereas in the *Fable* and in the *Enquiry* he tries to outline their physiology. This research develops gradually, and it is only in the Third Dialogue of the *Fable II*, that is seventeenth years after the publication of the *Treatise*’ first edition (and a few months before the second edition was issued), that Mandeville introduces the concept of self-liking for the first time (Mandeville 1924b, 131). Then, it is in the *Enquiry into the origin of honour*, published in 1732 (two years after the publication of the *Treatise*’ second edition) that the Dutch

physician completes his theory, modifying along the way the views expressed in *Fable I*.<sup>6</sup> In the *Enquiry* he makes a distinction between self-liking (self-esteem), self-love (self-conservation instinct) and pride (a vice deriving from an excess of self-liking):

Hor: I now understand perfectly well what you mean by Self-liking. You are of Opinion, that we are all born with a Passion manifestly distinct from Self-love; that, when it is 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 that 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. As there is no Word or Expression that comprehends all the different Effects of this same Cause, this Passion, you have made one, viz. Self-liking, by which you mean the Passion in general, the whole Extent of it, whether it produces laudable Actions, and gains us Applause, or such as we are blamed for and draw upon us the ill Will of others.

Cleo. You are extremely right; this was my Design in coining the Word Self-liking (Mandeville 1971, 6-7).

Self-liking should not be confused with the desire for social recognition: they are inseparable, but they are not the same thing. In fact, self-liking is “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” (Mandeville 1971, 3). Love of praise or desire for applause is only the effect of self-liking (Mandeville 1971, 5). The desire for social recognition is so important because self-liking...

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 (Mandeville 1924b, 130).

Mandeville explicitly states that a good balance of the passion of self-liking is the necessary ingredient for good mental health. It is significant, in my opinion, that Mandeville himself shows a certain kind of reluctance in linking self-liking with health and psychological illness, almost as if he found it difficult to reconcile the *Treatise* with the *Fable*:

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<sup>6</sup> In *Fable I* Mandeville affirmed that pride and shame were two separate passions; in the *Enquiry*, instead, he states that they are both symptoms of self-liking (Mandeville 1971, 12).

Hor: 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?

Cleo: If I should tell you, that the inward Pleasure and Satisfaction a Man receives from the Gratification of that Passion, is a Cordial that contributes to his Health, you would laugh at me, and think it far fetch'd (Mandeville 1924b, 134).

In this regard, it is the passage where Cleomenes fears ridicule that Mandeville indicates the introduction of a new and counterintuitive concept. The desire to be esteemed is a fundamental element for psychological health. Mandeville doesn't explicitly theorise that self-liking plays a role in hypochondriac symptoms. However, in the *Fable of the bees* there are a series of hints that attest to Mandeville's preoccupation with hypochondria while describing the effects of deficient self-liking; these effects range from depression to suicide. If we compare the hypochondriac symptoms described in the *Treatise*, for example, with the psychological symptoms linked to low self-esteem found in the *Fable*, not only do we notice an extraordinary similarity but (at least in one case) the use of the very same description.

In what follows, I will examine two key-passages of the *Fable*: the first relates to the symptoms of shame (one of the effects of self-liking); the second is the description of the psychological state of those who want to commit suicide (the most severe form of hypochondria).

Shame is the symptom of the wound of self-liking:

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: But when, gratifying his vanity he exults in his Pride, he discovers quite contrary Symptoms; his Spirits swell and fan the Arterial Blood; a more than ordinary Warmth strengthens and dilates the Heart; the Extremities are cool; he feels Light to himself, and imagines he could tread on Air; his Head is held up; his Eyes are roll'd about with Sprightliness; he rejoices at his Being, is prone to Anger, and would be glad that all the World could take Notice of him (Mandeville 1924a, 67-68; see also Mandeville 1971, 12-13).

That We can point out at least five elements. 1) Shame causes a loss of animal spirits (“a Sinking of the Spirits”), which is exactly the cause of digestive problems, leading to hypochondria. 2) One of the symptoms of shame is the wish to be invisible—i.e., the annihilation of self-liking. (By contrast, when one’s degree of self-liking is high, then that person “would be glad that all the World could take Notice of him”). 3) Symptoms of shame are described in the *Fable* as a general heaviness of heart and head (“the Heart feels cold and condensed [...] He is heavy as Lead”). Symptoms of Hypochondria have the same characteristics in the *Treatise*: “Sometimes my Spirits are oppress’d of a sudden with an unaccountable Sadness, and I feel a great Weight at my Heart; at the height of this Anxiety I am often seiz’d with such a terrible Fits of Crying, as if I was to be dissolv’d in Tears, by which yet I am generally reliev’d” (Mandeville 1981, 267). 4) Mandeville uses the same expression to define the symptoms of hypochondria and to describe the symptoms of a man who is ashamed, that is who is wounded in his self-liking. In fact, in the *Treatise*, Misomedon describes his psychological symptoms in order of increasing intensity. The most severe one invites the outcry: “Such a *lerna malorum* and *Syndrome* of Evils made me weary of my Life” (Mandeville 1981, 27). In *Fable I* Mandeville writes: “He is weary of his Being”. 5) Even in those passages where Mandeville doesn’t use the very same words, hypochondria’s psychological symptoms are similar to those attributed in the *Fable* to patients who suffer from a lack of self-liking. Compare, for example, the suicide-passage from *Fable II* (analysed below) with the *Treatise*’s description of the symptoms of hypochondria: “a vast enormous Monster, whose Savage force may in an Instant bear down my Reason, Judgment, and all their boasted Strength before it [...] I know it, I resist it, yet I can’t overcome it” (Mandeville 1981, 53). It is a disease that “possess’d my Fancy for hours together, till the Horror of them entring deeper into my Soul, sometimes struck me with such unspeakable Pangs of Grief, as no Torture, or Death could ever be able to give the like” (Mandeville 1981, 49). The patient exclaims “How strange a thing in this Distemper of mine! To be so extraordinary well between whiles, as I am now, and sometimes to be plung’d into such an Abyss of Misery” (Mandeville 1981, 46).

In the *Enquiry into the origin of honour* Mandeville states that the *Fable of the bees* can be read as an attempt to describe the symptoms of self-liking: “The Author of the Fable of the Bees, I think pretends

somewhere to set down the different Symptoms of Pride and Shame” (Mandeville 1971, 11).

This passage on the symptoms of shame is fundamental; in fact, Mandeville uses it twice (once in the *Fable I* and once in the *Enquiry*) to emphasize the essential function that self-liking plays in one’s psychological health. In the *Enquiry* Mandeville emphasises the connection between shame and the extirpation of self-liking: “Sometimes Shame signifies the visible Disorders that are the Symptoms of this sorrowful Reflection on our own Unworthiness [...] all the Marks of Ignominy, that can be thought of, have a plain Tendency to mortify Pride; which, in other Words, is to disturb, take away and extirpate every Thought of Self-liking” (Mandeville 1971, 11).

Another crucial passage is the famous passage about suicide in *Fable II*, where Mandeville theorises that suicide is due to frustration of self-liking: vilified self-esteem may cause such suffering to overcome the natural resistance of self-preservation. Self-liking may become a cause of hatred against oneself:

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 [Self-liking] 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, [...] 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 intolerable to us, that Self-love prompts us to make an end of it, and seek Refuge in Death (Mandeville 1924b, 135-136).

Mandeville is here claiming that self-liking is necessary for psychological well-being: it is the source of hopes and wishes, the foundation of care of ourselves. If the psychological mechanism does not work properly (and, when this happens, we no longer seek the esteem of others) then “self-love prompts us to make an end of it, and seek Refuge in Death”.

Self-liking can turn into an apparent self-hatred, as pointed out by Horace: “You mean Self-hatred; for you have said your self, that a Creature cannot love what it dislikes” (Mandeville 1924b, 136). How can self-liking turns into self-hatred? Mandeville deems this impossible. He therefore claims, interestingly, that suicide is rather the last desperate act of kindness towards oneself: it puts to an end suffering that cannot otherwise be avoided: “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 ones self” (Mandeville 1924b, 136).

The evidence mustered here suggests that the psychological cause of hypochondria is a shortage of self-liking, which, in turn, causes low self-esteem and the annihilation of the desire for approval and sociability. Hypochondria is the loss of self-liking, the lack of faith and interest in other people’s esteem. Evidence of this becomes apparent if we contrast characteristics of self-liking with the symptoms of hypochondria: they are opposites. Self-liking is the principle of sociability, while hypochondria causes loneliness. Self-liking is the desire for other people’s esteem, while hypochondria is the lack of interest in other people’s judgment.

One main virtue of my interpretation is that it explains why talking therapy is so effective: it allows the patient to regain the lost sense of self-liking. The physician’s role would be to delve into the complex psychological and passionate world of his patient, and to re-establish a dialogue that may give back faith and interest in himself and in his public image. The therapy, then, would consist of self-analysis and introspection: “In Distempers, where the Imagination is chiefly affected, Men, without any other Remedies, may often reason themselves into Health” (Mandeville 2001, 187).

The *Treatise* suggests that there is a correlation between stomach disorders, hypochondria, and talking therapy; but Mandeville doesn’t explain how words can affect the stomach, even if he does try to identify the link between stomach and thought. It is worth noting that Mandeville’s examples demonstrate the influence of thought on the stomach (bad thoughts interfere with appetite and favourite foods are more easily digested)—though not the reverse. The framework, opened by new considerations on self-liking dynamics, allows the reader to identify a link between the psychic and somatic dimensions of personal

health. Stomach ailments can be seen as an effect of hypochondria, not as one of its causes. This resolves the *Treatise's* tensions: diminished self-liking is the cause of hypochondria, stomach disorders is one of the illness' symptoms, and the spoken word would play the role to retrieve the patient's lost sense of self-liking.

Let me reiterate my argument in brief: self-liking can cause either pride or shame. Pride or shame can manifest themselves physiologically. Excessive shame ruins the stomach because of "a sinking of spirits". Hypochondria thus has both psychological and physical pain. In practice, it makes one lonely and solitary. The cure is social interaction, but the patient does not want interaction because society has shamed him. The talking cure mimics interaction by reintroducing the regulative mechanism of social appreciation.

While there is textual evidence and we can track precedents among those who identify the cause of hypochondria in something similar to what Mandeville calls self-liking (pride, glory or desire for power), the etiological problem remains an open question, of which Mandeville himself reconsidered several times, highlighting the dangers of attempting to find medical explanations beyond what we can observe and experience: "Physicians, with the rest of Mankind, are wholly ignorant of the first Principles and constituent Parts of Things, in which all the Virtues and Properties of them consist" (Mandeville 1924b, 161-162).

It is impossible, however, to explain through observation alone and without resorting to conjectures how and why words may influence the symbolic dimension and the passions, and in which way passions and ideas may interact with the body. It is possible to show that words have a therapeutic effect, as it is possible to detect the existence of a relation between symbolic and physic dimensions; nevertheless, according to Mandeville, to reach a better definition is a mission that goes beyond human capacities:

I am persuaded that our Thoughts, and the Affections of the Mind, have a more certain and more mechanical Influence upon several Parts of the Body, than has been hitherto, or in all human Probability, ever will be discovered (Mandeville 1924b, 162).

## V. CONCLUSION

I started off by analysing the talking cure; this constitutes one of the most important aspects of the foregoing historiography. I then

investigated the explanations that Mandeville provides for its effectiveness. Furthermore I have argued that the theory of the passions that the Dutch physician elaborated in the twenty years between the first edition of the *Fable* and the *Enquiry* may provide an answer to problems that remained unsolved in the *Treatise* (1711). In particular, I defended the thesis that within the *Fable* is a theory of hypochondria that is based on a lack of self-liking. To this end, I showed that when Mandeville describes the symptoms of a lack of self-liking he resorts to the very same description that he makes for the symptoms of hypochondria. One unsolved problem in the *Treatise* concerns the talking cure work—i.e., how does it work? Mandeville couldn't solve this from a medical perspective by investigating the pathology of the passions. However, his philosophical perspective provides a framework for investigating the passions via a theory of self-liking.

The elaboration of his theory of passions runs parallel to his studies on hypochondria, but self-liking appears for the first time only in *Fable II* in 1729. Mandeville was unable to fully realize his project of “anatomizing the invisible Part of Man” (Mandeville 1924a, 145), and to discover the fundamental role of the desire to be esteemed, in order to apply them to his research on the causes of hypochondria. The Dutch physician left us with a medical work, the *Treatise*, where he describes his particular therapeutic method based on talking therapy and trust between doctor and patient; he also left us with a philosophical thesis, found in the *Fable* and in the *Enquiry into the origin of honour*, in which we can find a theory of the passions that explains the reasons why such a therapy is effective.

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# Mandeville on charity schools: happiness, social order and the psychology of poverty

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**Abstract:** Bernard Mandeville was not alone in criticising the charity school movement that had developed in Britain starting in late 1600; yet his *Essay on charity and charity-schools* is extremely provocative, especially as it regards the conditions of the poor. He criticises the selfish intentions and motives of charity schools, and inquires whether such schools are socially advantageous. This essay aims, first, to shed light on Mandeville's views on charity and charity schools, and demonstrate that such views are consistent with his moral thought. Second, this essay addresses problems inherent in Mandeville's views on how the working poor should be "managed"; what he proposes does not appear to guarantee (but rather puts at further risk) societal peace or the happiness of poor people.

**Keywords:** poverty, happiness, employment, necessity, mercantilism

## INTRODUCTION

It used to be widely believed that Bernard Mandeville was not concerned about the poor.<sup>1</sup> In truth, there is nothing to suggest that he was not a compassionate man either in his private life or in his profession as a

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<sup>1</sup> It used to be that Mandeville's attitude toward the poor was described as "grim mercantilist", which depicted him as a harsh advocate of the utility of poverty (Wittkowsky 1943, 79; Heckscher 1956; Moss 1987). However, recent assessments of Mandeville's mercantilist background have taken a more nuanced view regarding his attitude towards the poor (Hurtado-Prieto 2006). For a balanced analysis of Mandeville's Augustinian and mercantilist background, see Dew (2013); Dew (2005); Brody Kramnick (1992). On the political aspects of poverty, see Gunn (1983). For a discussion about Mandeville's account of social progress, see Jack (1989).

medical doctor. He worked with the poor and witnessed, first hand, the grim realities of life on the streets. Likewise, his work addressed problems facing marginalized peoples and offered solutions to those problems. For example, he adopted a strong stance against domestic violence towards women, which is discussed in *Virgin unmasked* (Mandeville 1999); he has used female characters in several of his dialogues; he even provided ideas on how to improve the conditions of working girls.<sup>2</sup> In his medical practice he advocated for simple methods, and above all offered psychological help to the sick. He seemed to genuinely despise coffee-shop doctors who cashed in on quack pills. The reality of the living and working conditions of the poor, among other things, could have fostered his resentment of hypocrisy, which he set out to expose by means of paradoxical writing in his *Fable of the bees* (Mandeville 1924a) as well as in his treatment of Shaftesbury (who was seen to project his own privileged position onto the whole of human kind).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, although Mandeville acquired many of his views about human nature through his involvement with the immigrant population and working class, it should be noted that this constituted only one context of his experiences. By contrast, the most puzzling of his works is his *Essay on charity and charity-schools* (Mandeville 1924b), which dealt with a much debated and delicate issue of the time: poor people and the so-called “charity schools” where impoverished children were sent to receive a basic education, as an alternative to early employment.

Mandeville was not alone in criticising the charity school movement that had developed in Britain since late seventeenth century, yet his *Essay on charity and charity-schools* seems extremely provocative with regard to the conditions of the poor.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, there are many passages in the essay that convey an apparently unmotivated ruthlessness.

What can be said is that Mandeville seemed, generally, to make an effort to reconcile his views about such institutions with his moral thought; that is, his premises were motivated from the perspective of an objective morality (i.e., morality that is not concerned with appearance), in order to validate his arguments. Yet, his efforts to do so fell short at times: first, his attempt at reconciling his views with objective morality

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<sup>2</sup> See Garrett.

<sup>3</sup> About Mandeville’s relationship towards Shaftesbury, see Tolonen (2013, 32-34 and 68-69) and Tolonen (2015).

<sup>4</sup> For other contemporary discussions on charity schools, see for example, Defoe (1859), p. 14; Locke (1997); Berkeley (1948-1957, VI).

was not convincing and thus not successful. Second, his portrayal of poor people was at odds with his own view of human nature, as if the poor belonged to a different species than human.

The aim of the paper is as follows: first, to shed light on Mandeville's views on charity and charity schools by going beyond the 'utility of poverty' discussion in order to show that such views are consistent with his general line thought: his criticisms of charity apply to the intentions that motivate charitable acts. In his texts Mandeville puts forward a view that claims that true morality is always and necessarily generated by self-denial, whereas charity and its "product"—i.e., the charity schools—are not. Self-denial is used as a premise for a moral position, upon which he evaluated the acts of those who claimed to be charitable. The argument he put forward purports to show that charity schools are not motivated by genuine consideration of what is good for society, or for the poor themselves. Rather, charity schools put at risk societal peace and order, the wealth of the country and, ultimately, the happiness of the poor.

Second, the paper shifts focus in order to address the problems inherent in Mandeville's views of how the working poor should be "managed": what he proposes does not appear to guarantee (but rather puts at further risk) societal peace as well as the happiness of poor people. Mandeville's seemingly unconvincing and inconsistent arguments are analysed. Specific attention is given to his claim that the working poor ought to be kept in a state of poverty, and to his "portrait" of the poor, which portrays them as people with different passions and different needs—as if ultimately they have a different nature. An extensive discussion is dedicated to the claim that ignorance is the key to preserving poor people's happiness. It will subsequently be shown that Mandeville's claims are often contradictory and philosophically unsatisfying.

## **I. MANDEVILLE'S CRITICISM OF CHARITY-SCHOOLS: HYPOCRISY OF MOTIVES, USEFULNESS OF RESULTS**

Mandeville's attack on charity schools was primarily meant as an attack on the hypocrisy of their founders, who pretended to be motivated by what is often referred to as the virtue of charity. At the same time, it could have reflected Mandeville's resentment of utopian projects built on self-deception with the tendency to do more harm than good. In moral terms, his analysis of charity in his *Essay on charity and charity-*

*schools* was similar to his reflections on every other simulated virtue. A pure act of charity implies a form of self-denial, but Mandeville expressed extreme scepticism about identifying genuinely altruistic action. In fact, he argued that what is commonly regarded as charity tends to have nothing to do with virtue. The most common charitable actions arise from a mixture of pity and pride. Pity is a natural passion that arises upon the sight of someone suffering, especially when the senses perceive the pain of others. Helping to relieve suffering engenders a feeling of pride (Mandeville 1924b, 258). Vanity also plays a role in motivating charitable actions: people simulate charity in order to gain a good reputation (1924b, 261). Mandeville mentions the case of John Radcliffe, a rich doctor who ignored his immediate family and left a substantial part of his fortune to the University of Oxford, where he knew he would be remembered long after his death (1924b, 261). People are also disposed to donate goods to the poor to ensure deliverance from their sins. This kind of charity, which is motivated by selfish concerns, is hypocritical.

Mandeville criticised insincere charity, arguing against the hypocrisy charity schools: they are the consequence of human passions, not pure benevolence or altruism (1924b, 285). What disturbed him most is the hypocrisy that leads to their construction and the universal enthusiasm for them. However, a simple consideration of human nature would explain why the majority of people are so fond of charity schools: they give their supporters an opportunity to feel morally superior, offering redemption for their sins (1924b, 279). People will, of course, claim that the pleasure they experience in contributing to the common good motivated them, but once again, their alleged motives are very different from their real ones. According to Mandeville, “No Habit or Quality is more easily acquir’d than Hypocrisy, nor anything sooner learn’d than to deny the Sentiments of our Hearts and the Principle we act from” (1924b, 281). Moreover, a stronger reason for criticism, in addition to the motives discussed above, is that charity schools are not socially beneficial; they may even be detrimental to civil society.

***Risks raised by charity schools: crime, unemployment, unhappiness***

Mandeville began by analysing the outcomes of charity schools from the perspective of public interest. Referring to the social order, he argued that, despite what their supporters claim the schools do not reduce the number of criminals, and thus he downplayed the relationship between

ignorance and crime. There were other reasons why thefts, burglaries, and murders were committed, the prime example being that the laws were not strict enough and that it was too easy to escape punishment. If the justice system were more severe, there would be far fewer criminals because the fear of punishment would deter them (Mandeville 1924b, 273). Charity schools might have even contributed to criminality, as Mandeville was convinced that another primary cause of crime is “the habit of Sloth, Idleness and strong Aversion to Labour and Assiduity” (1924b, 274), which charity schools may have encouraged, concluding that “it is not the want of Reading and Writing, but the concurrence and a complication of more substantial Evils that are the perpetual Nursery of abandoned Profligates in great and opulent Nations” (1924b, 275).

Mandeville also extensively analysed the outcomes of charity schools for their supposed beneficiaries—poor people. Again, he was not satisfied with what such schools achieved, which he summarised in two words: unemployment and unhappiness. The education in charity schools failed to achieve the main objective of every genuine educational institution: to help children find jobs after they finish their schooling. Mandeville was a strong supporter of practical education that directed one toward a specific line of work, while he was against the kind of non-tangible education given in charity schools, which did not teach any competence and risked to produce a generation of young adults who cannot find a job and consequently a decent position in society, and end up begging.

Mandeville’s attack on what he considered to be unnecessary education of poor children is primarily pragmatic:

Reading, writing and arithmetick, are very necessary to those, whose business require such qualifications, but where people’s livelihood has no dependence on these arts, they are very pernicious to the poor, who are forc’d to get their daily bread by their daily labour (1924b, 288).

The kind of education provided by charity schools could instead encourage laziness, and it would be much better to teach poor children a job and to send them to work at as early an age as possible (1924b, 267).

Employment is a crucial issue for Mandeville. He argues that, when it comes to “the social design of promoting arts and sciences”, the “principal aim” of these undertakings “is the Employment of the Poor”

(Mandeville 1733, 43), and that, “Employments might be found out for most our Lame, and many that are unfit for hard Labour, as well as the Blind, as long as their Health and Strength would allow of it” (Mandeville 1924b, 267-268). Charity schools were simply not the right means to provide employment.

Another major problem for charity schools, in addition to unemployment and its consequent social exclusion, was unhappiness. Given the kind of education provided, the children of the poor became aware of the existence of “another world” in which low wages, good beer, and simple clothes are not enough. Mandeville’s claim that poor people should be kept ignorant rests on the fact that “it is impossible, that any Creature should know the Want of what it can have no Idea of” (Mandeville 1733, 285). To some extent, those who have never experienced certain comforts, and do not have the faintest idea about them, cannot really desire them strongly, and thus, do not suffer as much from their absence: it is much easier for the poor to accept their condition if they have never known an easier or better life than it is for the rich to give up privileges and habits to which they are habituated. He argued that...

Hard Labour and the coarsest Diet are a proper Punishment to several kinds of Malefactors, but to impose either on those that have not been used and brought up to both is the greatest Cruelty, when there is no Crime you can charge them with (Mandeville 1924b, 288-289), ...

and that since “Abundance of hard and dirty Labour is to be done [...] the things I called Hardships, neither seem nor are such to those who have been brought up to ’em, and know no better” (1924b, 311).

For this reason Mandeville believed that a farmer, who had always lived a simple life full of hard work in the countryside, will not suffer because he does not have silk clothes or elegant furniture. This idea resembles what is now called the “endowment effect”—i.e., having or enjoying something and then losing it brings about much more suffering than never having experienced or possessed it (Thaler 1980). For this reason, one who is used to a comfortable life would hardly accept to be deprived of it and to work hard, while one who has never experienced anything different will adapt to it easily. Mandeville was convinced that children who were educated at charity schools, having become used to study rather than to work, would not submit to hard



labour; and further, without having proper alternatives, those children would end up unhappy and unemployed, and likely would engage in criminality.

### ***Mercantilist arguments***

It is evident that Mandeville's ideas for maintaining a rich and flourishing nation were influenced by his mercantilist background (see Furniss 1920, 117). He argues that, ...

[t]he surest Wealth consists in a Multitude of laborious Poor; for besides that they are the never-failing Nursery of Fleets and Armies, without them there could be no Enjoyment, and no Product of any Country could be valuable (Mandeville 1924b, 287).

His point was that the wealth of a nation depends upon the poor working class: a certain quantity of poor people is required to do work that no one (the rich) would do. For this reason, it is hypocritical to praise charity schools without acknowledging the need of a poor working class. As the wealth of a particular nation, according to Mandeville, depends partly upon the poor working class, it is hypocritical to praise supposed means to get rid of ignorant poor and at the same time to enjoy the benefits of having a lot of poor people willing to work hard. This kind of hypocrisy was prevalent among those people who complained about the dangers of vice, yet enjoyed all the "public benefits" that arise from it; similarly, the same hypocrisy was prevalent among people who complained about London's dirty, stinking streets, but whose wealth depended on the trade, commerce, and other activities that took place on the streets. These activities contributed not only to the chaos of the streets, but also to the wealth and opulence of the city (Mandeville 1924a, 12).

In addition to pragmatic considerations, Mandeville argued for the economic need to keep workers poor. He believed that by keeping wages low among the poor, England could be competitive on an international level as the price of manufactures could have been kept low as well. He suggests that the poor should be paid according to their productivity as opposed to receiving a set weekly or monthly wage.<sup>5</sup> What a "labouring

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<sup>5</sup> In the *Fables* part II he writes: "Lucre is the best Restorative in the World, in a literal Sense, and works upon the Spirits mechanically; for it is not only a Spur, that excites Men to labour, and makes them in love with it; but it likewise gives Relief in Weariness, and actually supports Men in all Fatigues and Difficulties. A Labourer of any sort, who

man” needs is “a moderate quantity of money; for as too little will either dispirit or make him desperate, so too much will make him insolent and lazy” (Mandeville 1924b, 194). Further, “The Proportion of the Society is spoil’d [if] the Bulk of the Nation [does not] consist of Labouring Poor, that are unacquainted with every thing but their Work” (1924b, 302). He therefore suggested that the greater the number of people working for low wages in a nation, the richer it will become. This is clearly a mercantile claim.

Adam Smith, and later Karl Marx, specifically criticized the mercantilist paradox (supported by Mandeville) that what makes a nation rich is its number of working poor. Marx pointed out that not only does having a multitude of poor people prohibit a nation from becoming rich, but that it is also dangerous as it puts social order at risk (Marx 1964, 643).

## II. UNCONVINCING ARGUMENTS AND INCONSISTENCIES

Thus far the focus of this paper has been on Mandeville’s views about charity schools. The aim has been to identify consistent arguments within his work and with the shared opinion of his time. However, most of what Mandeville wrote in his essay *Charity-schools* seems much less reasonable and not ‘Mandevillian’ at all. Rather, it reads as if he wanted to prove his point about the uselessness and perniciousness of charity schools, and cared less whether his arguments were theoretically suspect. It appears that he did not attempt to reconcile his views on charity schools with his other, perhaps more profound, views on human nature.

### ***A perennial state of necessity: incompatible with human passions, dangerous for social order?***

When Mandeville argues that workers need to be kept poor, his primary reason is the economic consideration examined above. He provided, however, a secondary reason—viz., that workers should be kept poor so that they find it *necessary* to work:

The absolute necessity all stand in for Victuals and Drink, and in cold Climates for Clothes and Lodging, makes them submit to any thing that can be bore with. If no body did Want no body would

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is paid in proportion to his Diligence, can do more work than another, who is paid by the Day or the Week, and has standing Wages” (Mandeville 1733).

work, but the greatest Hardships are look'd upon as solid Pleasures, when they keep a Man from Starving (Mandeville 1924b, 287).

In order to preserve this condition of necessity, wages have to be kept low: "Who, if by four Days Labour in a Week they can maintain themselves, will hardly be persuaded to work the fifth; [...] what reason have we to think that they would ever work, unless they were oblig'd to it by immediate Necessity?" (Mandeville 1924a, 192). This is why "the poor should be kept strictly to work, and that it was prudence to relieve their wants, but folly to cure them" (1924a, 248). Necessity thus seems to be the only way to force people to accept a life of sacrifice; furthermore, the working poor should "condescend" to accept an existence of hard work and deprivation.<sup>6</sup>

Such claims appear to be at odds with the common understanding of Mandeville's theory of human nature.<sup>7</sup> For instance, one of the dominant human characteristics he emphasises is "the desire for more", to fulfil needs, and to satisfy appetites; this cannot, it seems, be reconciled with voluntary and compliant submission to unending toil. Even when he discusses the rational ability of humans to govern their passions,<sup>8</sup> he insists that what all humans ultimately seek is the satisfaction of their desires: "All Human Creatures are sway'd and wholly govern'd by their Passions, whatever fine Notions we may flatter our Selves with" (Mandeville 1732, 31).

Mandeville seems to believe that humans seek satisfaction in every activity because they are dominated by passions, and that "all Passions center in Self-Love" (Mandeville 1924a, 75). Self-love is more than an instinct to preserve oneself. It can be seen to include the desire to be praised, and plays therefore a large role in governing human interaction (see Hjort 1991). In the *Fable's Part I*, self-love shares much in common

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<sup>6</sup> "It is impossible that a Society can long subsist, and suffer many of its Members to live in Idleness, and enjoy all the Ease and Pleasure they can invent, without having at the same time great Multitudes of People that to make good this Defect will condescend to be quite the reverse" (Mandeville 1924b, 286).

<sup>7</sup> It should be emphasised that it is not altogether clear if we can talk about Mandeville's having a single, unified, theory of human nature, even if this discussion is not the scope of this essay. One option for dealing with the apparent inconsistency is to accept that there is a lack of coherence in Mandeville's writings that would give us reason to discuss him as a theorist of human nature (or a philosopher as such). This is implicitly assumed by many philosophers today.

<sup>8</sup> "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" (Mandeville 1732, 31).

with pride (though, in *Part II* of the *Fable*, Mandeville distinguishes it from self-liking, which is a more refined passion) (Lovejoy 1971, 171; Dickey 1990, 399; Tolonen 2013, 84-95). Mandeville believed that all humans possess pride (even the working poor). He states:

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. We are possess'd of no other Quality so beneficial to Society, and so necessary to render it wealthy and flourishing as this (Mandeville 1924a, 124).

Mandeville seemed to suggest that every human being has a desire to improve his own condition, and that this desire is the driver of human action. In Remark 'M', Mandeville does not appear to exclude anyone from the domain of this passion, not even simple workers:

We all look above our selves, and, as fast as we can, strive to imitate those, that some way or other are superior to us. The poorest Labourer's Wife in the Parish, who scorns to wear a strong wholesom Frize, as she might, will half starve her self and her Husband to purchase a second-hand Gown and Petticoat, that cannot do her half the Service; because, forsooth, it is more genteel. The Weaver, the Shoemaker, the Tailor, the Barber, and every mean working Fellow, that can set up with little, has the Impudence with the first Money he gets, to Dress himself like a Tradesman of Substance (1924a, 129).

Passions, especially pride, seem to dominate all human actions. At first glance, there is no reason to believe that this does not apply to the working poor, who, unlike everyone else, work just for fulfilling their basic necessities. It is indeed true that Mandeville contemplates the possibility that people give up (some of) their passions at some point; but those who suppress their desires have other passion-driven aims instead. This led him to conclude that: "it is unreasonable to expect, that others should serve us for nothing" (Mandeville 1733, 349). Though, he never mentions the possibility that people voluntarily give up personal aspirations without hope for reward. His assumption about the innateness of pride permitted him to suggest that humans tend to value luxury over pleasure: the desire to possess things and to be admired will lead people to accept other deprivations. For example, women who want to look thinner and to fit in smaller clothes will deprive themselves of food (Mandeville 1924a).

If we consider that *all* human beings are ruled by passions, it seems quite unfair to suppose that persons will submit to hard work without reward (other than having basic needs met), and also dangerous for the maintenance of social order. Yet, elsewhere, Mandeville has expressed scepticism about the possibility that human passions can be subdued and even claims that it could be dangerous for social order. Most of these reflections concern the political dimension of social order: Mandeville defended the principle of liberty against the tyranny of absolute government. This was based on his assumption about human nature, according to which, every kind of forced submission is ultimately dangerous for the socio-political order. The way to build a peaceful society is not through the exercise of sovereign power, as it is impossible to control humans by force alone (1924a, 42). An obvious example of this is slavery: slaves cannot be trusted and will always try to rebel against their captors (Mandeville 1987, 307). Here Mandeville seems to be making a more general point beyond the mere idea of a government exercising power over its subjects. The point is that human nature cannot easily be modified, and that passions cannot easily be suffocated. Accordingly, those in power should not underestimate the power of human passions, and should not assume that they can be easily suppressed. In *The Fable's Part II* he states that,

There is great Difference between being submissive, and being governable; for he who barely submits to another, only embraces what he dislikes, to shun what he dislikes more; But to be governable, implies an Endeavour to please, and a Willingness to exert ourselves in behalf of the Person that governs. [...] Therefore a Creature is then truly governable, when, reconcil'd to Submission, it has learn'd to construe his Servitude to his own Advantage; and rests satisfy'd with the Account it finds for itself, in the Labour it performs for others (Mandeville 1733, 184).

Although the context of these claims is the maintenance of political order rather than the working condition of labourers, the subject is the same—it deals with the human passions. In the former context (the social/political order) Mandeville advises politicians not to assume that humans can be subdued by force alone because their passions are not easily suppressed. By contrast, with regard to labourers, the only way to make them accept deprivation and hard living conditions is to inculcate the necessity of working.

Nevertheless, Mandeville did not seem to consider fully that the ambitions and desires of poor people cannot be suppressed for long without threatening societal peace and order. Humans will never willingly submit to the will of others; at some point they will try to rebel. This was apparently clear to Mandeville concerning political issues. But, that the submission of poor people is just as likely to lead to unstable social conditions should have been clearer to him.

***Mandeville's portrait of the poor: ignorant and happy?***

It is not obvious, then, why it can't be assumed that the working poor would labour to earn more money, to achieve a comfortable lifestyle, and to improve their overall condition—this is what people typically do. Mandeville might have seen this objection and tried to respond to it, but the arguments he employs are problematic because of their inconsistency with his general line of thought.

The first argument goes as follows: when Mandeville talks about pride, he claims that it is a faculty that belongs to “every Mortal that has any Understanding”. So perhaps his intuition was that without such “understanding” people would not display any signs of pride. Thus, if the working poor were kept away from charity schools (as sources of understanding), they would not become victims of this passion. It was for this reason that Mandeville stated that workers ought to be kept ignorant. He insisted that such ignorance guarantees a form of happiness that is possible only among the uneducated, and subsequently portrayed them in a way that closely resembles his idea of a savage in the state of nature. However, his attempt to prove that poor and ignorant people bound to hard work can be happy is not convincing and suffers from many inconsistencies.

Mandeville was probably aware of how untenable his position was, and for this reason added the provision of ignorance:

To make the Society happy and People easy under the meanest Circumstances, it is requisite that great Numbers of them should be Ignorant as well as Poor. Knowledge both enlarges and multiplies our Desires, and the fewer things a Man wishes for, the more easily his Necessities may be supply'd (Mandeville 1924b, 277-278).

Mandeville criticized charity schools as a source of knowledge since the more a man “knows” the less he is likely to accept a life of deprivation. The small amount of knowledge the working poor would

gain at charity schools (such as the ability to read and write) would lead them to overestimate themselves (the same effect of pride), and thus to refuse to submit to hard work:

Those who spent a great part of their Youth in learning to Read, Write and Cypher, expect and not unjustly to be employ'd where those Qualifications may be of use to them; the Generality of them will look upon downright Labour with the utmost Contempt, I mean Labour perform'd in the Service of others in the lowest Station of Life, and for the meanest Consideration (1924b, 289).

Ignorance is therefore required for people to willingly submit to hard work. But it is not clear what Mandeville really meant when he talks about ignorance. Given that he wanted to support his claim about the harms of charity schools, it is possible that he simply referred to education. This is apparent in some passages, as he thinks that merely reading and writing can bring about damage. But, in other passages, he seems to refer to more than the kind of education one could learn at a charity school; it is a broader kind of knowledge, what he calls knowledge “of the world”, and also “understanding”. He writes that:

the Knowledge of the Working Poor should be confin'd within the Verge of their Occupations, and never extended (as to things visible) beyond what relates to their Calling. The more a Shepherd, a Plowman or any other Peasant knows of the World, and the things that are Foreign to his Labour or Employment, the less fit he'll be to go through the Fatigues and Hardships of it with Chearfulness and Content (1924b, 288).

Later in the text, when commenting on the necessity of the “inferiority” of the servants, he clarifies that he means “Inferiors not only in Riches and Quality, but likewise in Knowledge and Understanding. A Servant can have no unfeign'd Respect for his Master, as soon as he has Sense enough to find out that he serves a Fool” (1924b, 289).

Such arguments suggest that what Mandeville meant by keeping the poor ignorant went beyond the kind of education obtained in charity schools. The kind of ignorance that is required is not only lack of formal education, but also lack of “knowledge of the world”, and lack of understanding. Yet such conditions would not be met simply by closing charity schools; they would require a different conception of human nature.

Happiness is a central concept in Mandeville's prose. He had insisted that charity schools are likely to make the children of the poor unhappy given that, upon being educated, children will have glimpsed a life they could not achieve. In this context, unhappiness seems thus to be strongly connected to education, and this is perhaps why Mandeville professed that poor people should be kept ignorant. Mandeville devoted much attention to the happiness of the poor in order to prove that poor people could be happy despite being mired in their lowly condition, unable to ameliorate it with education. What needed to be clarified is the kind of happiness the poor could achieve, and whether it would be true happiness.

In medical and Epicurean terms, happiness is characterised as the absence of pain (be that mental or physical). For example, in the *Fable of the bees* Mandeville stated that, "those were the happiest, who felt the least pain" (Mandeville 1924a, 92). And, in the *Preface* to the *Fable*, Mandeville stated that, ...

if laying aside all worldly Greatness and Vain-Glory, I should be ask'd where I thought it was most probable that Men might enjoy true Happiness, I would prefer a small peaceable Society, in which Men, neither envy'd nor esteem'd by Neighbours, should be contented to live upon the Natural Product of the Spot they inhabit (1924a, 12-13).

Thus, in order to be happy it would have been better to be frugal and moderate in one's passions: fewer wants and fewer passions lead to moderation and contentment.

Mandeville aimed to show that poor people were able to enjoy as much happiness as the rich because they had different needs and passions. The poor man is content drinking beer whereas the middle-class choice is more complex—e.g., he cannot decide between claret and port. The framework by which human nature is defined is fairly standard, but the poor and the rich differ with regard to the objects of their passions. Thus, even the poor could satisfy their passions, as they are described as

soon contented as to the necessities of Life; such as are glad to take up with the coarsest Manufacture in every thing they wear, and in their Diet have no other aim than to feed their Bodies when their Stomachs prompt them to eat, and with little regard to Taste or Relish, refuse no wholesome Nourishment that can be



swallow'd when Men are Hungry, or ask any thing for their Thirst but to quench it (Mandeville 1924b, 286-287).

The key to understanding this desire mechanism is as follows: poor people's desires are different from those of the rich in that the objects of desire are more tangible. This is not to say that the poor and the rich are entirely different; but they do not appear to have similar desires (1924b, 311).<sup>9</sup> This is a familiar argument put forward by all early modern writers, Christian and non-Christian alike: life's necessities among people in higher positions of society compared with those on the lower levels were assumed to be different.

Yet, it could be objected that, even if desires are different, the mechanism that drives the desire is the same, as Mandeville writes in the Remark 'M' (see above Mandeville 1924a, 129). This might be why Mandeville made the distinction between poor people and rich people, suggesting that they have ultimately different natures: "Excess of Vanity and hurtful Ambition are unknown among the Poor; they are seldom tainted with Avarice, with Irreligion never; and they have much less Opportunity of robbing the Publick than their Betters" (Mandeville 1733, 60). Poor people are content with what they have, so long as they ignore the pleasures and luxury of the rich. One may find "Union and Neighbourly Love, less Wickedness and Attachment to the World, more Content of Mind, more Innocence, Sincerity" among the hard working and the illiterate, and "Pride and Insolence, eternal Quarrels and Dissensions, Irreconcilable Hatreds, Strife, Envy, Calumny and other Vices destructive to mutual Concord" among university-educated scholars (Mandeville 1924b, 309).

The description of the poor Mandeville provided in *Charity-schools* resembles his description of man in the state of nature: the savage is a timorous rather than a voracious animal, characterised by "Innocence and Stupidity"; all the problems of the savage, as well as of the poor, arise from knowledge: "as his Knowledge increases, his Desires are enlarged (and consequently his Wants and Appetites are multiply'd)" (Mandeville 1924a, 205-206).

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<sup>9</sup> "Abundance of hard and dirty labour is to be done, and coarse living is to be complied with: where shall we find a better nursery for these necessities than the children of the poor? none certainly are nearer to it or fitter for it. Besides that the things I called hardships, neither seem nor are such to those who have been brought up to 'em, and know no better. There is not a more contented people among us, than those who work the hardest and are the least acquainted with the pomp and delicacies of the world".

There are, nevertheless, some problems with this description of poor people. First, contentment and innocence are not drivers of action: “Content, the Bane of Industry, / Makes ‘em admire their homely Store, / And neither seek nor covet more” (1924a, 35). If poor people are happy with their condition they have no reason to submit to hard work, and if they do it because they are guided by their passions and necessities, this is at odds with the idea of happiness and “contentment”. If poor people work in order to satisfy their passions and necessities they are thus just like everyone else in the world, and the fact that the passions are less refined does not change the mechanism behind it.

It could be further argued that Mandeville actually had in mind a stoic idea of happiness, which meant that people could be happy in the worst conditions—i.e., hard work, low salary, simple food, no luxury. This is a recurrent theme in Mandeville’s work. The Stoics indeed did not...

allow any Thing to be a real Good that was liable to be taken from them by others. They wisely consider’d the Instability of Fortune, and the Favour of Princes; the Vanity of Honour, and popular Applause; the Precariousness of Riches, and all earthly Possessions; and therefore placed true Happiness in the calm Serenity of a contented Mind free from Guilt and Ambition (1924a, 150).

This is not only found in the Stoics, as Mandeville states: “the generality of Wise Men that have liv’d ever since to this Day, agree with the Stoicks in the most material Points; as that there can be no true Felicity in what depends on Things perishable” (1924a, 151).

But, the working poor are excluded from such happiness. As such, the Stoics could be happy in spite of what befalls them, their force is in their mind: “the generality of Wise Men [...] agree with the Stoicks [...] that Knowledge, Temperance, Fortitude, Humility, and other Embellishments of the Mind are the most valuable Acquisitions” (1924a, 151). Thus, while the stoic is a wise man, the working poor is ignorant; while the stoic has knowledge on his side, the working poor has to be kept away from it at all costs; while the stoic commands his passions, the working poor has fewer passions, but does not command them—the necessity to satisfy at least some of them is what makes him work hard. The stoic is superior to others, the working poor *needs* to be inferior.

It could thus be stated that Mandeville’s claim that poor people are happy does not hold. Even supposing that the poor are similar to savages, they could never enjoy the same happiness and contentment,

as they are virtually enslaved by the rich, but lack the intellectual resources that would allow them to be happy even with such deprivations.

## CONCLUSION

The aim in this paper was to explore Mandeville's highly criticised *Essay on charity and charity-schools* in order to establish what was valuable and reasonable therein, and what, even if less topical from a contemporary perspective, was problematic about his mercantilist background.

Despite some interesting elements, Mandeville's attempts to justify his views are not entirely convincing. Although it may well be that charity schools did not make poor people happy, and may have been detrimental to their wellbeing, the working conditions Mandeville proposed would have had no chance of generating a happy working class. On the other hand, the idea of teaching job skills instead of Latin, and focusing on employment rather than education makes some sense. The main problem is Mandeville's notion of necessity: In lacking basic needs and being dependent upon hard labour for low wages, the poor are more likely to experience civil unrest than "national happiness"—Mandeville seemed to understand this given his explanation of the difference between submission and governability.

Yet, the idea of keeping the poor ignorant so as to subdue their passions and keep their happiness intact is inconsistent. This is for two reasons: Firstly, Mandeville's idea of ignorance does not seem to be confined to formal education, but rather to a general "knowledge of the world" and "understanding". But such forms of ignorance cannot be achieved by the mere abolition of charity schools. Rather, they require the presence of a different kind of human being, which he indeed theorizes about. However, the portrait of the poor person he conceives, which is very similar to his notion of the primitive savage, is again inconsistent with his ideas about happiness. Even the Stoic ideal of happiness cannot apply to the poor, since the Stoic's wisdom and superior knowledge allow him to feel happy despite his poor material conditions. Mandeville's ideal poor person, being ignorant and savage-like, cannot aspire to reach this kind of happiness.

In conclusion, Mandeville probably deserved the criticism his essay attracted, but more for the inner inconsistencies in his arguments than for his attack on the virtue of charity and charity schools. As he points

out, such institutions were probably far from a good solution to the problem of poverty.

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# Bernard Mandeville and the doctrine of laissez-faire

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**Abstract:** The view of Mandeville as a pioneer of laissez-faire is difficult to reconcile with his repeated insistence that private vices were turned into public benefits by the 'dexterous management of the skilful politician'. Even if references to the skilful politician are regarded as shorthand for a legal and institutional framework, there remains the question of whether such a framework is a spontaneous order or the product of purposeful experiment as Mandeville thought? Mandeville warned about the harmful effects of meddling but his complaint was about the actions of fashionable do-gooders rather than government. He understood that the voluntariness of a transaction could be regarded as a defence against complaints of unfairness but he was quick to point out the limitations of voluntariness especially in the market for labour. Mandeville's objective was to teach people what they are not what they should be. He pointed to the strengths of the emerging market system but was not afraid to expose its faults.

**Keywords:** Mandeville, laissez-faire, interventionist, education, labour, voluntary action

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to his edition of Mandeville's *Fable of the bees*, F.B. Kaye considered Mandeville's influence in three fields: literature, ethics and economics. Kaye concluded that it was on the course of economic theory that Mandeville's influence was greatest and identified three areas in which this influence was especially important. These were the division of labour, the defence of luxury and most important of all, the doctrine of laissez faire. Kaye saw Mandeville's doctrine of laissez faire as having two interlocking components. One was the beneficial social consequences of political non-interference. The other was that these beneficial social consequences were the result of the unhindered

interaction of self-seeking individuals (Kaye, in Mandeville 1924, I: cxxxviii). In support of the first component, Kaye cited the following passage from volume II of the *Fable*:

In the Compound of all Nations, the different Degrees of Men ought to bear a certain Proportion to each other, as to Numbers, in order to render the whole a well-proportion'd Mixture. And as this due Proportion is the Result and natural Consequence of the difference there is in the Qualifications of Men, and the Vicissitudes that happen among them, so it is never better attained to, or preserv'd, than when nobody meddles with it. Hence we may learn, how the short-sighted Wisdom, of perhaps well-meaning People, may rob us of a Felicity, that would flow spontaneously from the Nature of every large Society, if none were to divert or interrupt the Stream (Mandeville 1924, II: 353).

However, while acknowledging the importance of such passages, Kaye argued that what made the *Fable* the chief source of the laissez-faire doctrine was not the issue of non-interference but the prominence that Mandeville gave to the doctrine of individualism,<sup>1</sup> according to which man is seen as a mechanism of interacting selfish passions whose apparent discords harmonise to the public good. Kaye intimated that it was this linking of selfish private interests to the public welfare that provided the philosophical ground for laissez-faire and that, without it, the laissez-faire doctrine could hardly have developed.

Although studies of the ideological basis of classical economics emphasise the importance of the idea that individual self-seeking may entail unintended social benefits, the doctrine of laissez-faire also drew sustenance from other sources (Keynes 1926). The most important of these was the doctrine of natural right, which was developed in the course of the seventeenth century by authors such as Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Samuel Pufendorf and John Locke. Building on theories of property and exchange that were present in Roman law, these authors emphasised the right of the individual to the enjoyment of his life, liberty, and property, and regarded transactions entered into voluntarily as inherently just. As Hobbes put it, “forasmuch as both the buyer and

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<sup>1</sup> Kaye does not provide any formal definition of individualism nor does he adopt Schumpeter's (1908) distinction between political and methodological individualism. However, it is evident from his comparison of Mandeville's thought with his free trade predecessors that Kaye regarded the key difference as follows: “Mandeville held that the selfish good of the individual is normally the good of the state' whereas his predecessors considered the welfare of the state as a whole and that of the individual need not necessarily coincide” (Kaye, in Mandeville 1924, I: cii-ciii).

the seller are made judges of the value, and are thereby both satisfied: there can be no injury on either side" (Hobbes 1999, I: xvi.5). The key change related to the issue of voluntariness. Whereas in earlier thought an exchange was considered to be involuntary and unjust if there was personal compulsion and need, Hobbes was clear that such things as fear could not invalidate a lawful contract (Hobbes 2001, I: xiv.27).

The two justifications for laissez-faire have quite different structures. The first is consequentialist in character; it stresses the beneficial social results. The second is concerned with the rights people have to do things rather than the consequences of their actions. Odd Langholm (1982, 282) has suggested that the great strength and longevity of the laissez-faire doctrine derives precisely from the combination of the two justifications. Self-regard is justified by its social benefits, while its less pleasant consequences are tolerated because individuals have a priori rights to do certain things.

No one doubts that Mandeville expressed the view that pursuit of individual self-interest could be beneficial for society and indeed he is widely regarded as the originator of consequentialist arguments for the laissez-faire doctrine.<sup>2</sup> The issue for commentators has been the conditions under which reconciliation of private and public interests takes place. In defending himself against the suggestion that he was actively promoting vice, Mandeville clarified that the phrase 'private vices, public benefits'—which formed the subtitle of his *Fable of the bees*—should be interpreted to mean "that private vices by the dexterous management of a skilful politician, may be turned into public benefits" (Mandeville 1924, I: 411-412). This opens up questions concerning the role of the skilful politician and the nature of his dexterous management. The debate surrounding this has generated a substantial literature with important contributions from Viner, Rosenberg, Hayek, and others. This literature is reviewed and evaluated in section II below.

What has not been attended to in the literature to date is the extent to which Mandeville held that the outcome of voluntary transactions is necessarily just or beneficial.<sup>3</sup> This neglect may be explained by the fact that Mandeville did not subscribe to the idea of a social contract and so

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<sup>2</sup> The precise nature of these benefits is seldom investigated. Mandeville usually had in mind general prosperity and economic progress, though at times he referred to specific benefits. For a critique of the latter, see Rashid (1985).

<sup>3</sup> No suggestion is being made here that the properties of being just and being beneficial are identical.



would not be expected to use arguments grounded in an appeal to natural rights. Nonetheless, as shown in section III below, Mandeville not only made frequent use of the argument that when a choice is freely made, we can be sure that the person making it regards it as the best option available to him, but he also showed awareness of its ideological force as a justification for otherwise unpleasant states of affairs. But this is not all. While Mandeville generally regarded mutually beneficial exchange of commodities as unproblematic, that was not the case with transactions involving labour. In the labour market, 'voluntary' exchange had to be underpinned by the compulsion of need and Mandeville discussed in some detail what was required for the maintenance of this situation. Almost a century and a half later, Mandeville's observations on the labour market won the approval of Marx, who saw them as providing important insights into the nature of an emerging capitalist system and not simply as a reflection of mercantilist prejudices as has more often been alleged.

## II. INTERVENTIONIST OR NON-INTERVENTIONIST

The earliest challenge to Kaye's view (that Mandeville's *Fable* was the chief source of the *laissez-faire* doctrine) came from Jacob Viner<sup>4</sup> in the course of his introduction to a reprint of *A letter to Dion*, which Mandeville wrote in reply to criticisms in George Berkeley's *Alciphron*. Viner acknowledged Mandeville's rejection of forms of intervention, such as sumptuary laws, as well as his stress on the importance of self-interest and of individual ambition as the driving forces of economic activity. He also acknowledged that Mandeville held that individual determination would result in a better allocation of labour among different occupations than would regulation. But whilst accepting that these were an essential part of the *laissez-faire* doctrine, Viner maintained that they were also consistent with mercantilism. According to Viner, in England at least, both mercantilism and the widely-prevalent theological utilitarianism were just as individualistic as later *laissez-faire* economics. Consequently, Adam Smith was regarded as an exponent of *laissez-faire* not just because he linked the pursuit of private interest to the public good, but because he maintained as a general principle that the activities of government should be limited to

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<sup>4</sup> In his earlier *Studies of the theory of international trade*, Viner (1937, 99) accepted Kaye's evaluation referring to Mandeville's elaborate reasoning in support of individualism and *laissez-faire* as preparing the way for Adam Smith.

the enforcement of justice, to defence, and to public works. Mandeville, by contrast, “put great and repeated stress on the importance of the rôle of government in producing a strong and prosperous society, through detailed and systematic regulation of economic activity” (Viner 1953, 13). It was a common mistake to interpret the sub-title of the *Fable* ‘Private Vices, Publick Benefits’ as a laissez-faire motto, but Mandeville, himself, had repeatedly emphasised the importance of “the dexterous Management of a skilful Politician” (Viner 1953, 13-14).

In a paper published in 1963, Nathan Rosenberg sought to address the problems posed by these conflicting interpretations of Mandeville. Rosenberg acknowledged that Mandeville was a mercantilist in the sense that attributed great importance to the regulation of a country’s balance of trade with the rest of the world. However, he qualified this by noting that Mandeville’s emphasis on the balance of payments appears to have been motivated by his desire to demonstrate that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, a taste for foreign luxury could not undo a nation (Rosenberg 1963). Turning to the domestic affairs, Rosenberg argued that Mandeville presented a well-articulated position on the role of government in social and economic affairs, which was considerably more interesting than that comprehended in the intellectual tradition of laissez-faire or, for that matter, mercantilism. Mandeville, he argued, was indeed an interventionist, but the forms of intervention that he approved were such as would result in the creation of a society which would run itself. Thus, when Mandeville referred to private vices being turned into social benefits by the dexterous management of the skilful politician, he was not advocating political intervention in the day-to-day management of the economy. Rather, he was advancing the view that the welfare of society is best promoted by the introduction and diffusion of laws that utilize man’s basic passions and channel them into socially useful activities. In other words, Mandeville’s dexterous management by the clever politician was not to be interpreted literally; it referred to the creation of a legal and institutional framework where arbitrary exertions of government would be minimised. Such a framework was not to be regarded as the product of human ingenuity or of a single mind but evolved gradually over time through a process of trial and error (Rosenberg 1963).

The broad thrust of Rosenberg’s interpretation of Mandeville with its emphasis on the evolutionary development of social institutions is

widely accepted.<sup>5</sup> However, as we shall see, its effect was not to end the arguments about Mandeville and laissez-faire but to move them to a different level. In his 1966 lecture on Mandeville delivered to the British Academy, Hayek expressed the view that Rosenberg was “wholly right” in his interpretation of Mandeville, and intimated that Viner had been misled by Mandeville’s references to “dexterous management by the skilful politician” (Hayek 1991). While the focus of the lecture was Mandeville’s evolutionary views rather than his attitude to laissez-faire per se, it nonetheless had important bearing on the issue since Hayek characterised Mandeville’s evolutionary views on the development of institutions as an early statement of the doctrine of spontaneous order. Hayek’s view is well summarised in a note on Mandeville written in 1959:

Not only in the areas of morality and convention, but also for language and money, he [Mandeville] shows clearly how the preservation of more advantageous and the elimination of less profitable practices and usages leads to cumulative growth of extremely complicated structures which serve human goals and form the basis of culture without ever having been consciously designed (Hayek 1991, 99).

Hayek and Rosenberg are in agreement that Mandeville’s “dexterous management” is to be achieved not by continuous government intervention in the market process but by means of laws and institutions which evolved over time that channel human energies in ways that are socially beneficial (Rosenberg 1963, 188). They also agree that these laws and institutions are the products of an evolutionary process taking place over very long periods of time and, in this sense, can be regarded as the product of human action rather than human design. However, whereas Rosenberg argued that, for Mandeville, laws and institutions were in a meaningful sense the products of wise government, Hayek saw in Mandeville an early statement of the doctrine of spontaneous order—that is, an order which has evolved over time without the intervention of government. Although views differ on what exactly Hayek believed about the efficiency of evolved institutions, there

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Chalk (1966) regards Rosenberg’s analysis as “convincing” and “thorough”. On the other hand, while describing Rosenberg’s interpretation of Mandeville’s views on the evolutionary development of social institutions as “faultless”, Landreth (1975, n76) argues that Rosenberg missed the main point, viz., Mandeville’s emphatic assertion of the necessity of government to bring harmony between individual self-interest and public welfare.

can be no doubt that he was a reluctant reformer, an advocate of gradualism, and an enemy of what he called constructive intervention. Apart from any propensity to believe in the proven utility of evolved organisations, Hayek also grounded his gradualism in the belief that people lacked the knowledge to enable them to intervene effectively in complex evolved institutions.

Mandeville was also deeply conscious of the limitations of our knowledge,<sup>6</sup> but he appears to have had no objection to a considerable amount of reforming effort. He defined society as a body politic in which man had become a disciplined creature that can find his own ends in labouring for others “and where under one head or other form of government each member is rendered subservient to the whole” (Mandeville 1924, I: 347). The role of government was to preserve peace and tranquillity among multitudes of different views, and make them all labour for one interest. It was the “business of the public to supply the defects of the society, and take that in hand which is most neglected by private persons” (ibid., 321). The art of governing was “a great task [...] and nothing in human affairs required greater knowledge” (II: 318). The regulations required to defeat and prevent all the machinations and contrivances that arise from avarice and envy were infinite. In a city such as London, “the laws, prohibitions, ordinances, and restrictions that have been found absolutely necessary, to hinder both private men and bodies corporate, in so many different stations, first from interfering with the public peace and welfare; secondly, from openly wrongdoing and secretly overreaching, or any other way injuring one another [...] were] prodigious beyond imagination” (II: 321). Very few institutions were the work of one man or even one generation. The wisdom they involved was not the product of a fine understanding or intense thinking but of sound and deliberate judgement, acquired from long experience in business and a multiplicity of observations (II: 322). Hence, if we examine the governance of a flourishing city which has lasted a long time, we will find:

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<sup>6</sup> There are discussions of the nature and limitations of human knowledge in the 3rd and 4th dialogues of Part II of the *Fable* and in *A treatise of the hypochondriack and hysterick diseases*, 1730. Mandeville’s analysis of knowledge is discussed in Prendergast (2014).

That the changes, repeals, additions and amendments, that have been made in and to the laws and ordinances by which it is ruled, are in number prodigious: But when they are once brought to as much perfection, as art and human wisdom, can carry them, the whole machine may be made to play of itself, with as little skill, as is required to wind up a clock (II: 323).

All of this would seem to indicate that in Mandeville's view the evolution of laws and institutions involved active intervention by government and law makers. Mandeville was aware that, like everyone else, legislators possessed only limited rationality. As he it put in his *Modest defence of public stews* (1724), no society ever framed a complete body of laws at once. Unforeseen events were likely to happen and these would require subsequent modification of any initial proposals or actions (Primer 2006, 62).

As noted above, Hayek was of the view that Viner had been misled by Mandeville's repeated reference to dexterous management by the skilful politician and had misinterpreted this to mean that Mandeville favoured "what we now call government intervention, that is, a specific direction of men's economic activities by government" (Hayek 1991, 85). Viner, however, appears to have been unmoved and expressed this in a letter to Hayek of January 23rd, 1967, in which he wrote: "I see nothing to withdraw, to amend, or to justify in what I have written about Mandeville" (Hayek 1991, 85; Skarbek 2013). Viner also pointed out that although Mandeville was a staunch supporter of the Whig government of his day, there was no record of his having criticised any interventionist laws of the period other than those involving discrimination against dissenters and the exclusion of protestant immigrants (Hayek 1991b, 85).

Viner's concerns about what he perceived as biases and inconsistencies in Hayek's position had already been articulated in his review of Hayek's *The constitution of liberty* in 1961 and also in his own article on the intellectual history of laissez-faire published in 1960. Two related points from these publications will concern us here. The first concerns Hayek's contention that the development of desirable institutions should be left to the play of spontaneous forces, which he believed can be relied upon to produce good results because no institution can continue to survive unless it performs some useful function. Viner complained of Hayek's failure to examine the historical evidence relating to the rise, persistence, and fall of historical

institutions. Tellingly, he also complained about Hayek's failure "to apply the method of speculative history to government itself" and to treat it "as itself an institution which is in large degree a spontaneous growth, inherently decentralised, experimental, innovating, subject not only to tendencies for costly meddling but also to propensities for inertia and costly inaction" (Viner 1961, 235).

The second point relates to the bias in favour of the status quo. This is a natural consequence of the assumption that existing institutions must have wisdom and merit in them because they are the product of an evolutionary process (Viner 1960, 63). Viner argued that if this assumption were valid, it would at most imply that interventions should be cautious and piecemeal. In any case, it provided no warrant against "selective tampering with the free market process by a government well-intentioned and reasonably intelligent" (1960, 64). Such tampering could be warranted even in "cases of free contract between two individuals". In this context, Viner went on to challenge Bentham's view that no government or official can know what somebody wants or the means of fulfilling those wants better than the person himself (1960, 65).

Implicit in Viner's critique are doubts about the 'optimality' of both the actual market process as well as the evolutionary processes outlined by Hayek. Viner is by no means alone in this. Hayek has been widely criticised even by allied authors, such as Buchanan, for implying that the persistence of a form of life indicates that it is in some sense ideal or legitimate (Buchanan 1975; Gray 1989; Voight 1992, Brennan 2013).<sup>7</sup> The work of authors such as Paul David (1985), Brian Arthur (1989), and Paul Krugman (1991) has demonstrated the importance of positive feedbacks and the possibility that societies could be locked-in to inferior conventions, standards and technologies. Likewise, game theoretic approaches have failed to provide any comfort for those wishing to argue in defence of the status quo. In a perceptive article focussed on Mandeville, Marina Bianchi (1993) pointed out that Hayek neither explains what he means by socially beneficial institutions nor how such institutions are reached, maintained, or changed. Bianchi showed that repeated games of the co-ordination type were helpful in representing

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the works cited above, there is a large literature on the issue of group selection, namely on whether it can provide an adequate mechanism for cultural evolution in Hayek (Caldwell 2000; Whitman 1998; Sober and Wilson 1988; Steele 1987; Fiori 2006). Although Mandeville, in his conjectural history of the origin of moral virtue, has the lawgivers and other wise men divide the species into two classes to create an emulation among them, what he describes is hardly what Hayek means by group selection.

the spontaneous emergence of norms. However, such conventions were not necessarily the most efficient and, where they were not, the shift to a more efficient solution could not happen spontaneously but required active intervention (Bianchi 1993; Rosenberg 1963; Rutherford 2001). Norms can also emerge in prisoners' dilemma type games which continue in time but the means by which they do so are not well understood. As Bianchi points out, the solutions usually proposed involve the restructuring of the problem as if interests necessarily converge on the commonly beneficial outcome. Bianchi argues that this does not do justice to Mandeville whose depiction of society involves a constant search for innovations yielding differential advantage and whose formulation of market society is one in which beneficial 'consequences' arise not *despite* individual conflicts of interest but *because* of them.

This aspect of Mandeville's thought was noticed, and evidently admired, by Marx who parodied Mandeville's arguments in a passage in the *Economic manuscript of 1861-63*. The passage begins: "A philosopher produces ideas, a poet poems, a clergyman sermons, a professor compendia and so on. A criminal produces crimes". It continues:

If we take a closer look at the connection between this latter branch of production and society as a whole, we shall rid ourselves of many prejudices. The criminal produces not only crimes but also criminal law, and with this also the professor who gives lectures on criminal law [...]. The criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life. In this way, he keeps it from stagnation, and gives rise to that uneasy tension and agility without which even the spur of competition would get blunted. Thus he gives a stimulus to the productive forces [...]. Would locks ever have reached their present degree of excellence had there been no thieves? [...] Does not practical chemistry owe as much to the adulteration of commodities and the efforts to show it up as the honest zeal for production? (Marx 1988, 306-309).

Marx concluded with the statement that Mandeville had already shown that every possible kind of occupation is productive, and he quoted Mandeville's view that what we call evil in this world, moral as well as natural, is the grand principle that makes us sociable creatures. Marx added, "Only Mandeville was of course infinitely bolder and more honest than the philistine apologists of bourgeois society" (Marx 1988,

310).<sup>8</sup> Like Mandeville, Marx evidently enjoyed disturbing bourgeois sensibilities, but his parody pinpoints the fact that, for Mandeville, it is the clash of interests rather than their identity that drove economic progress.

Rashid (1985, 322) regards Mandeville's assertions about the benefits of fraud as nonsensical, and indeed Mandeville himself cautioned against drawing conclusions *in infinitum* from some of his paradoxical assertions. However, the key point is that things that are undesirable in the short-term may lead to a variety of improvements if viewed in a longer time frame.<sup>9</sup> In the essay, *A search into the nature of society* and in volume II of the *Fable*, Mandeville argued that neither the friendly qualities of man nor the bounty of nature gave rise to development. Rather "the necessities, the vices and imperfections of man, together with the various inclemencies of the air and other elements, contain in them the seeds of all arts, industry and labour" (Mandeville 1924, I: 366).

Mandeville insisted that genius, wit, and natural parts could be as much improved in the practice of the meanest villainy, as in the exercise of industry or the most heroic virtue (I: 275). Nonetheless, he understood that the system could not function if everybody behaved badly. Those who strove only to gratify their appetites would find themselves "continually crossed by others of the same stamp". Consequently, "they could not but observe that whenever they checked their inclinations or but followed them with more circumspection, they avoided a world of troubles, and often escaped many calamities that generally attended the too eager pursuit after pleasure" (I: 47). While such observations were the philosophical reason for accepting restraints on behaviour, Mandeville was of the view that forms of tractable behaviour were not the result of reflection but achieved gradually over long periods of time through the pursuit of self-preservation or through the skilful management of politicians who flattered men's pride using honours and other imaginary rewards (II: 139; I: 51).

Like Mandeville, Adam Smith emphasised that economic development was the main source of improvements in the standard of

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<sup>8</sup> Marx did not elaborate further and, in spite of his reference to the development of the forces of production, he did not comment on the evolutionary aspect of Mandeville's thought. All of Marx's quotations from Mandeville are from the first volume of the *Fable* so it is possible that he was not acquainted with the more developed evolutionary thought of the volume II.

<sup>9</sup> For a recent discussion of the difference between static and dynamic approaches in the context of environmental protection, see Porter and Van der Linde (1995).



living.<sup>10</sup> In Smith's case, development was linked to the accumulation of capital and the case for non-intervention was that interference would lead to the misallocation of capital and slow the rate of accumulation. Mandeville had no theory of capital accumulation. Progress depended on the sustained accumulation of knowledge which, in turn, required the preservation of existing knowledge through education and training, as well as the addition of new knowledge to that inherited from the past (Prendergast 2010; 2014). Such additions were due to the innovations of active stirring men easily reconciled to the bustle of the world who pursued their aims with eagerness and assiduity (Mandeville 1924, II: 111). But while such eagerness was necessary for innovation, it had to be "lopt and bound" by justice and other social institutions lest it become dysfunctional.

### III. THE MERITS OF FREE CHOICES

Before examining Mandeville's references to the question of free choice, it will be useful to refer briefly to the ways in which free choice is considered in modern economic literature. One view, in the spirit of Locke, Nozick and Rothbard, is that choices and contracts made voluntarily are good by virtue of the fact that they are expressions of the will or right of the parties concerned. A different approach to the merits of free choice can be found, for example, in Friedman who argues that the outcome of free exchange is necessarily good because where a transaction is informed and bi-laterally voluntary, it will only be engaged in if it brings benefits to both parties. In this view of things, voluntary transactions are valued not just because they are voluntary but because they produce good outcomes for the contracting individuals.<sup>11</sup>

As noted earlier, the view that the outcome of transactions made voluntarily will be beneficial for all the parties involved has its origins in Roman law and is summarized in the maxim that a thing is worth what it can be sold for in the absence of force, fraud and deceit (Langholm 1982; Lupton 2015). Langholm has argued that, in Aristotelian and scholastic thought, the criterion for voluntariness was strict, with no distinction being made between personal coercion and personal

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<sup>10</sup> Bitterman (1940) and Spengler (1959) argue that the case for laissez-faire in Smith is based on gains through the division of labour and the accumulation of capital, rather than any supposed identity of interests.

<sup>11</sup> See Friedman (1991). While Friedman emphasised the instrumental value of economic freedom, his valuation of economic freedom was not purely instrumental.

compulsion in the form of need (Langholm 1982). The scholastics' effort to modify Roman legal liberalism by applying strict criteria of voluntariness was swept aside during the seventeenth century; this is seen in the works of Grotius and Pufendorf and, most of all, in Hobbes who took the view that there could be no injury where exchanges were made voluntarily. Mandeville's thinking on the matter appears to be very much in the new liberal spirit: market transactions would take place only when both parties expected to benefit from the exchange:

How to get these services performed by others, when we have occasion for them, is the grand and almost constant solicitude in life of every individual person. To expect that others should serve us for nothing is unreasonable; therefore all commerce, that we can have together, must be a continual bartering of one thing for another. The seller, has his own interest as much at heart as the buyer, who purchases that property; and if you want or like a thing, the owner of it, whatever stock or provision he may have of the same, or how greatly soever you may stand in need of it, will never part with it, but for a consideration which he likes better, than he does the thing you want (Mandeville 1924, II: 349).

Elsewhere in the *Fable*, Mandeville had explained that actions and choices that were freely made are to be regarded as the best available to the individual: "in the choice of things, men must be determin'd by the perception they have of happiness; and no person can commit or set about an action, which at that then present time seems not to be the best to him" (II: 178). In response to the challenge that one might choose against their better judgment, Mandeville continued:

Every motion in a free agent which he does not approve of, is either convulsive or it is not his; I speak of those that are subject to the will. When two things are left to a person's choice, it is a demonstration, that he thinks that most eligible which he chuses, how contradictory, impertinent or pernicious soever his reason for chusing it may be: without this there would be no voluntary *suicide* and it would be an injustice to punish men for their crimes (II: 178-9).

Although he took pains to argue that people would always seek to make the choices that appeared to be the best available in the particular circumstances, Mandeville was aware that problems could arise if quality were difficult to judge or information were lacking. For example:

If the butcher sends us home stinking meat, or the shoe-maker sells us bad leather, they lose our custom, because everybody can judge the imposition which makes them honest in their own defence; but what obligation lie they under to be so, *quorum scelera terra tegit* [whose villainies the earth covers] (Mandeville 1730, 348).

The information issue was discussed in the context of a bargaining session between two merchants haggling over a price of a cargo of sugar. In the course of the bargaining, the seller receives news of events which would be expected to lower the future market price of sugar. This makes him more eager to do business now though he endeavours to conceal this fact. A little later, the buyer receives news that would drive the market price in the opposite direction. When the bargain is concluded, it is the buyer who reaps the benefits. Remarking that each party to the contract strove to over-reach the other, Mandeville comments: “yet all of this is called fair dealing; but I am sure neither of them would have desired to be done by, as they did to each other” (Mandeville 1924, I: 63).<sup>12</sup> This example shows that misinformation may cause the actual benefits from a transaction to differ from those that were expected. It also serves to illustrate that “fair dealing” in the market has little to do with the Christian teaching, which requires that you should do to others as you would have them do to you.

As we shall see, however, Mandeville recognised that it would be possible to attach ‘moral’ worth to choices freely made. In a well-known<sup>13</sup> passage on the division of labour in volume I of the *Fable*, Mandeville itemizes the multiplicity of trades in different parts of the world that were required to produce a crimson cloth. Towards the end of the passage, Mandeville writes that when we are acquainted with the toil, labour, hardships, and calamities that must be undergone in order to produce such an article, “it is scarce possible to conceive a tyrant so inhuman and devoid of shame, that [...] he should exact such terrible services from his innocent slaves” (I: 357). Things looked different, however:

if we turn the prospect, and look on all those labours as so many voluntary actions, belonging to different callings and occupations

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<sup>12</sup> Examples such as this have led some commentators, e.g., Moss (1987), to argue that Mandeville had a zero-sum view of the market process. This does not seem to be in line with Mandeville’s general position with regard to exchange.

<sup>13</sup> The passage is well known at least in part because Adam Smith’s discussion of the division of labour in chapter 1 of *Wealth of Nations* borrows extensively from it, although Mandeville is not referenced.

that men are brought up to for a lively hood, and in which everyone works for himself, how much soever he may seem to labour for others: [...] If we consider, I say, and look on these things in another view, we shall find that the labour of the poor is so far from being a burthen and an imposition upon them; that to have employment is a blessing, which in their addresses to heaven they pray for (I: 358).

With an eye for paradox, Mandeville had noted that whether the labour of the poor was viewed as a curse or as a blessing would depend on how one looked at it.<sup>14</sup> However, Mandeville was not content to simply to identify the paradox; he sought to uncover the circumstances by which “in a free nation where slaves were not allow’d of” multitudes of laborious poor would be willing to perform the hard unpleasant work (Mandeville 1924, I: 287-8). Part of his answer was that labourers should be kept poor; just as the poor “ought to be kept from starving, so they should receive nothing worth saving”. Furthermore:

Those that get their living by their daily labour [...] have nothing to stir them up to be serviceable but their wants, which it is prudence to relieve, but folly to cure. The only thing that can render the labouring man industrious, is a moderate quantity of money; for as too little will [...] either dispirit him or make him desperate, so too much will make him insolent and lazy (I: 193).

In addition to being kept poor, he maintained that they should be kept ignorant as well:

The knowledge of the working poor should be confined within the verge of their occupations and never extended [...] beyond what relates to their calling. The more a shepherd, a plowman or any other peasant knows of the world, and the things that are foreign to his labour or employment, the less fit he will be to go through the fatigues and hardships of it with chearfulness and content (I: 288).

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<sup>14</sup> The idea that things were evaluated differently depending on how one looked at them is ubiquitous in Part I of the *Fable*. Mandeville delighted in uncovering paradoxes and contradictions and in mocking the one sidedness and hypocrisy which he saw all around him. For example, having first established the evil nature of the trade in alcoholic spirits in Remark ‘G’, Mandeville proceeded to show that a good humoured man might look at things differently and view them as a universal comfort for the poor, as well as a source of great wealth for some eminent distiller. Against the objection that the wealth of one rich man could not compensate for the misery of thousands of poor, Mandeville satirically pointed out that such a man could be active in encouraging the reformation of manners and become the scourge of the very class of men to whom he owed his fortune (Mandeville 1924, I: 86-93).

Those who spent a great part of their youth in learning to read, write and cypher, expect [...] to be employed where these qualifications may be of use to them; the generality of them will look upon downright labour with the utmost contempt, I mean labour performed in the service of others in the lowest station of life, and for the meanest consideration. A man who has some education may follow husbandry by choice, and be diligent at the dirtiest and most laborious work; but then the concern must be his own, and avarice, the care of a family, or some other pressing motive must put him upon it; but he won't make a good hireling and serve a farmer for a pitiful reward (I: 289).

Mandeville recognized that there would be backlash against these sentiments, and that it was barbarous that the children of the poor should be deprived of opportunities if they had as much natural ability as the rich (which is what he believed to be the case). In response he claimed that if someone from the lowest class lifted him or herself out of their condition by way of uncommon industry, nobody should hinder them (I: 193). He also argued that being deprived of opportunity was no worse than not having money when the poor had the same inclinations to spend as others. There was an abundance of hard, dirty labour to be done, and coarse living to be complied with. Nobody would do this work if not obliged to do it, and so there was no "better nursery for these necessities than the children of the poor? None certainly are nearer to it or fitter for it" (I: 311).

It is not that Mandeville thinks that opportunity is unimportant. He knows that it is:

Reading, writing or arithmetic would never be wanting, in the business that requires them, though none were to learn them but such whose parents could be at the charge of it. It is not with letters as it is with gifts of the Holy Ghost, that they may not be purchased with money; and bought wit, if we believe the proverb, is none the worst (I: 298).

Mandeville's point is that if someone is to experience hardship, it should be those who are brought up to it: "the things [...] called hardships, neither seem nor are such to those who have been brought up to them, and know no better" (I: 311).

Hence, while Mandeville understood that it was possible to 'justify' the nasty, brutish conditions endured by the working class on the basis that individuals would prefer to be employed rather than in want of

work, he was under no illusion that work would be freely chosen in all circumstances (I: 317):

No man would be poor and fatigue himself for a livelihood if he could help it: The absolute necessity all stand in for victuals and drink, and in cold climates for clothes and lodging, makes them submit to anything that can be bore with. If nobody did want no body would work; but the greatest hardships are looked upon as solid pleasures, when they keep a man from starving (I: 287).

Mandeville returned to this in part II of the *Fable*. There, he argued that there was a big difference between disallowing poor children from rising out of poverty and refusing them education when they could be more usefully employed (II: 352). Mandeville assumed that all the hard and dirty labour in the kingdom required a fixed amount of labour to accomplish it. Consequently, if some of the existing workforce were to rise in the world, their place would have to be taken by others or there would have to be a reduction in the amount of work done. Hence, charity to some might prove cruel to others. It was in this context that Mandeville stated the following:

In the Compound of all Nations, the different Degrees of Men ought to bear a certain Proportion to each other, as to Numbers, in order to render the whole a well-proportion'd Mixture. [...] [I]t is never better attained to, or preserv'd, than when nobody meddles with it (II: 353).

This declaration of the '*laissez-faire* principle' was not opposed to government intervention, but was opposed to the "short-sighted wisdom of well-meaning people" in this case, the fashionable meddling of those who promoted charity schools.<sup>15</sup> The same applies to Mandeville's other statement of the principle which occurs in the essay on charity and charity schools in volume I of the *Fable*. Having pointed to "[t]he variety of services that are required to supply the luxurious and wanton desires as well as the real necessities of man", he clarified, "this proportion as to numbers in every trade finds itself and is never better kept than when nobody meddles or interferes with it" (I: 299-300). Mandeville's argument is that parents can be trusted to prepare their children for a trade or profession. In doing so, they confine themselves to their circumstances such that "he that can give but ten pounds with his son

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<sup>15</sup> Imitation and emulation are important in Mandeville's sociology; he was aware that regularities which arise as a result of particular trends could have considerable social impact.

must not look out for a trade where they ask one hundred for an apprentice". Even so, unlike the charity schools, they look out for the apprenticeship that is likely to be most advantageous (Mandeville 1924, I: 300). Mandeville did not deny that there were circumstances where the promotion of education was necessary for the development of the economy (such as in the Russia of Peter the Great). This, in his view, was not the case in England. Sound politics were to the social body what the art of medicine was to the natural; ergo, the appropriate intervention depended on the disease (I: 322). It was the business of the public to supply the defects of society, and take that in hand first that which is most neglected by private persons (I: 321).

While Mandeville was aware of the need to develop structures that incentivised people to act 'voluntarily' in ways which were useful even when it was unpleasant for them personally, he was sharply critical of those, such as Addison, Steele and Shaftsbury, who presented a vision of social harmony. In a satirical passage worthy of Swift, Mandeville pretended to have been converted to Shaftsbury's system: he alludes to an example of an industrious poor woman who scrimped and scraped in order to save the money needed to apprentice her six year old son to a chimney sweeper. Parodying Shaftsbury, Mandeville portrayed the story as follows:

she gives up her all, both offspring and estate, to assist in preventing the several mischiefs that are often occasioned by great quantities of soot disregarded; and, free from selfishness, sacrifices her only son to the most wretched employment for the public welfare" (II: 43-4).

The reader is left under no illusion that it is need that drives the woman's sacrifice, not her desire to promote the public good.<sup>16</sup> As stated in the Introduction to his *Inquiry into the origin of moral virtue*, Mandeville's aim was to describe men as they really are, not teach them what they should be (I: 39). Similarly, with regard to society, Mandeville's interest was not the justification of the existing state of affairs or its presentation as harmonious, but in describing society as it was, warts and all.

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<sup>16</sup> Conversely, in *A Letter to Dion*, Mandeville referred to hypocrites seeking to "persuade the world, [...] that they fed on trouts and turbot, quails and ortolans, and the most expensive dishes, not to please their dainty palates or their vanity but to maintain the fishmonger and the poulterer and the many wretches, who, for a miserable livelihood, are daily slaving to furnish them" (Mandeville 1953).

Mandeville's treatment of the labour market won him the admiration of Marx who, in volume I of *Capital*, praised Mandeville as honest and clear-headed, and included lengthy quotations from volume I of the *Fable* which depicted the conditions necessary to make the poor laborious. Marx appreciated Mandeville's depiction of a class-based society and his views on what was necessary for its reproduction. However, Marx was aware that Mandeville lacked both a theory of capital and of its accumulation. As he put it, Mandeville had "not yet seen" that in the process of capital accumulation, wage labourers turn their labour power into an engine for the self-expansion of capital, and by doing so, reinforce their dependence upon their own product (Marx 1977, 576-577).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Two forms of argument commonly associated with the laissez-faire principle can be found in Mandeville's thought. The first of these relates to the issue of government intervention. As has often been noted, Mandeville claimed that the allocation of the workforce between the different trades was best achieved when nobody meddled with it. The issue then arises: how is Mandeville's call for non-interference (by well-meaning meddlers) to be reconciled with his equally clear assertion that private vices were turned into public benefits by the dexterous management of the skilful politician? Rosenberg's answer is that the dexterous management by the clever politician should be interpreted to mean the creation of a legal and institutional framework where arbitrary intervention by government would be minimised. Such a framework was not to be seen as the product of human ingenuity but evolved gradually over time through a process of trial and error (Rosenberg 1963). While Rosenberg's solution is widely accepted, it did not put an end to the debate about intervention but shifted it from being about direct interference in the economy to being about the role government in the creation of institutions. Whereas Rosenberg and Viner viewed institutions as being at least in part the product of wise government intervention, Hayek argued that institutions are the products of human activity but not human design and that this mandates a policy of non-intervention, or at best, cautious reform in the process of emergence.

Mandeville's concern about the limitations of human knowledge and rationality are visible throughout his work, particularly in part II of the *Fable*. But unlike Hayek, he never regarded the limitations of human



knowledge as an excuse for inertia. For Mandeville, all knowledge was derived from experience and his heroes were those who put their hands to the plough and experimented. Mandeville certainly understood the complex nature of social institutions and the fact that this complexity meant that actions taken to eliminate some perceived evil did not always produce the desired effect. Part of the purpose of the *Fable* was to expand people's worldviews and thereby enable them to take account of unintended consequences (Mandeville 1924, I: 91). By looking at the concatenated chain of events, men could learn to reject some actions (e.g., the charity schools) and promote others (e.g., sustainable buildings and works; legal brothels). Mandeville took the view that competition generally produced positive results but he was aware that this was not always the case. The search for differential advantage could lead to the discovery of better ways of doing things but he was aware that, particularly in medicine, the search for advantage could hinder progress by providing incentives for the wrong kinds of activity.<sup>17</sup>

The second argument in support of the laissez-faire principle revolves around the notion of freedom. There are two versions of this argument. In one version, freedom has instrumental value in that it enables people to choose the best available outcome. In another version traditionally associated with natural law, market outcomes are considered just because they are entered into voluntarily. Mandeville believed that, when offered a choice, people make what seems to them to be the best choice available. However, he delighted in showing that sometimes the 'best' choice only looks palatable because it is comparably better than the worse alternatives.<sup>18</sup> Thus, while a contractual relationship had to be based on the principle of mutual benefit, transactions in the labour market had to be underpinned by the compulsion of need. While such transactions could be regarded as fair in a system where honour had replaced virtue, they were a long way

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<sup>17</sup> Mandeville believed that all knowledge resulted from experience. In medicine as in painting, theoretical knowledge alone did not prepare one for the practice of the art. However, physicians had found out that the means to achieve riches and reputation was by becoming expert in one of the many "shallow auxiliary arts" that formed part of the theory of physic. Mandeville stated that, "Where shall you find a physician now-a-days, that makes that stay with his patients [...] this would not only be too laborious, but a tedious was of getting money; self-interest now gives better lessons to young physicians" (Mandeville 1730, 39). The lessons were that if they had not achieved fame in one of the auxiliary arts, they should set about obtaining a reputation in other ways, such as becoming an author, a translator, marrying well, becoming a party man or holding court in the coffee houses.

<sup>18</sup> See Remark 'R' in volume I of the *Fable* (Mandeville 1924, I: 208-209).

from being just in the sense required by the scholastic doctors in an earlier era.

In *A letter to Dion*, Mandeville acknowledged the bad reputation acquired by the *Fable of the bees*. His explanation for the book's ill repute was that his exposure of vice and luxury of the time had earned him a great number of enemies: "Few men can bear with patience, to see those things detected, which it is their interest, and they take pains to conceal" (Mandeville 1953). But if Mandeville was willing to expose the faults of the emerging market system, he was also a powerful advocate of its strengths:

To this emulation and continual striving to outdo one another it is owing, that [...] there is still a *plus ultra* left for the ingenious; it is this, or at least the consequence of it, that sets the poor to work, adds spurs to industry, and encourages the skilful artificer to search after further improvements (I: 130).

The emulation and striving which drove progress had to be accommodated but if unregulated it could become an obstacle to development. Rules of the game were necessary and evolved over time. Society was "a body politic, in which man, either subdued by superior force, or by persuasion drawn from his savage state, is become a disciplined creature, that can find his own ends in labouring for others" (I: 347). There is no presumed harmony of interests: "the temporal happiness of some is inseparable from the misery of others. They are silly people who imagine that the good of the whole is consistent with the good of every individual" (Mandeville 1953: 49). Mandeville sought to understand how such a system could still appear to operate on the basis of the voluntary actions of the individual. In so doing, he recognised both the importance of evolved institutions and the limitations of apparent voluntary action.

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## Bees on paper: the British press reads the Fable

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**Abstract:** The British press played a significant role by influencing public debates following the publication of Mandeville's *The fable of the bees*. Between 1714 and 1732, British newspapers published over three hundred reports on the *Fable* that circulated in the form of editorials and advertising announcements. These publications not only offered general information on the *Fable*, they also fueled controversy surrounding Mandeville's text. In this article I will analyse how the British press introduced the *Fable* to its readers and influenced its reception. Specifically, my aim is to show how the *Fable*'s reception was shaped by the political and economic orientation of the newspapers in question. In doing so, I will analyze appearances of the *Fable* and its critics in the British press. I will then examine the language and topics used by two popular essay-papers, the *Mist weekly journal* and the *Craftsman*, who presented Mandeville's book.

**Keywords:** newspapers, advertisings, Nathaniel Mist, Robert Walpole, Jonathan Wild, South sea bubble

Bernard Mandeville submitted his last publication, *A letter to Dion*, to the printer James Roberts in 1732. In this seventy-page essay, the Dutch author responded to George Berkeley, who had attacked the *Fable* in his *Alciphron or the minute philosopher* (1732). Mandeville ironically maintained that the Irish bishop had not read a single page of his work but only reproduced the criticisms of the *Fable* set forth in sermons and newspapers. Indeed, the Berkeleian condemnation of Mandevillean topics, such as the celebration of vices or the notion of human nature, had been adopted and discussed by the British public opinion in the years before. Specifically, newspapers were responsible for making the

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**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** An earlier version of this paper was submitted for the 300th anniversary of the publication of *The fable of the bees* and the centennial of Erasmus University. I would like to thank Harro Maas, Laurens van Apeldoorn, and Johan Olsthoorn for organizing the conference 'Science, politics and economy. The unintended consequences of a diabolic paradox' held at the Erasmus University Rotterdam on 6 June, 2014.

*Fable* well-known among the public, frequently casting it as an attack upon religion and public spirit. From Mandeville's point of view, the press had published misleading editorials about his book and thus compromised its reception. The Dutch author complained in particular about the increasing influence enjoyed by newspapers, noting ironically that "if we find the *London Journal* have a Fling at the *Fable of the bees* one Day, and *The craftsman* another, it is a certain Sign that the ill Repute of the Book, must will be established and not to be doubted of" (Mandeville 1732, 6). Mandeville's claim was intended to vilify one of the more salient aspects of English society: the newspaper industry.

Very little research has been done on the reception of the *Fable* in the British press. Kaye's classical edition of the *Fable* provides a partial list of newspaper articles on the *Fable* (Mandeville 1924, II: 418-426). In his critical study, Martin Stafford (1997) cites only eight articles. This paper argues that newspapers played a crucial role in the debate triggered by Mandeville's work in four ways. Firstly, the press provided step by step reporting on the origin and development of the discussion surrounding Mandeville's text. For instance, the *Evening post* printed the presentment by the Grand Jury of Middlesex on 11 July 1723. Mandeville's response to the aspersions cast on his book appeared in the *London journal* of 10 August 1723. Secondly, some of the *Fable's* critics used the press to attack the work of the Dutch author. For example, Francis Hutcheson attacked the *Fable* in the *Dublin weekly journal* and *London journal* several times. In addition to these critiques, the newspapers also published false news items regarding the *Fable*, such as Mandeville's supposed abjuration of his opinions in 1728.<sup>1</sup> Finally, in many cases the press was unabashedly biased. Newspapers representing opposing political views often offered contradictory interpretations of Mandeville, always casting him as contrary to their own positions (some as a Whig, others as a Tory, etc.).

## THE FABLE AND THE BRITISH NEWSPAPERS

During the restoration of Charles II, the press was regulated by the Licensing Act, which specified that every publication had to be licensed and supervised by the Stationer's Company. The only paper to hold this

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<sup>1</sup> On Saturday, 9 March 1728, the *London evening post* printed the following note: "On Friday Evening, the first Instant, a Gentleman well-dress'd, appeared at the Bonfire before St. James's Gate, who declared himself the author of the *Fable of the Bees*: And that he was sorry for writing the same: and recollecting his former Promise, pronounced this Words: I commit my Book to the Flames; and threw it in accordingly".

authorization was the *London gazette*, which served as the official organ of government and was printed in a single sheet twice weekly. Following the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695, there was an upsurge of newspapers and periodicals in England and its provinces (Plomer 1922; Siebert 1965; Black 1987; Harris 1987; Clark 1994; Raymond 1999; Heyd 2012). Between May and October 1695, three tri-weekly newspapers appeared: the *Flying post*, the *Post boy*, and the *Post man*, all of which were delivered to the local postmaster. Under the reign of Queen Anne the first daily, the *Daily courrant* (1702), was printed; in August 1706 the first evening paper, the *Evening post*, appeared. Generally, newspapers were edited and published by printers who also printed books, pamphlets, ballads, etc. They circulated in taverns, coffee-houses, and clubs, and informed their readers about domestic and foreign news; in some cases, they offered commentary on political, moral, and economic topics as well. The rapid expansion of the press was followed by the growth of the printing industry, which often combined commercial and political interests. In 1724, the printer Samuel Negus offered Lord Viscount Townshend a complete list of all the printing-houses in London (Nichols 1812-1815, I: 288-312). The list not only gave an account of the printers, it also informed Townshend of the political stances of the publishers. For instance, the printer Roberts was known “to be well affected to King George” (Nichols 1812-1815, I: 292), whereas the printer of the *Evening post* was a “Roman catholick” (Nichols 1812-1815, I: 312). Consequently, many newspapers were connected to political parties and they quickly assumed Whig or Tory associations: the *Daily courrant* from London was a Whig publication, whereas the *Post boy* was an organ of the Tory party.<sup>2</sup> According to Speck and Holmes (1967, 2), in the early eighteenth century the press was the most effective instrument of party propaganda in Great Britain. The newspapers constituted an important means of evaluating the extent to which popular opinion supported or opposed a particular issue. Many papers were sponsored by politicians, as demonstrated by Bolingbroke’s support of *The craftsman journal*, or the editing of the *Mist weekly journal* by the Jacobite, Nathaniel Mist.

Given this context, the reception of the *Fable* was at times influenced by the political affiliation of the papers. Mandeville himself denounced

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<sup>2</sup> Whereas in Anne’s reign the metropolitan newspapers followed the classic distinction in Whig and Tory, under the kingdom of George II they tend to divide into government and opposition (Speck 1986, 48).

the contradictions of “our party writers” (1732, 6), which he saw as disparaging to his work. Indeed, the press not only provided an account of the controversy sparked by the *Fable*, it also provided its readers with various interpretations of the debate. First, the newspapers purposely misrepresented Mandeville’s text, publishing the most provocative passages of his work. The denial of virtues, the legalization of prostitution, and the praise of self-interest were the most popular *Fable* quotes published in the papers. Secondly, the press associated the *Fable* with several specific issues. For instance, the Tory press presented the *Fable*’s content in association with certain negative topics such as the South sea bubble or the thief Jonathan Wild; on the other hand, the Whig newspapers emphasized the coexistence of virtues and commerce, denying the *Fable*’s motto, *private vices, public benefits*. It is thus clear that newspapers of the time represent a key piece in the puzzle of the debate surrounding the *Fable*.

### THE FIRST NOTICES REGARDING THE FABLE

The first notice about Bernard Mandeville in the British press appeared on 18 January, 1704, in the *Post man and the historical account*; the newspaper, under the direction of Richard Baldwin, advertised an edition of *Aesop dress’d or a collections of fables* written by B. Mandeville MD.<sup>3</sup> Another reference to the Dutch author was then occasioned by Mandeville’s *Treatise of the hypochondriack and histeryck passions* in 1711. On 27 December, 1711, the *Post man* expanded the notice, publishing the Dutch physician’s London address as it appeared on the frontispiece of the *Treatise*.<sup>4</sup> On 7 December, 1714, the *Post man* also announced the publication of *The fable of the bees*. According to Mandeville, the metropolitan press only began to pay serious attention to the *Fable* after the Grand Jury’s indictment in July of 1723. In the

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<sup>3</sup> Other works of Mandeville were advertised between 1704 and 1711, but most of them appeared anonymously. For instance, on 18 April, 1704, the *Daily courant* advertised *Typhon or the wars between the gods and giants*; on 2 April, 1705, the *Grumbling hive* was promoted by the *Daily courant*, and on 23 November, 1709, the *Virgin unmask’d* was advertised by the *Observer*.

<sup>4</sup> “A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passions, vulgarly call’d the Hypo in Men and Vapours in Women; in which the Symptoms, Causes, and Cure of those Diseases are set forth, after a Method entirely new. The whole interspers’d, with Instructive Discourses on the real Art of Physick itself; and entertaining Remarks on the modern Practice of Physicians and Apothecaries: Very useful to all, that have the Misfortune to stand in need of either. In 3 Dialogues. By B. de Mandeville, MD. To be had of the AUTHOR, at his House in MANCHESTER COURT, in Channel-Cow, Westminster [...] just published”.



third edition of the *Fable*, he complained that “the first Impression of the *Fable of the Bees*, which came out in 1714, was never carpt at, or publicly taken notice of” (1924, I: 473). As Speck remarked (1978, 1), the first edition of the *Fable* attracted some readers, but indeed does not appear to have excited much comment. Nevertheless, there were some reports on the *Fable* circulating between 1718 and 1722. For instance, on 15 October, 1719, the *Evening post* advertised the re-release of “the celebrated poem of the *Fable of the Bees*”. On 7 August, 1722, the *Post man* advertised both the *Fable of the bees* and *Free thoughts*, informing its readers that both had been written by Dr. Mandeville. As a result, it was public knowledge that Mandeville had written the *Fable* from at least 1722 onwards; it thus stands to reason that Mandeville’s *Fable* was reasonably well known prior its 1723 second edition.

On 11 July, 1723, the indictment of the Grand Jury against the *Fable* was inserted in the *Evening post* and Mandeville’s book suddenly attracted widespread attention in the British media. This was shortly followed by an increase in both reports on the *Fable* as well as attacks against it. On 27 July, 1723, the *London journal* published an anonymous letter addressed to Lord C. praising the politics of the current government against the infidelity: under the pseudonym of Theophilus philo-britannus, the author suggested that the *Fable* and three *Cato’s letters* were supporters of the Pretender. In addition, the correspondent of the *London journal* maintained that the texts in question undermined the current government and the protestant succession:

My Lord,

‘TIS Welcome News to all the King’s Loyal Subjects and true Friends to the Establish’d Government and Succession in the *Illustrious House of Hanover*, that your Lordship is said to be contriving some *Effectual* Means of securing us from the Dangers, wherewith his Majesty’s happy Government seems to be threatened by *Catiline*, under the Name of *Cato*; by the Writer of a Book, intituled, *The Fable of the Bees*, &c. and by others of their *Fraternity*, who are undoubtedly useful Friends to the *Pretender*, and diligent, for his sake, in labouring to subvert and ruin our Constitution, under a specious Pretence of defending it.

The name adopted by the reporter contains a clue that might better illuminate his political background and stance.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the pseudonym

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<sup>5</sup> The pseudonym of Theophilus Philo-Britannus only appeared in the article at issued.

appears to refer to Britannicus, a name employed by the English bishop Benjamin Hoadly. Walpole bought the *London journal* in 1722 and entrusted it to Hoadly, who had always been a loyal supporter of the protestant succession and the Whig party (Sanna 2012, 88-101). From 1722 to 1724, Hoadly was the editor of the *London journal* and, under his direction, it became the mouthpiece of Walpole and Townshend's government. Theophilus could very well have been a member of Hoadly's entourage, which defended the Whig government from the charges brought by its enemies. It would thus make sense for Theophilus to cast the *Fable* in opposition to the Whig party, thereby affirming that Mandeville's text had more in common with the hated Jacobite party instead. On 10 August, 1723, Mandeville replied to Theophilus from the *London journal* in an effort to defend his work, asserting that, "I think myself indispensably obliged to vindicate the above-said Book against the black Aspersions that undeservedly have been cast upon it".

At the beginning of the "battle of the bees" (Schneider 1987, 101), the press influenced the public reception of the *Fable* through its advertisements. For instance, on 17 August, 1723, the *British journal* advertised an essay by the reverend William Hendley, entitled *A defence of charity schools*. In his *Defence*, the first response to Mandeville to be advertised by newspapers, the reverend from Islington aimed to defend charity schools from the attacks mounted by the *Fable* and *Cato's letters*. Although the *Defence* was not published until the following year due to a long sickness suffered by the English reverend, the advertisement not only promoted Hendley's text but also called the *Fable* an atheistic book:

A very Reverend and very Learned Divine hath undertaken, in two Months, to answer the Objections made by *Cato*, and the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*, against the present Management of the Charity-Schools. This elaborate Performance is to be printed by Subscription; and, considering the Qualifications of the Author, 'tis not doubted but that there will be great Contributions to this Work of Charity; for who is so well qualify'd to prove these Authors to be Atheist, or anything else, as one, who, in the latter End of the late Reign, publish'd a Sermon, entitled, *Whigs no Christians?* Who a more proper Advocate for the Teachers in these Schools!

The *British journal* concluded the advertisement by reminding readers of a sermon of Hendley's called *Whigs no Christians*. This

sermon was delivered in 1713, in Putney, on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Charles I. In it, Hendley defended the divine right of kings whose sovereignty had been established by God: given the divine nature of his power, Hendley argued, the king could not be deposed because of the disparity between him and common citizens. According to Hendley, citizens have no independent rights and must submit to the authority of the sovereign. The sermon therefore denied the right of resistance and asserted that the rebels must be banished from the Church of England. Among the rebels listed, the sermon also included the Whigs and Low-Churchmen as people who should be excluded from the church and denied the label of Christian. As Hendley remarked, “But such Men as these (nowadays known by the name of *Whigs*, or *Low-Churchmen*) [...] should they be excluded the *Pale* of the *Church*, and be denied the Denomination of *Christians*, and ranked among *Jews* or *Heatens*” (1713, 5). By mentioning Hendley’s sermon, the *British journal* associated Mandeville’s *A defence of charity school* with the Jacobite stance taken by Hendley, whose previous sermon was the main sponsor for the Pretender. The *British journal* thus encouraged its readership to view the *Fable* as somehow connected to the Whig pamphlets that Hendley had denounced in his earlier sermon. In doing so, the newspaper indirectly yet effectively framed the *Fable*, alongside *Cato’s letters*, as belonging to the body of Whig literature condemned by the Jacobite pastor.

#### THE BEES IN GREAT CARTER LANE: NATHANIEL MIST AND THE FABLE

The following year the *Fable* began to attract significant public attention. Firstly, Mandeville’s text was no longer associated with *Cato’s letters*; rather, it was considered as an independent book. Secondly, the criticisms addressed to Mandeville were not exclusively focused on the *Essay on charity and charity schools* but referred to the whole text of the *Fable*.<sup>6</sup> Mandeville used the notoriety gained by the *Fable* to promote his new publications: a third edition of the *Fable*, *A modest defence of publick stews*, and reprint of *The virgin unmask’d*. Despite these efforts, however, Mandeville’s name initially appeared in the newspapers due to his publication *Free thoughts* (1722). On 30 May, 1724, the *British journal’s* correspondent addressed a letter to *Crito* containing a long extract from Mandeville’s work. The journalist, under the pseudonym of

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<sup>6</sup> The early criticisms of Mandeville’s text appeared within a few months: in January the newspapers advertised William Law’s *Remarks*; a month later Richard Fiddes published his *Treatise*; and finally, in April the *Daily journal* publicized John Dennis’ essay.

B.A. complained about the scarce interest in the *Free thoughts*, even though Mandeville's work had been translated into French.<sup>7</sup> Within this context, the *Mist weekly journal*, one of the papers most critical of Mandeville's text, offered readers a curious interpretation of the *Fable*. The essay-paper was linked to Nathaniel Mist, a British printer who explicitly opposed the Whig party. In Samuel Negus's list, the publisher of the "scandalous Weekly journal" (Nichols, 1812-1815, I: 311) was included among the Jacobite printers, and indeed Mist was repeatedly tried by the government for sedition.<sup>8</sup> On 8 August, 1724, Mist published a review of *A modest defence of publick stews*, suggesting that the author of *A modest defence* was the very same man who had written the *Fable*. In addition, the publisher of the *Weekly journal* maintained that Mandeville was an admirer of the Dutch Republic, a position that could be seen from his plan to open public stews in London modeled after the Dutch ones:

The Treatise intituled *The Fable of the Bees*, perhaps, has as much good and bad Reasoning in it as ever were seen in the Writings of the same Author. This Gentleman I take to be the first among us who has argued for a publick Toleration of Vices. He seems a great Admirer of the Policies of the *Dutch* [...].

The following year Mist's journal changed its name to *Mist weekly journal*. On 19 June, 1725, the *Mist* published a brief account of the life of the famous thief-taker and criminal, Jonathan Wild, based on a semi-satirical biography published some weeks after Wild's death. In his account, the *Mist*' reporter stressed that the thief-taker belonged to the political and cultural background of the Whig party. Firstly, Wild was introduced as a freethinker "and a little inclin'd to *Atheism*"; secondly, he was presented to be as supporter of the Whig party and its motto "keep what you get and get what you can". In particular, the reporter highlighted Wild's plan to write an essay entitled, *De legibus naturae*, in

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<sup>7</sup> "Give me, therefore, leave to present you with a very good Paper out of an excellent Book, too little known. It is Dr. *Mandeville's Free Thoughts on Religion, &c.* To the Reproach of our Taste, it has been twice translated into *French*, and yet is scarce known in England. It was written for the Interest of the Establishment; and yet the Friends of the Establishment have, for want of reading it, not promoted it".

<sup>8</sup> In December 1716, Mist bought the *Weekly journal* from Robert Mawson, changing its name to *Weekly journal or Saturday's post*. As Harris remarked (2003, 51), this periodical was published in the famous Great Carter lane, which was situated on the south side of St. Paul Cathedral and included several important coffee houses like the celebrated Lloyd.

which the notorious double-dealer intended to legitimise all kind of knavery as virtuous and honorable actions:

He communicated to me a Design he had of getting a Treatise wrote *De Legibus Naturae*; under which Title, Theft and all Kinds of Knavery should be recommended as vertuous and honourable Actions; and that they were justifiable by Laws of Nature, which teach us to seek own Good; and that he intended to employ the ingenious Pen of the Author of the *Fable of the Bees* for that Purpose, whom he look'd upon to be equal to the Subject.

The *Mist'* thus associated Mandeville with a wicked and depraved element of English society in the figure of Wild. Both the *Fable* and the thief-taker were identified by the Jacobite journal as the main sponsors of the Whig party, a party which was considered to be the author of all criminal and dishonest activities.

At the same time, the *Mist'* also paid a great deal of attention to the *Fable's* critics and often adopted their claims against Mandeville's book. On 11 June, 1726, for instance, a *Mist'* reporter informed his readership of how he and his friend had been offended by "a Book entitled, *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices Publick Benefits*, and it has been Matter of great Grief to us, to see a Person so hardy as openly to write in Defence of Vice". In response to the *Fable*, the two *Mist'* journalists held up Law's *Remarks* and *The enquiry whether a general practice of virtue tends to the wealth or poverty* as the main bulwarks standing in opposition to Mandeville's text. In particular, the *Mist'* reporter praised the recent publication of the anonymous treatise, *True meaning of the fable of the bees*:

[...] and as Auxiliaries, we sent for every Answer to the *Fable of the Bees* which our News Papers gave us Notice of. And much Ground did we get by the Assistance of two Pieces, the one entitled, *Remarks on the Fable of the Bees, &c.* The other, *An enquiry whether a general Practice of Virtue tends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage of a People &c.* [...] This, Sir, has hitherto been our Case, but now do we prepare for Victory, and compleat Conquest, we have met with a Book, entitled *The true Meaning of the Fable, &c.* and we venture to say, that it really is the *True meaning of the Fable of the Bees*, and that it has set that perplex Book, in its just, and proper Light.

According to *True meaning*, the *Fable* aimed to enrich only a small part of the nation while enslaving the rest of society. Although the Dutch author pretended to write for the benefit of the multitude, it claimed, he actually supported an arrangement in which the poor would be forced into the position of badly paid labourers. This position motivated his continuous attacks on institutions, such as the charity schools, the clergy, and the universities. The *Mist*' journalist concluded, in a comment addressed to Nathaniel Mist, by saying "now, Sir, if you are of my Sentiments, and think the *True Meaning*, &c. has set the Author which opposes it, in a just Light, [...] give this a Place in your Paper".

Another interesting reference to the controversy around Mandeville's text appeared some months early. On 5 March, 1726, the *Mist* advertised the recent publication of *True meaning*, informing its readership that the text had been conceived of as a response to Bluet's *Enquiry*. Although the authorship of the *Enquiry* is a vexed question (Sakmann 1897, 125; Kaye 1921, 461-462; Carrive 1980, 26; Stafford 1997, 229), the *Mist* reported the death of its author:

There was publish'd this Week, a Defence of the Fable of the Bees in the form of a Letter, to the Author of an Enquiry, &c. whose Death has been mentioned in this paper some time since, with his deserv'd Praise. It is submitted to the Publick to determine, whether the Greatness of the Performance, or other prudential Considerations, were true Cause that induce this Writer to delay his Letter 'till after the Decease of the Person whom it was directed. Or whether or no, if this Insult on the Dead should awaken one of them to come and shew him the Inquiry and Baseness of his Purposes, he would repent.

### **BETWEEN PHILANTROPOS AND THE SECOND PART OF THE FABLE**

The *Fable*'s critics themselves also used the press to advertise their work. On 14 November, 1724, Francis Hutcheson, under the pseudonym of Philantropos, published an announcement in the *London journal* for his essay, *An inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue*. In the article the Scottish-Irish philosopher included some passages from his work defending the Shaftesbury's moral system. Two years later, Hutcheson wrote a series of articles in the *Dublin weekly journal* that presented, in advance, some of the passages found in his later *Reflections upon laughter, and observations upon the Fable of the bees* (1750). In three of these articles Hutcheson criticized Mandeville's views, maintaining that virtue and commerce were compatible and luxury did

not necessarily lead to vice.<sup>9</sup> In 1729 he went on to write some articles for the *London journal*, the periodical that served as the mouthpiece of the finance community. Under the Walpole government the London newspaper promoted financial speculation, encouraging speculators and businessmen to engage in these kinds of market transactions. Mandeville's assertion that only vices enriched society was thus seen as a danger of the practice of speculation. Hutcheson himself followed the *London journal's* logic, emphasizing the necessity of overcoming outdated moral prejudice regarding commerce. In keeping with this position, he criticized the pessimism expressed by the *Fable* concerning the relationship between virtues and commerce. As Hutcheson noted in the *London journal* editorial on 14 June, 1729:

What our Author seems to mean by Private Vices Publick Benefits, is, that all the Villainies, Extravagance, Intemperance, Luxury, and Pride, of Individuals, tend to Publick Happiness of Society, and to increase the Power and the Grandeur of any Nation [...] To silence this Writer therefore intirely, must be to take him to Task in his own Way; and if it can be fully proved that there may be an Equal, nay a greater Consumption of Manufactures without these Vices and Evils, which flow from them: that Wealth and Power do not naturally tend to Vice or necessarily produce it; then it will be unjust to conclude, *either, that Vices naturally tend to Publick Prosperity, or are necessary to it; or that Publick Happiness does necessarily occasion them.*

Finally, a section of Hutcheson's *Inquiry* was published in the *Read's weekly journal or, British gazetteer* on 1 April, 1732. This section addressed the distinction between benevolent and selfish man, and included some references to Mandeville's work. Within the debate sparked by Mandeville's text, relatively few references were focused on the second part of the *Fable* that was published in 1729. According to Mandeville, the *Part II* aimed to clarify some of the topics dealt with in his earlier writing; in particular, in this work the Dutch author introduced and developed the notion of *self-liking*, which was presented as the principal motive of human actions (Simonazzi 2008; Tolonen 2013). Between 1729 and 1733, the only periodical to provide a brief account on Mandeville's work was the *Echo or Edinburgh weekly journal*. On 28, May, 1729, the Scottish paper advertised that:

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<sup>9</sup> In the articles on *Dublin weekly journal* Hutcheson used the acronym of P.M.

A second Part of the Fable of the Bees, by the author of the first; a Book that has made so much Noise, wherein humane Nature is further considered, both in its individual and social State, and all the several Ranks and Degrees thereof, from that of the first Minister, to that of the lowest subject, througly anatomiz'd and unfolded: Wherein, especially a very particular Deference and Regard is paid to the Beau monde, and the true Merit and great Excellence of all their glaring and shining Vertues, plac'd in the most clear and conspicuous Light. Together with a Confutation of the late Earl of *Shaftesbury's* System, as delivered in the Characteristicks on those Subjects, and an Answer to many Doubts and Difficulties of the Deist against Christian religion, and to several Objections that were made against the first Part.

Ultimately, reports on the *Fable* circulated until the death of the Dutch physician.<sup>10</sup> The last reports on Mandeville were printed on the occasion of his death in January 1733. An obituary was published in the *Daily journal* on Tuesday, 23 January. It praised Mandeville for his professional contributions and loyalty to his friends. Perhaps Mandeville's death was the last occasion for reconciliation between the author of the *Fable* and the newspapers that had long opposed him:

On Sunday Morning last died at Hackney, in the 63d Year of his Age, Bernard Mandeville, M.D: Author of the Fable of the Bees, of a Treatise of the Hypochondriac and Hysteric Passions and several other curious Pieces, some of which have been translated and publish'd in Foreign Languages. He had an extensive Genius, uncommon Wit, and strong Judgment. [...] In his Profession he was of known Benevolence and Humanity; in his private Character, a sincere Friend; and in the whole Conduct of Life, a Gentleman of great Probity and Integrity.

#### A DEFENSE OF WALPOLE'S GOVERNMENT? THE BEES IN THE CRAFTSMAN

An interesting interpretation of the *Fable* was offered by the weekly *The country journal; or the craftsman*. This periodical issued in Russell

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<sup>10</sup> On 29 August, 1729, *Brice's weekly journal* linked Mandeville to the licentious system of freethinkers. On 27 March, 1731, the *Fable* was quoted in *Read's weekly journal*. The correspondent of *Read's journal* emphasized the role played by the *Fable* in spreading all sorts of vices in society, asserting that "[t]he ingenious Author of the *Fable of the Bees* seems to me to deserve a large Share of the Fame resulting from his noble Improvement of our Understanding [...] that the Drunkard, the Fop and other Extravagants, are the most useful Members of Society". On 11 September, 1731, the reporter for the *Universal spectator and weekly journal*, under the pseudonym Polydore Pert, represented Mandeville as the ideal successor of Epicurus and a patron of the libertines.



Street began publication on 5 December, 1726, and originally appeared twice a week, presenting a political essay and a small number of advertisements. Starting in May 1727, the *Craftsman* began to be published once a week and changed its name to *The country journal; or the craftsman*. As some studies have demonstrated, the *Craftsman* was the mouthpiece of discontent regarding Walpole's government. The journal's editor was prosecuted for seditious libel on several occasions (Kramnick 1968, 17-23; Sanna 2006). The weekly was supported by influential politicians such as the Tory Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, and the Whig cousins William and Daniel Pulteney. Under the pseudonym of Caleb D'Anvers of Gray's Inn Esq., contributors to the *Craftsman* criticized the negative effects of Walpole's politics and expressed their distress in the face of what they saw as the corruption of society. The political aim of the *Craftsman* was stressed by its title, *The country journal*, a clear reference to the country party.<sup>11</sup>

This anti-ministerial weekly regularly identified the *Fable* with the government of the Prime Minister. The first reference to the *Fable* appeared in the *Craftsman* on 29 January, 1732. Under the pseudonym of Philantropus (and not Philantropos, i.e., Hutcheson), the *Craftsman*'s author wrote to Caleb D'Anvers praising the role of charity. For Philantropus, charity consisted of public or private munificence aimed at meeting the needs or reducing the necessity or the distress of indigent people. In the present age, however, charity was endangered by the modern writers, who "have resolved it into the sordid Principles of *Self-love, Ostentation and vain Glory*". Although Philantropus did not mention the *Fable* explicitly, the reference to Mandeville's book was clear:

Besides, I take this Dispute about the *Origin of moral Virtue* to be only a meer Prevarication; an idle Contention and Battle of Words. It

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<sup>11</sup> According to Bolingbroke, the partisan opposition between the Whigs and Tories had been replaced by court and country parties; the country party's aim was to unite the Whigs and Tories in opposition to Walpole and the court. The *Craftsman*'s contributors therefore made continuous references to the republican tradition and the ancient constitution in the face of tyranny exerted by Britain's first minister. Because of its anti-ministerial bent, the *Craftsman* was often prosecuted by the government. In 1729 the *Craftsman*'s printer, Richard Francklin, was brought to trial although he was acquitted by the jury. Two years later, Francklin was again arrested and imprisoned for printing "The letter from the Hague" in the *Craftsman* edition of 2 January, 1731. The letter, said to be written by Bolingbroke, accused Walpole of secret negotiations which lead to the second treaty of Vienna.

said, for Instances, that *Benevolence to others* is the secret Offspring of *Love to our selves*; and what then?

Philantropus' reference obviously concerned the *Fable's* essay, *An enquiry into the origin of moral virtues*. In opposition to Mandeville, Philantropus distinguished between true and false charity: the first was aimed at bringing about positive effects in society, whereas the second was flawed by ostentation and vanity. For example, the South sea scheme was presented to public opinion as a charitable project because of its aim to reduce the public debt, but in reality it was motivated by private interests and the forces of corruption. In this sense, the false charity condemned by Philantropus seems related to Mandeville's view on charity. According to Mandeville, charity was not a virtue but proceeds from appetite of praise. Nevertheless, Philantropus asserted that the true charity was a virtue moved not from vanity but from public spirit.

On 26 February, 1732, the *Craftsman* published a letter addressed to Caleb D'Anvers. The letter was signed by an Old Whig who praised Caleb for his defense of the constitution and British freedom. Caleb's enemies were depicted by the anonymous author as supporters of the corruption represented by their patron, Robert Walpole:

Your *Adversaries*, on the contrary, are employed to commend every Action of their *Patron*, good or bad; to write Panegyrics upon the Vices of *great Men*; and according to their different Capacities, to worry every Body, who oppose their *Master*; [...] Thus they cry out that *Mr. D'Anvers* is abusing the Government [...] and were it not for his paper [The *Craftsman*], Nobody would have any Thing to say against the Government.

At this point, the Old Whig cited the *Fable of the bees* as the principal reference of the court administration and asserted that the wrong-headed opinions of the author of the *Fable* had been adopted by Walpole's establishment:

Your Antagonists, with the utmost Confidence, advanced the same Doctrines, viz. that *Corruption, Venality and other Vices are become really necessary for the publick Good*; meaning, I suppose, the Security of *their Patron*, and plead and harangue in their Behalf as if for our Benefit, in direct Opposition to all sense of Morality and Religion. *These gentlemen* seem to have made this Scheme of the Doctor's the ground of Work their performances for some time past.

The Old Whig concluded that this perverse model had given rise to social incidents and tendencies over the past few years such as the South sea bubble and financial speculation. Four months later, Mandeville's text was mentioned again in Richard Franklin's weekly when the *Craftsman* published a letter by Anglicanus addressed to Caleb, which came to the conclusion that the *Fable* was detrimental to the interest of society.<sup>12</sup> The *Craftsman*'s correspondent was of the opinion that "nothing hath given more Offence in that Book than the Author's attempt to prove that *moral Virtue* hath no better an Origin than the Contrivance and Management of *crafty politicians*". In this case as well, Anglicanus' reference was directed to *An enquiry into the origin of moral virtue*, wherein Mandeville stated that virtues were the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride. In fact, from Anglicanus' point of view, the ancient lawgivers had originally exercised significant improvement on morality, but it was clear that the conduct of the modern politicians was characterized by corruption and self-interest rather than morality and virtue. Therefore, he concluded that "if therefore *moral Virtue* was first introduced into the World by the Craft of *these Gentlemen*, we ought to lament their present Degeneracy and endeavour to make Them *honest* by *Necessity*". Anglicanus' nostalgia for a virtuous and traditional society was a common theme among these patriots, who stressed the importance of moral virtues and the ancient constitution. In keeping with this, Walpole's opponents associated Mandeville's arguments about the a-moral genesis of society and toleration for vice with the current administration.

## CONCLUSION

As Mandeville himself noted (1924, I: XV), his text was condemned by thousands who never actually read a word of it. Thanks to the press, the *Fable* became one of the most notorious works of the early eighteenth century. From the indictment of the Grand Jury until Mandeville's death, the *Fable* was a *Leitmotiv* in the newspapers of the time. The spread of the *Fable* was not limited to the metropolitan area of London; it also had reverberations in Dublin and Edinburgh. As I have shown, the dissemination of the *Fable* took place through multiple journalistic styles: editorials, advertisements and commentary. In all of these instances, however, it is noteworthy that the British press concentrated nearly all of his reportage and comments on the 1723 edition and rarely

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<sup>12</sup> Anglicanus' letter appeared in the *Craftsman* of 24 June, 1732.

paid attention to the second part of the *Fable*. Overall, the assessment of Mandeville's text provided by the press was largely negative. Journalists and contributors expressed a moral condemnation of the *Fable*, associating it with several negative topics such as the South sea bubble or the thief Jonathan Wild. Indeed, the denial of virtues, libertinism, atheism, the legalization of prostitution, and the praise of self-interest were the common topics associated with the *Fable* in the British papers.

My study of Mandeville's reception in the press sheds some light on the controversial issue of Mandeville's party affiliation (Dickinson 1976; Goldsmith 1985; Mitchell 2003).<sup>13</sup> The British newspapers often granted a specific political stance to the *Fable* and its ideas. Mandeville himself in his *Letter to Dion*, invited his readers to pay attention to this new media, warning them about the contradictions of our party-affiliated writers. Indeed, the most extensive criticisms of his work came from partisan papers such as the *Mist weekly journal*, the *Craftsman* and the *London journal*. The Country newspapers saw the *Fable* as the main sponsor of Walpole's entourage and symbol of the degeneration of the times. The Whig press criticized the Mandevillean pessimism on the relationship between virtues and commerce. The Jacobite periodical, on the other side, associated Mandeville's text with the Whig Party which was depicted as a site for all manner of criminal and dishonest activities. Consequently, it stands to reason that partisan newspapers associated the *Fable* with whatever political views they themselves opposed in order to defame their antagonists. In doing so, the press indirectly demonstrated how the *Fable* first rose to public attention as a result of being implicated in a debate over the nature of politics.

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<sup>13</sup> Mandevillean scholars have already emphasized the Whig attitude of the Dutch author. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing debate regarding the nature of Mandeville's Whig affiliation: Court Whig, Country Whig or independent Whig.

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## Neural networks, real patterns, and the mathematics of constrained optimization: an interview with Don Ross

DON ROSS (Winnipeg, 1962) is professor of economics at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) and is program director of methodology at the Center for Economic Analysis of Risk (CEAR) at the J. Mack Robinson School of Business at Georgia State University (USA). He is co-founder of the Research Unit in Behavioral Economics and Neuroeconomics (RUBEN) at the University of Cape Town. From 2012 to 2014 Ross was chair of the executive board of the International Network for Economic Method (INEM), and remains an active member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Economic Methodology*, *Biological Theory*, and *Bioeconomics*. He holds a PhD in philosophy of science (1990) from the University of Western Ontario.

The scope of Ross' work is staggering. His areas of specialization span economic methodology, game theory, experimental economics of risk and time preferences, addiction and impulsive consumption, the history of economics, and philosophy of science (from logical positivism to scientific metaphysics). Moreover, he has published, refereed, and organized symposia on topics as diverse as biological evolution, human language and signalling dynamics, artificial intelligence (AI) and artificial life modelling, connectionist theories of cognition, cognitive learning theory, analysis of econometric methods, political economy of international trade, African industry studies, and economic development (with emphasis on development in South Africa).

Ross' published monographs include: *Philosophy of economics* (2014), *Economic theory and cognitive science: microexplanation* (2005), *What people want: the concept of utility from Bentham to game theory* (1999), and *Metaphor, meaning and cognition* (1993). His collaborations include *Scientific metaphysics* (2012, with James Ladyman and Harold Kincaid), *Distributed cognition and the will* (2007, with David Spurrett, Harold Kincaid, and G. Lynn Stevens), *Handbook of the philosophy of economics* (2009, with Harold Kincaid), *Midbrain mutiny: the*

*picoeconomics and neuroeconomics of disordered gambling* (2008, with Carla Sharp, Rudy E. Vuchinich, and David Spurrett), *Every thing must go: metaphysics naturalized* (2007, James Ladyman), and *Dennett's philosophy: a comprehensive assessment* (2000, with David Thompson and Andrew Brooks). To date, he has published upward of fifty scholarly articles, three dozen book chapters, and a score of reviews and review articles. He has also contributed over a hundred mass-market articles on trade and industrial policy in Africa.

In this interview, professor Ross explores his intellectual roots and surveys his transition from cognitive scientist to economist. He discusses his involvement with Daniel Dennett, the virtues of economic optimization theory, and the merits (and demerits) of integrating economics with its neighbour disciplines.

**EJPE:** *The story of your academic training is very interesting: You started out as a philosopher interested in cognitive science—how did this segue into studying economics? Can you say a little bit about your background as a philosopher and your early interests in cognitive science?*

**DON ROSS:** It was a rapid trip across a wide intellectual landscape. I started off being interested in continental philosophy, specifically Merleau-Ponty's brand of phenomenology. Then I read Doug Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach* (1980), in my final undergraduate year, and was entranced by the deep intellectual roots of the study of machine intelligence. My alma mater, Western Ontario, was strong in cognitive science—Zenon Pylyshyn was there at the time—and it was possible to specialize in cognitive science within the philosophy of science PhD programme. But it was 1986, and the 'new' connectionism was just being born. I was sure that bringing a more biological flavour into AI made sense, so wanted to study that. But the necessary formalism for neural network modelling is the mathematics of optimisation, not formal logic as with classical AI. So although I took courses in foundations of PROLOG and formal semantics, the only place I could get help in learning the math I needed for connectionism was the economics department. I knew many of the economists—and UWO's economics department at the time was one of the best in the world—so I arranged to do some coursework there, and the philosophy department credited it.



The other critical event in my intellectual development at that time was that I sent one of my course papers to Dan Dennett, and received a detailed reply that was so helpful that I got the paper published in *Philosophy of Science* (Ross 1990). That marked the beginning of Dan's role as my principal intellectual mentor, which he remains to this day. I owe more to him professionally than to anyone else.

***Was economics foreign to you? How did you assimilate? What aspects of economics seemed intuitive (or counter-intuitive) to you given your training as a philosopher of science?***

I knew absolutely nothing about economics when I started the courses, unless one counts a bit of Marx. But game theory immediately struck me as wonderful. At that time, in the mid-1980s, game theory was only being rigorously applied in industrial organization (IO) theory. So I attended to IO quite comprehensively before I studied anything else in economics. Gradually I filled in the other branches of micro from there. It was a long time before I started paying any attention to macro, though I now read it as much as anything else. And I ignored development economics completely until I moved to South Africa in 1997 and perceived with my direct senses that it's the most important part of the discipline. If ever one doubts the value of applying effort to economics, look at real poverty.

***So did you do all coursework for a PhD in economics while doing your PhD in philosophy? If so, was there a point where you ceased to think of yourself as philosopher and started thinking "like an economist"?***

No, not all the coursework—just the parts that interested me and also taught me the math I needed. As I said, I didn't then take so much as a glance at macroeconomics. It was a few years before I felt sure of myself in applied game theory, and could build IO models and prove theorems. I wish I'd learned more statistics—I had to go back and do that later by myself, and took a full year out of research in the 1990s to just relentlessly do exercises from econometrics textbooks. In 2008 I spent a half-year repeating that regimen at a more advanced level, which was necessary because so much had happened in econometrics in the interim. But from the beginning of my academic career I listed my main research areas as "Connectionist AI, Artificial Life, and Game Theory." Some of my earliest publications were on the foundations of game theory. Also very soon after my PhD, as a philosopher of science, I

became particularly interested in the social sciences. That led me to read very intensively in the history of economics and in political economy.

As for “thinking like an economist,” I found the three primary heuristics for that—‘Identify the incentives!’, ‘Identify the opportunity costs!’, and ‘Look for selection effects!’—as utterly intuitive and sensible from the moment I encountered them. I approached issues in cognitive science through those principles, which made it natural for me to align with Dan Dennett philosophically. I’ve always felt that on the big issues in both philosophy and economics, my style of thought has been coherent and internally joined-up.

***How has Dennett responded to your use of his ideas?***

Dan is very generous in acknowledging the work of others, but he wisely refrains from endorsing other scholars’ arguments and conclusions tout court. He’s said in print, a few times, that he’s learned some things from my work, and naturally that’s what one most wants to hear from a mentor. But I’d be worried about him if he ever came out and said “Don is right!” about a big issue. That would be like watching Willie Mays let a ball go between his legs; you don’t want to be there. (That really did eventually happen to poor old Willie Mays. But, happily, minds can remain in excellent functional shape right until the end, and Dan’s hasn’t lost a step.)

I’ve consistently tried to push Dan to be uncompromising about the ‘real’ part of his concept of a real pattern (Dennett 1987, 1991). I think he’d acknowledge that I’ve at least buttressed his retreat from instrumentalism about intentionality with some of my formulations of the shared idea. But Dan is usually more concerned to minister—while applying a lot of gentle but firm correction—to the ontological convictions of non-scientists than I am. This inclines him to promote a role for philosophers in mediating between scientific and folk belief that seems to me to be more appropriately a job for anthropologists.

I may be sounding too much like Paul Churchland here. My view on folk psychology is still closer to Dan’s than to his—beliefs and desires are real patterns. They exist only virtually, but being virtual is a way of being real, not a way of being fictional.

***“Micro-explanation” is a major theme in your work on economic methodology. For instance, in your (2005) book, Economic theory and***

**cognitive science (ET&CS), you argue that many theories from the cognitive sciences, including neuroscience, can be reconciled with neoclassical economic theory. Can you say a little about this?**

What induces a brain to enact a mind—the very point of mindfulness—is pressure to rationalize its behaviour so as to make itself comprehensible—and, within limits, predictable—to others. In strategic contexts, this also means that it must be predictable to itself. That’s all in Dan’s work. So when I asked myself how I could extend the Dennettian perspective—which I wanted to do because I truly think it’s right—I reasoned, well, I know some economics and I know some neural network modelling, and I know what they have in common mathematically, so let’s see if I can anchor Dan’s loosely economic framework into the actual theory as economists understand it.

**Do you think that a book like ET&CS is better suited for philosophers and cognitive scientists, or for economists? Who has the most to gain by reading that book?**

Naturally I wish that more economists had read the book. After I actually started doing experimental economics myself, which I took up immediately after finishing the book, I understood why they hadn’t. I simply hadn’t connected the high-level Samuelsonian theory of the book into the kinds of modelling choices that actually arise in labs. And those are the kinds of economists who are most interested in cognitive science. I think they’ll find my (2014) book, *Philosophy of economics*, much more congenial. I might have thought like an economist, in the sense I described above, from early days; but, although I’ve done policy work for a long time, I only started doing practical economics that was connected to the topics of my philosophical work about ten years ago. Now, designing and analysing experiments takes up about half of my time. This is largely due to the influence of my other most important intellectual mentor, Glenn Harrison.

It was partly due to this recognition that the second volume in the ET&CS project wasn’t the book about macroeconomics that I’d announced—and am still planning to produce—but, instead, was an application of the ideas of volume 1 to a phenomenon on which I’d been doing experimental work, namely, disordered gambling (Ross et al. 2008).

I do think that economists could learn from the first ET&CS book how to be more sophisticated in framing their behavioural hypotheses.

But I'd now advise them to read *Philosophy of economics* before tackling *ET&CS*.

***In Philosophy of economics you argue that economics should be distanced from psychology. With this in mind, what are your thoughts on the current state of behavioural economics? How would you respond to behavioural economists who think that psychology is important for understanding how people make decisions?***

Let me start with the second question first. I completely agree that we crucially need help from psychology in understanding how people make decisions. I emphasize the distinction between economics and psychology precisely in order to try to promote clarity about how economics and psychology can be complements instead of substitutes for one another. (My complaint about much behavioural economics is that it implicitly replaces economics with the psychology of valuation.)

A typical human behaviour that involves a decision is the result of a vector of causal processes. The economist who is methodologically clear studies external constraints that constitute incentives to narrow choice sets, and the network of expectations about responses of other agents or of whole markets that tend to cause choices to conform (statistically) to the 'general axioms of revealed preference' (GARP) and to implement strategies that are elements of quantal response equilibria (QRE). Psychologists interested in valuation study internal processes that contribute to the framing of choice sets. Often these will be modelled as processes of diffusion and drift in neural or quasi-neural networks. I assume, controversially, that psychological processes are sub-deliberative. This reflects my alignment with Dennett's philosophy of mind; once a process is deliberative, it's been framed in public language, and thus involves the person taking the intentional stance toward herself. At that point she's modelling herself strategically and we're in the domain of game theory.

There is a way of integrating these vector elements, provided one has kept them apart in the first place. The method has been developed and illustrated by Glenn Harrison, Lisa Rutström, and their Danish collaborators (Andersen, Harrison & Rutström 2010). Maximum likelihood estimation of mixture models does not require that all the component models be models of choice, so long as the outputs can be identified with the same event (a 'behaviour'). So mixtures can model both economic and psychological data-generating processes, and

estimations of mixture models can identify the relative causal weights of economic choices and psychological processes. In some instances, for example bidding in a bond auction, the economic models might account for almost all of the observed behaviour. In other instances—say, ordering either identically priced chocolate or vanilla ice cream—the psychological processes might plausibly turn out to do almost all of the causal work. But to know either of these things in full confidence, we need the economist and the psychologist to work together.

I stress again, however, that to apply this method one must not *muddle up* the different data-generating processes. In my view the majority of behavioural economics—for example, applications of cumulative prospect theory that fail to distinguish probability loss aversion from utility loss aversion—positively *rely* on such muddling. Aspects of framing and choice are boiled together in one goulash. If you don't keep in mind that framing and choice are different kinds of processes with different structures, you're going to have too many moving parts in your model, too many degrees of freedom in estimation, and so you're going to have identification problems you can't solve.

***How does your current experimental work differ from that of other behavioural economics?***

I haven't produced experimental innovations. Rather, I've philosophically interpreted and defended as best practice the innovations of my collaborators in the Harrison-Rutström group. Most of their innovations lie not in the individual elements of the method—maximum likelihood mixture modelling, for example—but in combining effective econometrics with joint estimation of utility function curvature, risk preference structure (for example aversion to static risk versus correlated risk over time), intertemporal discounting, and subjective belief confidence (cf. Andersen, Harrison & Rutström 2008; Harrison and Rutström 2008). To repeat a much rehearsed line of Glenn's, our group's mantra is to always rigorously align economic theory (which much behavioural economics tosses away), structural econometrics (where much behavioural economics relies on attempted randomization and linear estimation), and sound data elicitation and measurement (unlike those behavioural economists who follow psychologists in trying to motivate subjects using hypothetical rewards).

Making one's best contributions to the collective enterprise of science involves accepting leadership where expertise warrants. In the

experimental lab and field, Glenn and Lisa are our leaders and I am a soldier.

It's also important in this context to mention our distinguished collaborator George Ainslie. I said earlier that my first deep intellectual interest was in phenomenology. George is the best phenomenologist I know of, probably partly because he was trained by behaviourists. His 'picoeconomics' (1992, 2001) is a very deep, subtle way of understanding the dynamics of selfhood. He's also had a strong influence on my involvement in experiments—he and I collaborated on a couple before either of us became involved with the Harrison-Rutström group. Recently, George, Glenn and I, with a few younger colleagues, have produced some empirical results on human reward bundling about which we're very excited. Watch this space!

***What do you think about the relationship between economics and neuroscience? Do you think one discipline has more to gain from the other? Is the discipline of “neuroeconomics” turning into something distinct from either neuroscience or economics?***

I've of course had a lot to say about this, very explicitly, in print (Ross 2008, 2011; Harrison and Ross 2010). I was drawn to immerse myself in neuroeconomics from the moment I caught wind of it in 2004, given my combined backgrounds in economic optimization theory and neural network modelling. My considered view today is that the tradition within neuroeconomics that derives directly from the computational neuroscience of learning has produced some outstanding science. I think it's still of only limited relevance to the main concerns of economists, but that's partly because there's still a massive load of bridge-building to be done from the other bank of the river, on the structural econometrics of latent data-generating processes. But then of course there's also quite a lot of neuroeconomics that is devoted to correlating areas of brain activity with economic behaviour as characterized in a naïve way that takes folk psychology much too seriously. I don't predict that the history of science is ultimately going to allocate many pages to work of that kind. And much of that second kind of neuroeconomics involves shockingly bad econometrics, or no econometrics.

***You've argued that any well behaved system can be an economic agent (and somewhat controversially, that humans are “atypical”***

***economic agents). Instead you claim that things like neurons, bugs, phylogenetic lineages, and even weather patterns are candidates better-suited for the tools of economic analysis. Can you say a little about this?***

Not weather patterns, actually, since there's nothing they're trying to optimize. But economic theory is, literally, as a matter of mathematics, a theory of constrained optimization, where the inputs are choices from sets of options and the outputs are measurable in terms of some sort of utility function. Clearly that applies to neurons (or at least groups of neurons), and to insects. It applies to phylogenetic lineages insofar as they're subject to Darwinian selection. That's another point emphasized by Dan Dennett (1995). Those just seem to be plain facts. Of course an economist is always welcome to say "That's not the sort of thing I want to use the theory to model." And it's true, very broadly, to say that biologists (sometimes) use economics to study non-human organisms and ecologies, and neuroscientists (sometimes) use economics to study value computation in the brain, and economists use economics to study human markets. But then my point is that this is a sociological fact, not a methodological one. Methodologically, economic theory applies very usefully to a wide range of phenomena, though where prediction and explanation are concerned it applies only with high levels of uncontrollable error to individual human choices. Fortunately it applies very nicely to markets involving groups of people, if they're constrained by enforced institutional rules that distinguish legitimate from illegitimate ways of transferring property rights.

***Following up on that question, some philosophers worry that economics is "imperialistic" in the sense that it invades other disciplines. Do you think this is a legitimate worry?***

I think that invocations of imperialism always amount to *ad hominem* rhetoric. There is no basis on which classes of phenomena should be pre-assigned to disciplines as their property. In saying this I'm not endorsing ambitions by economists to explain the whole social world in their own framework. As I said earlier, very few human behaviours are merely economic. Everyday pricing and resource allocations decisions by normal firms are to a first approximation just economic, though not when the firms in question are selling status goods or services, or when a specific person's idiosyncratic goals influence the decisions. Almost nothing that an individual person does is only economic. So if

economists try to shed light on whichever phenomena they think they can, this creates no risk that nearby disciplines will be crowded out of influence, at least insofar as the governing goals are scientific rather than political. Of course that final caveat is important. Should people be on guard against attempts by economists to appropriate unwarranted power? Of course—but merely as a special case of the generalization that we all should resist unilateral power grabs by anybody. And, some fantasies on the populist left notwithstanding, economists aren't relatively very powerful, because politicians don't pay much attention to them.

There are various specific points to be added in this area. I think that sociologists would greatly expand their capacity to enlighten the world if more of them learned econometrics. (Increasingly many are, but their institutional structures frequently interfere.) I think that economists should borrow a leaf from philosophers and ground their current debates in deep knowledge of historical debates within their discipline. I think that philosophers would do well to recognize that anthropologists are better equipped to systematically study folk conceptual intuitions than they are. All of this is to say that current disciplinary boundaries, like current national boundaries, are imperfect products of history. That's a good reason to be reverent about neither kind of boundary.

***Another important theme in your work is the evolution of human linguistic abilities and other means for public signalling. Most often this is connected to coordination and game theoretic modelling. However, you also make frequent references to philosophers of language, primarily Wittgenstein and Ryle. Would you say that there is an inherent connection between language use (as Wittgenstein and Ryle conceived of it) and game theory? If so, is this a connection that economists practicing game theory should be knowledgeable of?***

That's an interesting and perceptive question. Language very probably evolved as a strategic instrument—as Ruth Millikan (1984, 1989) would put it: facilitating equilibrium selection in games is its proper function. But that's far from its only contemporary function—it's not the main thing that Shakespeare and Bob Dylan, or for that matter Martin Luther King, get up to with it, and theirs are the uses that rightly impress us the most. Economists who have thought rigorously about language have typically spotted the point of modelling it with game theory



immediately. But I'd encourage them to avoid thus thinking of language reductively, as if sending strategic signals is the only point of it. When Wittgenstein talked about 'language games' he was drawing attention to the fact that people know how to work with language naturally and fluently even though there aren't, and couldn't be, any programmable rules for doing so. That's a very different perspective, indeed almost opposite to the one we take up when we model language as an equilibrium-selection or coordinating technology. I don't want to see economists going around saying "This great philosopher, Wittgenstein, said that language use is a game, so here are some suggested axioms for that game." Most know not to cite David Lewis, who imposes demands on game theory that have no counterpart at all in the mathematics. Economists won't go too far wrong in borrowing from philosophy—when they think about language—if they read Brian Skyrms's work (2010); and they do.

***Even if natural language isn't "programmable" in any realistic sense, do you think that philosophers of language can benefit from learning game theory? Do you think there are open philosophical questions about language, or the evolution of language, that game theory can help with?***

Absolutely! As I said earlier, the proper function of language is strategic, so in fact if a philosopher wants to fully understand that she had better learn some game theory, because that's what you need to rigorously model strategy. I particularly recommend the deep and pioneering work of Prashant Parikh (1991, 2010) in using game theory to understand the tensions between semantics and pragmatics. My own first book was on metaphor. When someone coins an original metaphor, they're trying to bring about a social change, to get other people to see some X as a Y where semantic convention hasn't supported the association in question. Whenever anyone tries to influence the behaviour of anyone else, they're entering the territory of strategy and inviting the scrutiny of the game theorist.

***What advice would you give to young philosophers interested in economics? What can philosophers contribute to the discipline? Similarly, what advice would you give to young economists? What can economists do from within to improve the discipline?***

To young philosophers who want to apply their skills to economics, my advice would be: find a way to actually get involved in doing some economics. That isn't as difficult to arrange as one might think. The key is to learn some econometrics, and to do so in part by learning to write Stata code. If you can do that, some team of economists will find you useful even on those occasions where you want to make philosophical points with which they're impatient. And chances are that sooner or later, probably sooner, you'll have a theoretical or methodological insight that didn't occur to your economist collaborators, and, bingo, you'll be part of an interdisciplinary team. This will make your critical scrutiny of other economists much more focused, relevant, and persuasive.

As for young economists, I don't need to be hypothetical, because at any given time I'm supervising the doctoral studies of half a dozen of them. They hear my methodological strictures a lot whether they like it or not! These include: (1) When you take up a new study area, learn its deep history from primary sources and trace it back to points in time before the tradition was mathematicised. You're most likely to grasp the subtleties of a domain if you have a good idea of how the late masters would be conceptualized it. I'm talking here about Smith, Ricardo, Marshall, Keynes, and so on—not just Samuelson or Arrow, and certainly not just the papers that have appeared in the *American Economic Review*. (2) Don't approach your problem by asking which pre-canned Stata routine will come closest to estimating your model. Ask rather what kind of model structure will fully represent the economics of the issues; then hope that there's a pre-canned Stata routine but be prepared to write new code if there isn't. That way, you cultivate intellectual depth as an economist, not just expertise in the layout of the tool-box.

I don't think that young economists should necessarily set out to 'improve' the discipline in any large-scale, programmatic sense. The discipline isn't in peril because its practitioners impose some benighted ideology on new recruits; it's in peril because learning software manuals is crowding out learning disciplinary history, where all the deepest ideas are to be found. Young economists can also implement wisdom by reading rigorous work from outside the discipline, particularly work of psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists—and, yes, philosophers.

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**Review of Jonathan Wight's *Ethics in economics: an introduction to moral frameworks*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015, 275 pp.**

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For many years now those of us looking for a text to use in courses on ethics and economics and have had to rely primarily on Hausman and McPherson's *Economic analysis, moral philosophy, and public policy* (2006). In my experience that largely comprehensive work has proven to be a far better guide for the instructor than for students who are new to the study of moral and political philosophy, or to the practice of normative engagement. Working with upper level undergraduate and graduate students in a school of international studies—where students are typically more widely trained than in economics departments—I've found the book too choppy in its presentation (too detailed in some respects and too rushed in others, which interferes with its narrative flow) and ultimately discouraging for students trying to wrap their minds around the central concepts of moral philosophy. Though there are sections of the book that are superb—its extended treatment of the infamous Larry Summers World Bank memo that advocates dumping pollution in poor countries is analytically and pedagogically first rate—the book now serves me primarily as a useful reference in my own research and teaching. It is no longer featured on my syllabi.

In part for this reason I was eager to read Jonathan Wight's *Ethics in economics*, to see whether it might provide a viable alternative for introducing students to the field. In fact, it does. But the book is more than the introductory text that it purports to be. The book has deepened my own reckoning with normative and economic theory, human behavior, and policy adjudication. For the sake of the many students who have passed through my courses over the years, I only wish the book had appeared a decade or two earlier.

*Ethics in economics* covers familiar ground (before introducing innovative ideas), but in ways that are both wonderfully accessible and directly relevant to economics. For instance, the three chapters in Part I demonstrate why ethics matters in economics, and why even positive

economics is value laden. This is something many economists are reluctant to concede, even following the persuasive work by Amartya Sen (1987) and others. Here Wight explores consequentialist, deontological, and virtue-based moral frameworks. The presentation is analytically sharp but also intuitive. Within the first dozen pages Wight has already introduced a concrete case that is both engaging and instructive—the infamous decision in the 1970s by GM not to repair a known problem with the gas tank placement on the Chevy Malibu that could and did cause explosions in certain crash situations that led to serious injuries and death. Wight exploits the case to convey the principal features of alternative moral theories and to tease out the distinctions between them. Having presented the frameworks, many normative theorists—and especially economists—would rush toward a forced normative choice of one framework over others as the uniquely appropriate lens by which to judge behavior, and economic policies and outcomes.<sup>1</sup> In economics, after all, we tend toward what philosopher Howard Radest (1997) calls “moral geometry”—the reduction of baffling ethical problems via a neat, analytically tractable machinery that yields unambiguous policy directives. Hence our profession’s deep attachment to Pareto, Kaldor-Hicks, cost-benefit analysis, or social welfare functions. Given his previous work on Adam Smith, one might have expected Wight to reject consequentialist and deontological ethics in toto in favor of virtue ethics as the singly appropriate and defensible framework to guide agents’ decision-making and ground normative economics.

Wight does not take that route, however.<sup>2</sup> Instead, a central objective (and certainly the most novel feature) of the book is to argue that any mono-theoretic approach is just as stunted and harmful in normative theory as it is in positive theory. Wight’s “ethical pluralism” entails “a more elaborate structure” that considers

the likelihood that people make choices within a pluralist moral ecosystem, that is, some mix of considering outcomes, conforming actions to principles, and exploring character or virtue as part of meaning and identity (p. 17).

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<sup>1</sup> I include myself among those economists who exhibit this tendency. See DeMartino (2001), where I explore the capabilities framework of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum and argue that it provides a better foundation for global policy assessment than neoclassical consequentialist welfarism.

<sup>2</sup> Neither, as Wight (p. 211) informs us, did Smith. Wight’s Smith is a pragmatist who understood the “interplay of values and principles.”

Wight seeks to persuade us that ethical pluralism is central to good practice in both positive and normative economics. Following Sen (1987), he argues that an appreciation of ethical complexity can help positive economics to model human behavior far more satisfactorily than any approach that presumes that humans act according to some narrow motivation, like self-interest. To this end, chapter 8 (evocatively titled “The Science Behind Adam Smith’s Ethics”) surveys findings from behavioral economics and neuroeconomics that demonstrate a rich diversity of human sensibilities and motivations.<sup>3</sup> Evidence from the new research ought to put to rest the idea that *Homo economicus* provides an adequate conception of human behavior. This positive insight helps to sustain a set of central normative claims—that ethical pluralism provides a more adequate and compelling basis for normative assessment of individual behaviors and government policy. A recurring theme of the book is that “seemingly different principles are at times necessary for the operation of another” (p. 17). Economic agents cannot be good consequentialists, for instance, if they do not at the same time recognize a set of duties (to respect the rights of others, for instance) as they go about maximizing the outcomes they value, and if they do not also cultivate an appropriate set of virtues. Wight locates this insight even in Milton Friedman’s famous “Social Responsibility of Business” essay (1970), so often taken as paean to strict, hard-headed, unapologetic consequentialism.<sup>4</sup> If it is in fact true that alternative moral frameworks “*complete*” rather “*compete with*” (p. 18) each other as humans fashion their behavior, then ought we not recognize moral

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<sup>3</sup> Absent here, however, is consideration of findings from the new field of behavioral ethics, which demonstrate that virtuous people often violate their own moral precepts and then fail to recognize their transgressions after the fact. See Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011) for a comprehensive overview of the field. The research is consistent with many of Wight’s claims, especially the idea that moral behavior requires more than consequentialist reasoning or acting in accordance with duties since people are wonderfully adept at reconciling consequential reasoning and moral duties with even egregious behavior.

<sup>4</sup> Wight draws our attention to what I’ll call the ‘Friedmanian Proviso,’ that corporate managers must seek to maximize corporate profit “while conforming to the basic rules of the society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom” (Wight, 13). As with provisos more generally, (such as the ‘Lockean Proviso’ against the monopolization of vital resources, see Nozick 1974), this one is often overlooked by advocates of Friedman’s position on the obligations of corporate managers. Wight’s treatment of Friedman strikes me as too generous, however. If there is an ethical duty to respect both the law *and* ethical custom, and the law permits and custom instructs corporate managers to attend in their decision-making to the broader needs of society and not just shareholders—wasn’t it this ethical custom to which Friedman was objecting in the essay?—then we have a clear renunciation of Friedman’s central dictate to managers to maximize profit.

pluralism as an appropriate grounding for normative assessment? Up until recently and too often even today in normative moral philosophy the tendency is to disparage ethical pluralism (in our students and others) as a sign of moral laziness, immaturity, or cowardice; as evidence of unwillingness to judge behaviors and outcomes by reference to the uniquely correct framework.<sup>5</sup> Wight's response is to encourage us to brave ethical pluralism even if doing so sacrifices ethical closure in particular cases, and consistency across them.

Part II of the book provides one of the best introductory treatments of normative economics now available. Its three chapters provide an accessible, engaging account of the standard treatment of preference-based welfare in economics before turning to the concept of Pareto and Kaldor-Hicks efficiency and the practice of cost-benefit analysis. Wight's assessment of standard neoclassical economics is respectful but hardly slavish. Indeed, chapter 5 on cost-benefit analysis and chapter 6 on criticisms of the preference satisfaction view of welfare bring together and extend many of the most compelling objections that have been offered to date against the neoclassical orthodoxy by critics on the liberal left (Sen) and right (Buchanan). For instance, Wight argues that as an application of Kaldor-Hicks, cost-benefit analysis shifts focus away from *actual* preference satisfaction and seeks to maximize *capacity* for preference satisfaction; and from *actual* to *potential* Pareto improvements. Equally problematic, it entails *compulsion* rather than *consensual* exchange. Citing Buchanan (1999 [1969]) Wight argues that compulsion makes it impossible to measure the actual opportunity costs associated with any policy adjustment that entails harms to economic actors. How can we know how much harm the loss of a valued good entails if there is no genuine opportunity for the affected party to negotiate a price at which she is willing to forego the good?

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<sup>5</sup> I'm thinking here, for instance, of the purported moral inconsistency inferred by utilitarians from the contradictory findings between the "trolley" problem (*should one pull a lever that will redirect an oncoming trolley from a track where it will kill five people to one where it will kill just one?*) and the "bridge overpass" problem (*should one push a heavy man with a large backpack off a bridge overpass to prevent a trolley from killing five people?*). Respondents tend to answer yes in the first but no in the second case. For strict consequentialists, the inconsistency reflects an indefensible distinction—between harming as a *side-effect* and harming as *means* to bring about a good outcome—that interferes with solid, cool-headed ethical judgment. Among others, Sen (1992) has pushed back against this tendency to essentialize any one normative standard (or procedure) against which to judge behavior and economic outcomes.



The insight regarding compulsion leads to another, which is particularly troublesome for the standard view that takes cost-benefit analysis to be a universally applicable policy decision-rule. Compulsion is justifiable only within institutional settings that provide sufficient support for democratic governance over the ground rules of economic engagement; individual rights; and a rule of law that encompasses adequate due process protections. Only in such contexts can we possibly infer that those harmed by Kaldor-Hicks efficient government initiatives (such as the use of eminent domain to seize private property so that it can serve more valuable purposes) have consented in advance to arrangements that sometimes induce harm to some so as to promote the general good. Moreover, only in such contexts can we conclude that the harms imposed are not the result of practices and procedures that citizens would deem unjust or otherwise illegitimate. Wight reminds us that “[w]hat is *compulsory* in a country with due process laws becomes *coercive* in a state lacking basic safeguards” (p. 90). He cites the Three River Gorges Dam in China as an egregious example, where the institutional supports for the legitimacy of compulsion are lacking, and where it cannot be claimed that the project is legitimated by the fact that its benefits are predicted to exceed its (massive) costs. Wight concludes the discussion with this question:

Without free speech, political parties, fair courts, or the right to emigrate, citizens in China lack the ability to set the rules for public policy making and to ensure that they are fairly enforced. What is the meaning of “efficiency” in this setting (p. 91)?

I’m on board with this claim, and I can only hope that leading economists will take heed when they find themselves advising government lacking basic civil rights. But I worry that the focus on the boogeyman China in Wight’s text lets the profession off the hook too easily in its defaulting to cost-benefit analysis as a legitimate decision rule in other contexts. As an instructor teaching the book I’d push my students to examine the degree to which the same critique applies today in the US, where (as Wight acknowledges, p. 86) neoclassical welfarism rather than legal rights now so often infuses judicial decision-making and where historically unprecedented inequality and the escalating capture of the state by elites undermine democratic procedures for ensuring consent and due process when some are forced to suffer for the presumed benefit of society.

In Part III, Wight explores “topics in ethics and economics.” These chapters are not to be skipped, as they provide some of the most compelling of the book’s insights. For instance, chapter 7 provides a comprehensive account of the moral limits to the market, organized around arguments pertaining to a) the intrinsic nature of certain goods, and b) the background conditions under which market exchanges take place. Regarding intrinsic matters, the chapter surveys *inter alia* claims pertaining to “moral goods,” and the problem of moral crowding out. For instance, voluntarism sometimes dissipates when financial incentives are offered to increase solidaristic behaviors, like the practice of donating blood. Background conditions that call market exchange into question comprise personal and even certain social relationships, vulnerability that can lead to exploitation, and discrimination and other mechanisms that can generate repugnant market outcomes. Neoclassical price theory has displaced ‘just price’ by virtue of its conception of consumer sovereignty which posits that restrictions on what might appear to be unequal exchange can only harm most the agent who is most desperate to conclude the contract. Wight rescues the concept of just price by pointing to its normative grounding in evolving community conceptions of basic fairness. He identifies its continuing salience today in contexts ranging from Mayan markets in which price setting is biased toward the most vulnerable party, to the Living Wage Movements in major US cities, to the global anti-sweatshop movement.<sup>6</sup>

The book’s concluding chapter deepens the argument for ethical pluralism. Here Wight amplifies the presentation of what he calls “3 dimensional thinking” on ethical matters. The perspective on offer recognizes the value of virtue, duty and consequences in shaping human behavior and in normative assessment of practices and policies. The 3-D approach also recognizes that each normative framework is internally heterogeneous. Consequentialist analysis can range over preference satisfaction, wealth enhancement, harm minimization, inequality reduction, and so forth. Virtues and duties are similarly complex. By this point in the text Wight has tried to inoculate us against the expectation of or desire for a singly dominant ethical principle to guide us in our individual behaviors or our professional practice.

Will students find ethical pluralism ultimately satisfying? Will it promote a willingness to live with ethical complexity when they might

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<sup>6</sup> Chapters 9-11 explore equally pressing topics. These include the financial crisis of 2008, and the contested matter of inequality and justice.

have hoped for moral geometry? Or will it lead to moral bewilderment and, even worse, skepticism toward the claim that normative theory has anything to add to their personal development or their economic literacy?

My own experience suggests that the students who self-select into courses on normative economics are far more open to ethical complexity than the median economist. They are eager to learn how economists think about normative matters, but they are not typically willing to submit to welfarist preference satisfaction simply because it is the predominant approach to normative assessment in economics today. They are open to the kinds of criticisms of ethical monotheoretism that Wight offers here, even if the confrontation with pluralism generates plenty of moments of exasperation. The challenge for the instructor using a book like Wight's will be to nurture students' appreciation of the power and challenge of ethical pluralism without letting them slide too easily into simplistic ethical relativism. That challenge may be difficult to manage, but the rewards to at least some students who leave the course with greater ethical awareness and enhanced capacity for moral judgment could more than repay the effort.

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**Review of Peter Dietsch's *Catching capital: the ethics of tax competition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, 280 pp.**

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This excellent book explores normative issues related to tax competition among states and proposes solutions to core problems identified. The two main questions which the book tackles are: What, if anything, is wrong with tax competition? And, if there is something ethically problematic, what should be done? Dietsch argues that “tax evasion and the shifting of profits to low-tax jurisdictions represent egregious forms of free-riding on the part of capital owners and one of the most blatant injustices of modern economic societies. We need to get a grip on them” (p. 223). As far as I am aware, this is the only book-length normative assessment of tax competition available and, as such, it makes a highly original contribution to important literatures. This work, principally in economic philosophy, blends issues and insights from at least four different disciplines, namely political philosophy, economics, political sciences, and international tax law. It is accessibly written and aims to reach a broad audience including philosophers, economists, political scientists, law theorists, along with policymakers and members of international organizations. It is centrally focused on the normative underpinnings of how the international tax regime should be organized. But it also offers concrete proposals about how to create institutions and policies that would best match the theoretical analysis and bring its core normative insights into being.

Dietsch argues that enormous private wealth is hidden in tax havens and restoring fiscal control to states will require more effectively catching this capital, so that those who have a right to tax capital are able to do this effectively. We have to reform the international fiscal policy regimes so that effective taxation is possible. These goals require answering a number of core questions.

If some coordination in tax policy is required to respond to tax competition, what will be the implications for states' fiscal sovereignty? Can one regulate tax competition without calling for an

outright harmonization of tax rates? If so, how should we strike a balance between the fiscal autonomy of one particular state and the externalities this autonomy creates for other states? And supposing that reforming the system through multilateral regulation of tax competition is not politically feasible, are there compensatory duties that the winners of tax competition owe the losers? Last but not least, could it be that regulating tax competition will be economically inefficient (p. 7)?

So, to begin the sketch of his answers to some of these questions, what kinds of tax competition are worrisome? Dietsch identifies three kinds. First, states compete for foreign direct investment which involves relocation of real economic activity. Second, there is competition for portfolio capital. “Individuals shift some of their wealth in the form of cash deposits, equity, and security holdings offshore—which in fact means nothing other than ‘abroad’ in the financial world—in order to avoid paying capital gains tax” (p. 3). Approximately 10% of European wealth is held offshore, while the figure for Latin America is 50%, and the Middle East, 70% (p. 3). Third, states also compete for paper profits of multinational enterprises (MNEs). Using a staggering array of methods (such as manipulative transfer pricing schemes), MNEs shift profits from high to low tax rate jurisdictions. As one example, in 2009 Google Inc. was able to shift profits through Ireland, the Netherlands and Bermuda to cut its taxes dramatically to around 2.4%, far below the US corporate tax rate of 35%. So successful are these methods that 39% of Fortune 500 companies that were profitable for each year between 2008 and 2013 paid zero (or less) tax in one or more of those 5 years. Indeed, such practices have become an essential part of being competitive.

It is important to note that in the wake of all this tax competition and especially abusive offshoring practices, the tax burden has shifted with regressive effects to more immobile factors such as consumption and labour.

Part I investigates the nature of the wrongs associated with tax competition and explores solutions to remedy the wrongs identified. States enjoying fiscal autonomy is a central aspect of Dietsch’s just worldview. Tax competition can undermine that autonomy. Fiscal self-determination involves two basic choices. One concerns the size of the public budget and the second concerns the level of redistribution (p. 35).

Suppose the citizens of Sweden prefer larger public budgets and levels of redistribution to the citizens of the United Kingdom, and taxes high-income earners and corporations in Sweden at higher rates than those in

the UK to achieve these goals. Those in Sweden will therefore have some incentive to shift capital and income to the United Kingdom. If one aims to protect fiscal autonomy, this is an inevitable feature of fiscal interdependence. He thinks that, *prima facie*, shifts from Sweden to the United Kingdom in this scenario are probably “benign from a normative viewpoint” (p. 78). He believes “there will be *some* shifts in tax base between countries in response to differential tax rates that should count as unproblematic. *The basic challenge of this book is to identify where the boundaries of the fiscal autonomy prerogative should lie, and what institutions might serve to protect them*” (p. 79, emphasis in original). If capital flows away from Sweden in response to the lower tax rates resulting from English democratic choices, other countries cannot object. However, if states lower tax rates “on strategic grounds to lure foreign capital, then other countries will have a legitimate complaint if they can show that the policy has a negative impact on their aggregate fiscal self-determination” (p. 183).

We should design principles to regulate fair tax competition. Two are offered: the membership principle and the fiscal policy constraint. The membership principle is reasonably easy to understand: persons (both natural and legal) should pay tax in the state where they are a member. The fiscal policy constraint is much more complex (and also more difficult to appreciate how it would unproblematically do real work in practice). According to this constraint, “any fiscal policy of a state is unjust and should be prohibited if it is *both* strategically motivated *and* has a negative impact on the aggregate fiscal self-determination of other states” (p. 80, emphasis in original).

Dietsch also explores the institutional structure that is required to implement these principles effectively. He proposes the establishment of an International Tax Organisation (ITO) in which the rules are designed and negotiated in line with the membership principle and the fiscal policy constraint. All states would be members and adequately represented in the decision-making process. Practices such as bank secrecy and refusals to exchange information would be prohibited. Several intermediate steps would be needed to achieve these goals such as stronger deterrents for tax fraud including criminal prosecutions.

He proposes a number of important policies that I cannot hope to do justice to here given space constraints. Importantly, one of the policies he offers is a version of unitary tax with formulary apportionment. On this proposal, one first calculates the worldwide profits of MNEs and then

apportions “each country’s right to tax a part of these profits through a previously agreed formula” (p. 76). While some of these proposals look exclusively at sales as the relevant variable in the apportionment formula, the proposal he endorses is a lot more nuanced and combines a host of factors. Dietsch also usefully compares his own solution with those policy initiatives aimed at addressing tax evasion and avoidance recently offered by the OECD and European Union, so we can appreciate some of the considerable advantages his proposal has.

Part II addresses challenges for his account, such as the objection that any form of tax cooperation (including his own) will be inefficient. Another important objection is that tax cooperation infringes sovereignty inappropriately. He also argues that under the system of tax competition as it operates today, the winners of our current tax competition regime have moral obligations to compensate the losers. Dietsch carefully considers matters of transitional justice involving compensatory duties. Those states that experience net gains from tax competition incur duties to compensate the net losers.

For the objections Dietsch does consider, he does an excellent job disarming their force. My concern is that he leaves unaddressed several other challenges that are potentially quite serious, and which threaten some of the core goals of his ambitious programme of research. This is not a complaint about what he chooses to do in *Catching capital*. One can, after all, only do so much in the scope of one book. Rather, the challenges I present are invitations for him to develop his account by tackling what I see as some of the more difficult issues his position faces.

One of Dietsch’s important aims in the book

[...] is to promote reforms that would bring all stakeholders of capitalism back under the control of democratic decision making. A renewed and sustainable social contract will only be possible if the bargaining positions of labour and capital at the negotiating table become once again symmetrical (p. 21).

He aims to offer a vision according to which this much-needed symmetry is possible. I am much less optimistic about how this goal will be achieved through the mechanisms offered. In fact, I do not believe this symmetry will be meaningfully achieved by the measures proposed. Indeed, if promoting a more even relationship between labour and capital is one of the core goals, (1) the proposed reforms need to go much further, (2) the expressed primary goal of “fiscal self-determination” is somewhat



in tension with achieving a more favourable bargaining position between labour and capital, and (3) he needs to give other goods that tax competition undermines more weight than he has so far.

In order to explain these points we might start by asking: What goods are threatened by tax competition? Two core goods are identified as being endangered. The first and by far the most important for Dietsch is that tax competition undermines the fiscal self-determination of states. The second is that tax competition also widens inequality in two ways, by increasing income gaps between rich and poor countries and by widening gaps between capital owners and others. I believe that if Dietsch takes the first goal of fiscal self-determination seriously he should be more concerned to prioritize the second goal by aiming to reduce inequality. Fiscal self-determination is something of a myth even in some of the most robust democracies currently in existence. To give one example of this, consider the ways in which election funding practices give rise to a system in which corporations and wealthy individuals get privileged access to regulators and legislators, and are frequently able to influence policy that bends in the direction of promoting their interests. In contrast to the rather idealized version of citizens determining fiscal policy through their own choices, primarily through the mechanisms of elections, it can be rather dangerous to assume that fiscal policies are truly a reflection of the will of the people, even in democracies regarded as well-functioning. This is especially the case where there is already wide inequality within a state.

In contemporary democracies the legislature is, to varying degrees, captured by corporations that have powerful resources to invest in ensuring that it is so captured (Brock 2014b). This is exacerbated by the revolving door (in which employment in the private sector follows periods of government service), and the reverse revolving door, which involves moves from the private sector to government. Laws are written by those who heavily favour the interests of corporations that have much invested in making sure both the size of the public budget is small and levels of redistribution are kept at minimal levels. Corporations also have a strong general interest in light regulatory regimes and it is far from clear that any current governments would have any genuine interest in establishing an ITO, which is a key component to Dietsch's overall solution. In practice, fiscal "self-determination" tends to mean that those who are in power can and do use that power to write rules (regulations, legislation, and policy) that can widen inequality, further entrench an unjust status quo, and

promote the interests of capital over labour (Brock 2014a). Under the guise of fiscal self-determination, the status quo tends to prevail and that is to maintain a structure that strongly promotes the interests of capital over labour. So the twin goods that lie at the heart of the analysis of why tax competition is thought to be unethical are actually in some tension. A better way to really assure genuine fiscal self-determination might be to prioritise the second set of concerns about stemming inequality rather than privileging fiscal self-determination.

So, the idea that government policy reliably tracks citizens' preferences and that citizens choose at the ballot box both the size of the public budget and the level of redistribution, while noble, is undermined so badly in practice, one wonders what use can be made of these ideas as sufficiently indicative of the will of the people that needs respecting. This rather makes a mockery of putting so much weight on democratically revealed fiscal preferences since, for the most part, these are not relevant in the writing of fiscal law in most so-called democracies.

Presumably, Dietsch is aware of these kinds of issues, noting democracy's flaws on occasion (e.g., p. 182). Also, all too briefly towards the very end of the book, he notes "the elephant in the room," which he identifies as corporate lobbies (pp. 214-216). He thinks that there is good potential for workers and consumers to form important coalitions to advance the regulation of tax competition agenda. These two groups in particular have, after all, been net losers from tax competition and have had their tax burdens increased, as payroll and consumption taxes have increased significantly. But there is more than one elephant in the room here. Arrangements for funding of elections, significant worries about regulatory capture, the revolving door between government and the private sector, widening inequality, *inter alia*, mean that there is only so much a coalition between consumers and workers can really achieve, given the extraordinary asymmetry in power enjoyed by the global advantaged. I think this cluster of concerns deserves more than a two-page concession towards the very end of the book. What mechanisms can be introduced to combat these worries? I hope Dietsch will develop his views to address such issues.

The second set of problems I raise here concerns the compensatory duties identified. As mentioned, Dietsch offers a state-centric account of compensation. Individual states that benefit from tax competition owe compensation to those states that are net losers: "the net winners of tax competition—that is, those states that, on balance, experience capital

inflows—incur a duty to compensate the net losers” (p. 191). Against feasibility concerns, Dietsch argues that making the case for these compensatory duties is not “actually to see them paid” (p. 192). Rather, these arguments strengthen the hand of those who have fared poorly under tax competition and helps improve the prospects for wider institutional reforms. Invoking Pablo Gilabert’s notion of dynamic duties he says that even if “a feasibility constraint prevents us from discharging duty X at time  $t_1$ , we may still have a duty Y to do something that will increase our likelihood of being able to discharge duty X at time  $t_2$ ” (p. 193). He argues that making the case for compensatory duties is of this kind and should help to have a “positive influence on the trajectory of events” (p. 193).

While I think invoking Gilabert’s account is useful, I think the state-centric model for compensation might well blind us to some core relevant issues. There are so many individual variations in who exactly benefited from the unjust system. Surely, we might argue, that those who contributed to the design of the unjust system, who benefited greatly from it and have great capacity to fix it might be more responsible for compensation than those who did not? Or, even if we bracket the causal or contributory component, those who benefited greatly and have great capacity to fix it should do more than those not similarly situated. So, *who* should compensate, is a question that remains unconsidered. I think a more fine-grained analysis is required and that simply considering the matter from the perspective of states is too crude. To give a concrete case of why this question is relevant, consider the case of tax professionals.

Tax professionals, including and especially large multinationals firms of accountants, financial advisors, lawyers, and bankers, have not only designed the architecture that facilitates wide-scale abusive tax schemes necessary for destructive forms of tax competition to flourish, but have also been instrumental in implementing these schemes (Brock and Russell 2015). They have also personally and professionally benefited extensively from these arrangements and have significant capacity to remedy the injustices identified. Why should this group of tax professionals not be called upon to make a huge contribution to any compensation that is owed? And what about the high net worth individuals and multinational corporations that again have been such large beneficiaries, have fuelled the demand for such services, and have enormous capacity to compensate? Similarly, what about all those banks that facilitated abusive

tax practices, specifically targeting high net worth individuals and promoting their services to them?

The state-level analysis also spreads the compensatory load to many within a state, including the worst off and least responsible for the deprivation caused by tax competition. Why think they should carry some part of the burden of such compensation given the much more obvious involvement of tax professionals and their clients? Finally, an important objection to this country-by-country analysis is that some of the worst offenders might be able to fudge their real residency quite easily so that they are not counted anywhere in the calculation of who owes what to whom.

Note that the whole argument for compensation is one essentially based on requirements of justice. Justice considerations might also suggest that the ITO should be more involved in tax policy and should have broader powers to remedy other defects. So, since inequality undermines fiscal self-determination, perhaps the ITO should set minimum tax rates, requirements on the size of the public budget, or levels of redistribution, to address inequality. Furthermore, the ITO would have a mandate to make such recommendations on the grounds that this undermines fiscal self-determination. Once established, the ITO might also drift into proposing other robust taxation policies, including the implementation of international tax and transfer schemes, specifically as a way to restore fiscal self-determination or correct for externalities related to current practices that undermine fiscal self-determination (Brock 2008, 2009). It is not clear how Dietsch would be able to allay the fears of those who have such concerns, since these policies would be most consistent with promoting the goods he articulates as valuable.

Overall, this is an exceptional book that is well worth reading. I hope Dietsch will develop his research to take account of these concerns.

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**Review of Istvan Hont's *Politics in commercial society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, eds. Béla Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2015, 138 pp.**

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In the past decades scholars have come to revise the view that Rousseau and Smith were on opposite sides in their appreciation of commercial society. In *Politics in commercial society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith* (posthumously published and edited by Béla Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher), Istvan Hont (1947–2013) takes the issue to a new level. He presents Rousseau and Smith both as theorists of commercial society, arguing that we still underestimate the extent to which they held similar aims and views. They were engaged in conversation with fellow contributors to the ongoing debate on how to balance self-love, growth and stability through politics in commercial society. Emphasizing their extensive common ground, Hont highlights the riddle of why they held such different views on politics. Aiming to solve this riddle, he reconstructs the political theories of Rousseau and Smith, arguing that the themes and concerns of their contrasting visions of politics in commercial society still define tensions in modern politics.

In the first two chapters Hont maps out the agreements and disagreements between Rousseau and Smith. He places them in the Hobbesian, selfish tradition, engaged in refining the moral foundation of selfish theory. While agreeing with Hobbes that humans have no inborn sociability, Rousseau and Smith rejected the Hobbesian claim that sociability only arises after sovereign power is established by contract to control the disruptive human desire for recognition and superiority. Instead they offered a conjectural history of law and government, explaining the rise of sociability and pre-political consensus out of need and utility. Sociability as well as morality are the natural outgrowth of development through which humans learn the benefits of cooperation and cohesion. Along the way, however, people also start to compare themselves, evoking envy and the desire for recognition and superiority

with the inevitable result of dissension and conflicts. Thus Rousseau and Smith sought to explain how passions and judgments linked to self-love became the building materials of a working moral enterprise.

Given their alternative view on the origin of sociability, Rousseau and Smith had no need for Hobbes's absolutism, which neglects pre-political consensus and commercial sociability. Commercial society, interpreted by Hont as a halfway house between Tönnies's 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft', reflects this tension between pride-based and utility-based sociability. Hont argues that the tension between these two types of sociability has been pinned on Rousseau and Smith as if they were in two minds. The well-known Adam Smith problem has a precedent in Rousseau. Both 'problems' concern the (in)compatibility of *amour-propre* and compassion in commercial society, and lead up to the question of how inherent tensions need to be complemented by government to arrive at a stable social order. If commercial sociability is a product of historical evolution, how does politics develop from pre-existing sociability and how can the rise of justice and government be plotted?

Despite all similarities, Rousseau's and Smith's sketches of the historical development of law and government bring to light that views diverge on law, liberty, property, and inequality. As a consequence, Hont shows in chapter three and four, Rousseau and Smith developed very different visions of politics. One bone of contention is the question of what comes first: judges or the law? Rousseau, arguing from a contractual perspective, claimed the primacy of the law, taking his cue from Locke. Locke had argued that natural authority based on trust was bound to be corrupted with economic development. The institution of private property and the invention of money allowed accumulation of wealth, which increased inequality and created conflicts, only to be solved by establishing a legalized regime by social contract. Economic development fuelled by *amour-propre*, Rousseau concurred, inevitably leads to corruption. Following Hume in rejecting contract theory, Smith took the opposite view. First, societies created judges out of necessity. Coming to fear their (arbitrary) power, people aspired to make judges accountable to certain principles of law. The resulting security and liberty allowed the long run benefits of commercial society—more equality and material well-being—to materialize.

Here we meet with the second author (besides Hobbes) by whom Hont frames his comparison of Rousseau's and Smith's views:

Montesquieu. In Rousseau's view, Montesquieu got it all wrong in his theory of modern monarchy. A monarchy can be a *res publica*, but not if it is based on inequality. Such a system of inequality does not square with the rule of law, while commerce, *amour-propre*, and a culture of honour cannot be relied upon to stabilize such a system. On the contrary, Rousseau argued that the social contract, superimposed upon the poor, established an unsustainable legal equality because it legalized inequality of property at the same time. Socio-economic inequality, Rousseau asserted, breeds legal inequality and results in despotism. Reform would not help as long as the basic culture and underlying economic system of inequality remained intact. Hence Rousseau's search for a way to escape this culture in *The social contract* and his claim that a republican culture must be able to harness *amour-propre* through a collective "I".

With his alternative history of *amour-propre*, sympathy, law, and liberty, Smith tried to show that it might work. Answering Locke and Rousseau, Smith painted a different history of political authority. He sketched the rise of authority from power as the spirit of conquest gave way to the spirit of commerce, with law and liberty following in the wake of commerce. Wealth is part of this process in becoming an important source of authority and legitimation. Instead of greater inequality, the rise and growth of commerce and cities fosters greater equality. History revealed that this was not a linear process. Despite their advanced state of development, the Greek and Roman urban republican states fell victim to shepherd societies when they failed to upgrade their communal mode of defense and mode of warfare. Instead, the wealth and luxury acquired by conquest caused a struggle for recognition and power, undermining conditions of equality and Roman's civic nature and military prowess.

Why were the ancient republics destroyed by luxury if they knew its destructive power? Hont uses this question in chapter five and six to inquire into the differences in the views of Rousseau and Smith on political economy. Neither wanted to ban luxury. The question is how to benefit from the imaginative passions and its culture of artificial needs in terms of civilization, without becoming enslaved by one's needs and without being lured into (self)destruction.

Hont argues that Rousseau proposed a theory of balanced growth to redress the imbalances that developed with the growth of cities, luxury, and industry. Despite the fact that it is private property that allows



needs to expand beyond basic requirements, taking the sting out of luxury does not require that private property be abolished. Although resulting inequalities do set relations between rich and poor on edge, the rich need the poor: who would satisfy the need for superiority of the rich if it wasn't for the poor? Imbalances result first and foremost from the unjust operation of markets and economic enslavement or dependency. Moreover, he criticizes the dominance of industry over agriculture (and of cities over the country) following from the invention of metallurgy, escalating the growth of artificial needs and resulting in demographic crises and social collapse. Rousseau called for a taxation state to correct these imbalances and to avert the threats of luxury. Far from crusading against growth or innovation and certainly not arguing the need to have a backward, self-sufficient country that turned away from competition, Rousseau aimed to replace the culture of artificial needs. True honour was to counterbalance *amour-propre*, creating a positive emulation, whereby people would try to distinguish themselves in a non-monetized way that produced collective improvement.

Smith agreed with the need for balance but interpreted balance differently. Growth of (artificial) needs should be seen in relation to the growth of productivity before it can be judged as corrupting or not. Likewise, imbalances between industry and agriculture are only damaging if terms of trade remain unfavourable. Moreover, exploiting these imbalances is what got Europe rich and powerful. Smith argued that the commerce and industry of the cities gradually reintroduced law and liberty after feudalism. Here Smith points out the dangers of theoretical history. What really happened may well be very different from conjecture. (Northern) Europe was a case in point, Smith contended in *The wealth of nations*, showing how the natural progress of opulence had been completely reversed. He linked the rise of commerce and the demise of feudalism to one causal factor: the same luxury that had destroyed the Roman republic states (and which lingered on in the surviving Roman towns). Feudalism self-destructed as feudal lords bartered away their position of power for baubles and trinkets, preparing the way for strong central governments.

Combined with the superiority of European shipping and military technology, Europe gained dominance in the world and secured a huge external market. It boosted economic growth as well as economic and military competition between states. Smith describes the mercantile system, founded upon national animosity and jealousy of trade, as a

symbiosis of power, commerce, and empire. Here Rousseau and Smith agreed. States seek recognition and, spurred by nationalism, a nation's *amour-propre*, engage in war to claim superiority in wealth and power. Conflicts turned into a zero-sum game. Putting commerce into the service of conquest, however, was a dangerous road to travel along and therefore government should withdraw from economic intervention. Smith argued that knowledge is always inadequate for government to realign Europe's economy according to a pre-conceived model of balanced growth. Consequently he disapproved of planning or (institutional) reform by absolute power based on theoretical fantasies to ensure balanced growth. At the same time, Hont claims, he tried to extend Rousseau's views on honour and competition to the international arena. Thus Smith argued the need for international emulation (competition without national animosity but based on the love of mankind) to eliminate the harmful effects of national prejudice and envy.

Visions of politics thus diverged between Rousseau and Smith given their different assessment of the consequences of the rise of commerce, their differences about the external and internal dynamics of commercial society, and in particular about political economy. Hont notes that Rousseau and Smith failed in their objective of clarifying what type of politics best fits a commercial society. Perhaps this was inevitable as there are no definite answers: the questions they struggled with are still with us today.

The book is a welcome addition to Hont's influential writings on eighteenth-century political and economic thought. Admirably surveying and putting the views of Rousseau and Smith in context, he offers challenging claims about their place, aims, design, and conclusions in the eighteenth-century debate on law, liberty, and commerce, once again broadening the scope of scholarship on the subject. Given the breadth of knowledge and comprehensive understanding required, such an undertaking means setting oneself up for a real challenge. Add the fact of Rousseau's and Smith's failure to finish their projected work on the history of law and government, whereby any attempt to write out their vision of politics is a reconstruction, extrapolating from the bits and pieces that we do have. Hont, moreover, was unable to finish his own project. The book is drawn from a series of six lectures on Rousseau and Smith that Hont gave at the University of Oxford in 2009. These

lectures were intended to be worked up into a larger study, which was to include Kant and Marx. As a consequence, the book is full of ideas, fascinating panoramas and sweeping statements, which are insufficiently worked out and substantiated.

Sparingly supported by argument, the way Hont develops his story keeps raising questions. He builds his reconstruction from rather imprecise and multi-layered concepts like commercial society, commercial sociability and an ill-defined Rousseau problem, unhelpful to give substance to the classifications and qualifications used in telling the story. It leads to non-conclusive arguments that leave the reader unconvinced. Was there really such a close resemblance in Rousseau's and Smith's views, as Hont asserts, or is he so eager to show a close resemblance that he ends up overstressing similarities? Or take the way he equates *amour-propre* with the desire for superiority, focusing on pride or *amour-propre*'s excessive and disruptive side. Leaving out the innocuous form of self-esteem, which was often seen as an instrument of virtue, allows Hont to present a contrast between pride-based and utility-based sociability by which he frames differences between Hobbes and Rousseau/Smith. In addition, Hont's emphasis on the views of Hobbes and Montesquieu as the key points of reference in the development of Rousseau's and Smith's own views cries out for careful argumentation. It is certainly true that Rousseau and Smith built their visions by assembling useful parts from various authors, fitted to their own purposes. But why such a strong focus on Hobbes and Montesquieu? Why is for instance Mandeville left out of the equation? This is a serious omission because Mandeville's historical account of the rise of sociability in the second volume of the *Fable of the bees* is a more likely benchmark than Hobbes's absolutism.

These choices colour the story. History, whether taken in a theoretical sense or not, is to Hont's Rousseau and Smith a display of failures. The failure of the Roman republic to put its advanced economic state into lasting prosperity, the failure of the feudal lords to resist the temptation of luxury, the failure to achieve balanced growth between agriculture and industry. Only unintended consequences seem capable of giving the story a positive twist for Smith, whereas Rousseau remains unconvinced about the whole project of politics in commercial society. No wonder that Hont presents Rousseau and Smith as Epicureans, influenced by the dark overtones of Augustinianism, and as theorists of the selfish tradition. Without much ado, Hont wrests Smith away from

the natural jurisprudence tradition. Although wary of the way traditional categories are often used as labelling devices, clearly Hont does not eschew the use of such labels himself, but often he leaves us guessing about his reasons.

Renowned scholar that he was, Hont surely had his reasons and it is a great pity that he was unable to further substantiate the views and claims he provocatively painted with broad strokes in his lectures. However frustrating it sometimes is that we have to content ourselves with the text of the lectures, the presented views are breathtaking. Bringing the debate on Rousseau and Smith to a new level, the book is a must for everyone interested in eighteenth-century thought and the intellectual origins of today's political issues.

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**Review of Tony Lawson's *Essays on the nature and state of modern economics*. London: Routledge, 2015, 262 pp.**

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The book by Tony Lawson entitled *Essays on the nature and state of modern economics* comes at a particularly fitting time in the history of the economic academic discipline. After what has been regarded by many as one of its major setbacks—namely the failure to predict the 2008 global financial crisis—economics has been severely shaken, marginally challenged, but ultimately left untouched by the debates on its conditions that have sparked in the last few years. Therefore, Lawson's choice to assemble a number of previously published papers and a new one into this collection constitutes an important and welcome contribution to the methodology and philosophy of economics literature.

The point of departure for Lawson's book is the idea that modern economics lies in a state of intellectual disarray due to the detachment from social reality, its lack of explanatory and predictive successes, and more generally the absence of a sense of direction. The unhealthy state of the discipline, Lawson notes in the introductory chapter, has been recognised by both heterodox and mainstream contributors, but despite this bipartisan acknowledgement, criticisms and discussions have been mostly superficial and unable to steer the course of economics back onto its tracks. Lawson's collection of papers tackles precisely this issue: it is aimed primarily at filling the gaps in our understanding of the contemporary history of economic thought, including the reasons behind its recent failures, and secondly at evaluating possible alternatives to the contemporary mainstream paradigm.

As Mark Blaug (cited in Lawson 2015, 174) bluntly and concisely put it in a passage cited multiple times by Lawson, “modern economics is sick”. According to the author, the causes of economics' bad state should not be located in recent events and theoretical developments. Instead, it emerged decades ago as the culmination of a process that originated in the past century with the growing mathematisation of the discipline. Therefore, we should not give in to the temptation to

consider the failure to predict a single episode (i.e., the recent global financial crisis) as the proof that economics is in need for thorough reconsideration. Economic phenomena, and more generally social ones, are indeed characterised by a degree of contingency so high that, according to Lawson, “successful event prediction is typically not much more creditable than winning a lottery” (p. 3). Had the crisis been predicted through the application of mathematical models, so Lawson's argument runs, it would have meant little more than a stroke of luck, and would not reduce the urgency of a substantial readjustment of the discipline.

The argument that we should consider central in Lawson's book is perhaps that the contemporary mainstream project is characterised by a continuing practice of ontological neglect. The latter is a concept previously employed by Lawson (2003; 2007), and further developed in his last effort, based on the idea that the application of mathematical techniques to the study of social phenomena is inappropriate. Given such incompatibility, mainstream economics' persistence in universally applying only formalistic models to the study of all types of phenomena implies that the former neglects the nature of social phenomena themselves (i.e., their ontology). A major part of the book deals with the nature and historical origins of this neglect, the causes of its perpetuation, and its consequences—all of which I will now attempt to summarise.

Why does the application of mathematical formalism within economics imply the neglect of social ontology? Why are the two incompatible? Lawson's answer to these questions, which provides an explanation to the fact that modern economics has “continually failed on its own terms” (p. 112), rests on the fact that stable correlations between economic variables have not and cannot succeed. This essentially means that social phenomena are not characterised by the kind of regularities that a) populate natural phenomena and b) can be captured by mathematical techniques. Mathematical deductivism of the kind that is universally employed within mainstream economics, in fact, works well in contexts where closures, i.e., systems in which event regularities occur, are ubiquitous. Instead, since social phenomena originate from the relational interaction of their constitutive elements, social reality is in a constantly changing condition of transformation, thus making closures—especially of causal sequence—extremely rare. Closures of causal sequence are “systems in which the events correlated

are such that one set [...] [is] considered to stand in the causal history of the remaining events" (p. 38), and imply a conception of social reality as composed by *isolated atoms* exercising their own invariable and independent effects. This atomistic conception of social reality is precisely what Lawson interprets as ontological neglect.

Lawson further develops his argument on the ontological neglect, warning against the undisciplined use of assumptions. In his view, any deductive exercise that knowingly rests on false premises is meaningless because "so long as that analysis includes assumptions that are known to be false of this, and any really possible, world the analysis itself gives no added credibility to any conclusion drawn" (p. 114). Not only similar analyses are not capable of validating any given hypothesis, but as long as false premises are allowed in deductive exercises, alternative premises could be used precisely to disprove the same hypothesis, hence emptying the exercise of any scientific validity.

An important element in Lawson's book is his attempt to venture outside the borders of economics and the philosophy of science as they are academically conceived and engage in a meta-academic analysis. In doing so he provides an original account of the historical and causal origins of the difficulties faced by modern economics that I believe is helpful to understand where the discipline is going. According to Lawson, as previously mentioned, the crisis of modern economics is not a recent event, but rather one whose origins date back to the success that mathematical techniques brought to the natural sciences (most importantly physics) in the first half of the 20th century. It is also a crisis that is caused by the gravitational pull towards a single ideology: not an economic ideology oriented towards a specific political stance, but rather a methodological ideology based on the "doctrine that all serious economics must take the form of mathematical modelling" (p. 152). Started as a fascination for a type of formalism that rapidly turned into an article of faith for large parts of western society, the process of mathematisation has indeed become a self-reinforcing mechanism that has radically altered the way in which economics is taught and studied in and outside the academy. Lawson interestingly observes that:

Many economists use mathematical deductivist methods just because this is what is required of them, not because of any deep belief in their relevance or utility. [...] Those with power allow almost no leeway for the undertaking of alternative approaches to

formalistic modelling [and] act as very restrictive gate keepers (p. 139).

Another crucial reason for the dominance of mathematical formalism in mainstream economics, Lawson argues, is precisely its enduring failure to demonstrate anything really new, and hence its inability to seriously challenge the status quo. While the mathematisation of the discipline has in fact led economists to believe in their capacity to predict social phenomena, thus turning economics into a collection of forecasting exercises, its recurrent lack of tangible successes has rendered it politically harmless and can explain how it came to dominate. Indeed, while other economic approaches have traditionally targeted the incoherencies and injustices perpetuated by the leading sources of power, the methods applied by mainstream economists have systematically failed to similarly confront the state of affairs. This has in turn rendered mainstream economists less threatening: we can therefore assume that it has led mathematical formalism to find supporters within economic and political authorities, thus overshadowing other methodologies.

Among the many interesting contributions collected in Lawson's book, perhaps one of the most prominent is his 2013 Cambridge Journal of Economics article entitled "What is this 'school' called neoclassical economics?". In this piece, featured as the fourth chapter of the book, Lawson attempts to clarify some of the confusion surrounding the use of a common term in the debate on modern economics, i.e., the adjective 'neoclassical'. From a purely taxonomical point of view, Lawson argues in favour of

[...] an interpretation that is consistent with the historical origins of the meaning of the term given it by Veblen; is both continuous with, as well as different from, a meaningful conception of classical economics; [...] encompasses seemingly all the explicit modern interpretations [...]; possesses a clear referent, one that is currently without a category name; and is useful in at least (through all the foregoing) bringing clarity to academic discussion (p. 60).

More substantially, he advances the idea that since all sub-disciplines within economics are identifiable according to their methodological stance rather than their focus on a particular object of analysis, neoclassical economics too is characterised by a specific



methodological architecture. In particular, it is “a version of deductivism that posits functional relations presupposing closures of causal sequence” (p. 38). Lawson also argues that such interpretation is somehow complementary to Veblen's original intuition that the neoclassical approach recognises the causal-processual nature of social phenomena, but fails to determine methods that are appropriate to address it. Lawson's theory of ontological neglect is therefore not merely compatible with Veblen's interpretation of neoclassical economics, but rather an evolution inspired and derived from it.

One of the major contributions of Lawson's book is the clarification of the division between the heterodox and neoclassical traditions in economics. In particular, the former is identified with the rejection of the latter's methodological stance: the heterodoxy is such because it is open to a plurality of approaches that are instead rejected a priori by the neoclassical reductionism. Equilibrium analysis is an example of such methodological divide. In the neoclassical camp equilibrium analysis represents the search for a solution to a mathematical problem which is considered the true representation of reality (and is therefore necessary to presuppose the discipline's usefulness). The heterodoxy, instead, tends to favour an interpretation of equilibrium as balance or social order, thus reflecting its tendency towards social illumination rather than formalistic modelling (p. 184). Although the equilibrium example proves that the two approaches have radically different ontological presuppositions, the ontology of heterodox economics has never been explicitly explored by its proponents as it should have. Indeed, just like mainstream economists, heterodox ones also have tended to overlook any systematic analysis of the conception of reality on which their methodological plurality rests, and which, according to Lawson, is the essence of their superiority.

Plurality is a recurring theme in the book. Its centrality hinges upon Lawson's interpretation of academic economics as a discipline polarised precisely along the degree of methodological pluralism allowed by its contributors. Despite his strong support of more pluralistic approaches to economics, Lawson has not been immune to critiques, some of which have come from other advocates of what are broadly interpreted as heterodox approaches. Three of the most important ones appear in the tenth chapter of the book, where the author engages in a debate with them. Davis (2006), Garnett (2006), and Van Bouwel (2005) present three different arguments advancing the idea that Lawson's excessively

inflexible attitude is causing damage to his own agenda. Albeit different in the content of their critiques (Davis looks at the strategic interaction between mainstream economics and the heterodoxy, while Garnett and Van Bouwel tackle the risk of generating a new orthodoxy with different superficial traits but similar monolithic stance), all three authors point their fingers at the intransigent style that Lawson applies to his assessment of neoclassical economics. In response to these (tenuous) accusations, Lawson elaborates his position in the direction of what he terms an “ontologically bold but epistemologically and substantively very cautious” (p. 213) position. Indeed, Lawson concludes that within his conception of good economics there is room for different types of research practices, including mathematical formalisms—a discipline in which he has been trained (Lawson 2009)—but not for the “dogmatic insistence that only these sorts of methods be used, irrespective of their ability to illuminate” (p. 210). Moreover, from his comment to some of his critics and other recent contributions in the broad heterodox methodology galaxy (including most notably Colander et al. 2009 and Soros 2009), emerges the idea that Lawson's stance is not in opposition to mainstream economics per se, but rather a specific mainstream, i.e., the modern and contemporary one.

As anticipated, Lawson's book constitutes an important and welcome contribution to the literature on economic methodology and the academic discipline as a whole. One of its merits is the uncompromising position that it takes in a debate where one faction (the one supported by Lawson himself) is under-represented in numerical terms and enjoys limited political and institutional power. Some of the central topics of *The nature and state of modern economics* are not new. Thorstein Veblen initially touched upon them more than a century ago and they were later picked up by the economic heterodoxy—including Lawson, whose 2003 book *Reorienting economics* was already targeting similar issues. Nevertheless, I believe that the events and conditions that brought about the global financial crisis and the debate, both public and academic, that the latter has sparked on the role of economics justify a similar effort and its timely publication. Lawson offers alternative interpretations for understanding some peculiarities of the relationship between economics and the phenomena that it aims to analyse, and, in doing so, provides the reader with a map and compass to navigate through the academic debate on these issues. About half of the chapters come from articles published before 2010,

which begs the question whether the book is still relevant today. I believe it is, thanks to its balance between historical and methodological analyses, and because the bulk of Lawson's arguments concerns tendencies that are still observable today.

In my opinion the major weakness of the book is the lack of connection between the theory on the leading methodological ideology behind modern economics presented by Lawson and the inevitable influence that political institutions have on academic ones. The power that political institutions tend to exert on the major centres of knowledge production (including universities) in our times is undeniable, and the fact that "most academic economists have little idea what neo-liberalism even means" (p. 4) can hardly immunise them from its influence. Although Lawson rightfully recognises the role played by neoclassical economics' predictive failures in explaining its ties with political and economic authorities, I believe that his analysis would benefit from a deeper consideration of this element. Another, perhaps minor, flaw of *The nature and state of modern economics* concerns Lawson's style of writing, which, albeit unquestionably pleasant and suitable for the academic readership, is characterised by frequent use of long and elaborate footnotes. Although there is nothing wrong with such habit per se and fits well with journal articles and similar types of publications, when transposed in books it tends to make the reading flow intermittent by forcing the reader to go back and forth from any given section to the chapter's end, where the footnotes are placed.

Despite these faults, Lawson's book is a precious instrument in the hands of contemporary and future generations of economists to free themselves from an unconscious ideological-methodological preconception. The book is sufficiently accessible to those who encounter for the first time topics in the field of the philosophy of science, but it also delves into the very depth of its arguments in a way that will challenge more knowledgeable audiences, ultimately sparking new debates thanks to Lawson's rigorous and resolute approach.

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**Review of Daniel M. Hausman's *Valuing health. Well-being, freedom, and suffering*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 267 pp.**

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## INTRODUCTION

At least since the 1980s, rising health care expenditures have become a central public policy issue in industrialized countries all over the world. Since then, the debate on resource allocation in health care has been increasingly framed in terms of the economic framework of costs and benefits. Economic evaluations gained pivotal significance in public policy and keep attracting a lot of attention as an area of research today. Given this practical and theoretical relevance, critical, conceptual analyses of economic evaluations of health practices, which open up the discourse for non-economists, are indispensable. Daniel M. Hausman has provided such an analysis. He offers a painstaking investigation of generic health measures, i.e., scalar measures quantifying the overall health in a population. These measures are not only needed when it comes to the allocation of resources, but are also required for epidemiological and demographic purposes (pp. 1-6).

## HEALTH AND ITS MEASUREMENT

The book can be divided into three parts. In the first part (ch. 2-5), Hausman raises the questions what health is and how it can be measured. Following Boorse, he adopts a naturalistic definition of health in terms of the relative functional efficiency of the body's parts and processes (p. 14). While this notion of health would be tentatively measurable in terms of probabilities of survival in some specified environment, Hausman argues that this is not what those interested in health measures are actually up to (p. 31). What is relevant for constructing generic health measures is how health bears on things people care about, such as activities, relationships, and feelings. Hence, generic health measures are not measuring the amount of health as such, but rather the *value* of health (p. 42). To approach the question of what kind of value we are dealing with, Hausman asks what the preference elicitation methods currently

used are actually measuring. The most common generic health measure used in the context of allocating resources is the quality-adjusted life year (QALY). It combines information on mortality and morbidity by adjusting each life-year with a quality weight which is supposed to mirror the health related quality of life (HrQOL) in the respective health state. While the concept of HrQOL seems intelligible at first glance, a closer investigation reveals that its meaning is unclear and its relevance for generic health measures highly questionable (pp. 47-51). For one thing, there is no consensus in the literature as to how quality of life should be defined. Some authors refer to mental states, others to subjective judgments, just to mention two examples. Yet, if quality of life is taken to be a subjective measure of how good one's life is at a certain point in time, it is doubtful whether it can serve as a measure of the value of health. The reason given by Hausman consists in an argument running like a common thread through the whole book: the badness of ill health cannot be completely captured by its effect on well-being; in fact, one can have a very high subjective quality of life while being in bad health and vice versa (pp. 48, 94-95, 117-16, 144-45). Beyond that, it is also unclear how the predicate "health related" is to be understood. A motorized wheelchair, for instance, certainly has the potential of improving a person's quality of life but the question remains as to whether such external tools should be regarded "as improving HrQOL, in the same way as treatments do", or rather "as improving quality of life while leaving the health-related part unchanged?" (p. 48).

When it comes to the actual measurement of HrQOL, health economists implicitly shift to another measure. Currently, health states are valued by means of preference elicitation methods, an example being the time trade-off, which asks the respondents for the number of life years they would be willing to sacrifice in order to be cured from a certain condition. The quality weight is then calculated as the ratio of the remaining life time in the respective health state to the remaining life time in perfect health (p. 49). Apparently, the notion of HrQOL does not surface in the questions posed. As their name suggests, the preference elicitation methods used in the surveys are eliciting preferences, instead. As Hausman has convincingly demonstrated before (see Hausman 2012), the economic notion of preferences has to be understood as cognitively demanding "total subjective comparative evaluations of alternatives" (p. 75). This implies that a preference is the *outcome* of and not an input in an evaluation process, in which the individual takes into account

everything that matters to her. Hence, there is no reason to assume that preferences elicited via the time trade-off and similar methods mirror HrQOL (p. 50).

### HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND PREFERENCES

Part two (ch. 6-12) provides an elaborate analysis of the relationship between the concepts of health, well-being, preferences, and subjective evaluations. To begin with, Hausman discusses whether health can and should be valued by its effect on well-being. According to John Broome, a central problem of this approach is that the contribution health makes to well-being cannot be separated from the contributions of other factors (p. 66-67). Although exceptions exist, the consequences of ill health for well-being crucially depend on contextual factors such as geography, technology, and social norms. Generalizing the argument, it can be said that the value of a token health state differs across persons and circumstances, so that it seems as if the value of health cannot be measured at all (p. 68). Yet, Hausman proposes two ways of averaging the values of tokens to reach values of types of health states. For one thing, the value of a kind of health state could be taken to be “an average of the values of tokens of that kind”, for another, it could be identified with the average value of tokens in a standard environment, i.e., the average “standard value” (p. 70). As Hausman shows using the example of paraplegia and its consequences in different environments, both approaches can lead to quite different results, so that “[a]pplying either the average or the standard value to calculate average population health then exaggerates how bad paraplegia is in accessible countries and understates how bad it is in inaccessible countries” (p. 72). Consequently, it is doubtful whether one scalar measure can serve international comparisons of health within epidemiological studies (p. 73).

If the average or standard value of health is regarded in terms of its impact on well-being, the question arises as to whether well-being can be measured by eliciting preferences. Although Hausman rejects the current practice of valuing health states by means of preference elicitation methods and stresses that preference satisfaction does not *constitute* well-being, he argues that under certain assumptions, preferences can function as *evidence* for well-being. In particular, it has to be the case that “in favorable circumstances (that is, when individuals have all the relevant information and are free of rational flaws) there is good reason to defer to their judgment concerning what is better or worse for them” (p. 76).

This is the assumption of evaluative competence. In addition, the person's preferences must be based on self-interest, be consistent, and founded on true beliefs (pp. 76-77). If these premises are met, preferences provide a good guide to well-being regardless of which philosophical theory of well-being was true.

Yet, this "evidential view" is questionable in different respects, as has been convincingly shown by Sarch (2015) and Hersch (2015). To give an example, Sarch (2015, 157) maintains that the claim that the evidential view holds no matter what account of well-being was actually true, is unsubstantiated. If, for instance, an objective list theory of well-being was correct, but most people formed their preferences on the basis of what they think would make them feel good, their preferences would not track what is in fact good for them. Furthermore, Hersch (2015) points out that Hausman's argument does not succeed in justifying the use of preference-based measures rather than any other measure of well-being. Yet, the most serious problem consists in the fact that the notion of "self-interest" remains unclear. If I prefer a state of affairs in which my beloved ones flourish, is this a preference based on self-interest? When it comes to evaluating health states, Hausman argues that respondents should be "instructed to state not their actual preferences but what their preferences would be if they were thinking only about their own self-interests, or, more simply, they can be asked which alternative would make them better off" (p. 77). Yet, I doubt whether the value of a health state could possibly be valued without taking the effects on and the involvement of other persons, especially dependents, into account (see Baker and Robinson 2004, 45). At any rate, the mentioned assumptions do not hold in actual health measurement surveys, since the respondents are facing an unfamiliar and intricate task and are not provided with enough information, just to mention two problems (pp. 86-87).

That being said, eliciting preferences faces a more fundamental challenge: the question of whom to ask, persons in the respective health state or the general public. The quality weights elicited from these samples differ systematically from each other to the extent that persons in a certain health state usually assign higher weights to their condition than the general public (pp. 90-95). Which group is mistaken, then? In all probability, none of them. If the differences stem from the adaption to a health state on the part of the patients, the diverging values may truly mirror their perceived quality of life.



Therefore, the systematic differences in the preferences elicited may not reflect any inaccuracy of the answers, but may actually point toward the inadequacy of defining the value of health in terms of subjective well-being. For if the severity of a disability is *defined* in terms of its impact on subjective well-being, one either has to stipulate that disabled persons cannot be as satisfied with their lives as non-disabled persons, or that they are not disabled. Yet, “that would be an erroneous way to understand disability, one that is at odds with the notion of comparative functional efficiency” (p. 95). A physical impairment, such as deafness or paraplegia, is a functional limitation, no matter what its impact on well-being. The same is true when it comes to positive mental states or happiness, as Hausman illustrates discussing a proposal by Dolan and Kahneman (pp. 104-19). Although the discussion is sophisticated and raises a number of objections, it boils down to the conclusion that health limitations matter regardless of their impact on happiness or feelings (p. 118). Hence, since the value of health is not an entirely subjective matter, delegating the evaluation of health states to the public is unwarranted (pp. 97-98): If “the task is to assign a location or number to how disabling a health state is, there is no obvious reason to ask members of the population rather than study the question directly” (p. 59).

Up to now, all considerations point to the inadequacy of valuing health by means of its impact on subjective well-being as well as to the latter’s immeasurability (pp. 120-33). However, Hausman finally points out that there are currently no better alternatives available (pp. 145-47). Adopting a concept of well-being as flourishing, consisting “in the dynamic coherent integration of objective goods into an identity”, he finally finds a way to identify truth conditions for interpersonal comparisons of well-being and to make well-being measurable to some extent (p. 141). The reason is the following:

Subjective experience is one indicator of whether someone is flourishing. To the extent that people are evaluatively competent—which is to say, to the extent that their preferences manifest a coherent identity that is rich in objective goods—(and also rational, self-interested, and well-informed), their preferences are good evidence concerning their well-being (p. 141).

Whether health states should be valued by their contribution to well-being, Hausman concludes after having examined the issue from all possible perspectives, depends on the respective values’ purpose. If “one seeks a measure of what matters about a health state to the individual

experiencing it, then, given our current capacities, there seems to be no better measure of health than the contribution the health state makes to well-being” (p. 151). Hausman dubs this measure the “private value” of health and makes some valuable suggestions as to how their elicitation can be improved (p. 151-52).

### **PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVE**

In part three (ch. 13-17) Hausman considers the value of health from the vantage point of public policy and argues that it should not focus on the private but the public value of health. To put flesh on this concept, he sketches an account of the “liberal facilitator state” and its tasks. In particular, the “goal of policy in a liberal state is to expand and secure the range of worthwhile alternatives that are accessible to individuals and to protect its institutions” (p. 161). Whereas the private value of health depends on the individual’s aims, activities, and goals in life, these idiosyncrasies do not matter from the vantage point of liberal state policy (pp. 158-59). Being largely neutral toward the individuals’ specific goals, public policy should secure “the basic prerequisites for common activities and competencies, including especially, the competencies for citizenship” (p. 160). What matters about health from this perspective lies first and foremost in how far health states limit the activities citizens can engage in (p. 163). Since the liberal state also has “duties of care and compassion”, the suffering a health state entails is relevant for its public value as well. It deserves emphasis that “only specifically health-related suffering should be a target of health policy” (p. 165) whereas suffering that is not a property of a health state has no bearing on its public value. Hausman gives the example of a violinist with a tendon problem who suffers because her career is ended. Unless she develops a clinical depression, her condition “is no more serious from a public-health perspective than the same tendon problem in anyone else” (pp. 165-66). Having thus defined the concept of the public value of health as depending on two dimensions—activity limitations and pathological suffering—Hausman provides a rough draft of how to measure it (pp. 171-87). Crucially he illustrates that this valuation process is to a large extent determined by normative reasoning and assigns a much more limited role to public input than current practices do (p. 186). The public values are determined by reason, though, and not by votes, as Hausman puts it pointedly.

The last chapters of the book (ch. 15-17) focus on cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA), discuss its technical and ethical problems, point out in how far Hausman's account of public values ameliorates these issues, and make a case for a restricted use of CEA within health policy. It is commonly acknowledged by now that QALY maximization leads to unacceptable distributional consequences and that it "would be deeply morally wrong to base policy exclusively on considerations of cost-effectiveness" (p. 191). For example, when all that matters is the overall sum of QALYs, it makes no difference whether it is constituted by either small benefits to a large group of persons or huge benefits to a few. This is the so-called aggregation problem (pp. 212-13). Furthermore, QALY maximization leads to unjust discrimination against the disabled when it comes to life-saving treatments because due to their restricted potential to health, saving the disabled will never engender as many QALYs as saving a healthy person's life. In the face of these issues, the problem of resource allocation is generally couched in terms of a trade-off between fairness and efficiency. Hausman rejects this metaphor because in his opinion, except in the case of discriminating the disabled, the rejection of CEA's consequences does not stem from fairness considerations (pp. 200-01). Consider his interpretation of the aggregation problem:

[A] plausible explanation of our gut reactions traces them to our compassionate outrage at the thought that our policy might let some people die in order to cure headaches or sore throats. [...] I think that compassion and benevolence, rather than fairness, grounds the objection to rationing via cost-effectiveness (p. 213).

Given the scarcity of resources the demands of compassion cannot be met, because not everyone in need can be treated, so that the aggregation problem thus cannot be solved. Yet, compassion could be taken into account by establishing "an appeals process within a universal health-care system that permits, as exceptions, cost-ineffective treatments in cases where death or great suffering are immanent and there is reasonable prospect to benefit" (pp. 215-16). Discrimination against the disabled, by contrast, indeed poses a fairness problem which cannot be solved by modifying the value of health because the "problem lies not with the values assigned to health states, but in reliance on those values to allocate health resources" (p. 202). This circumstance has led other authors to question the normative relevance of CEA in general (see L  bbe 2015; Klonschinski forthcoming), but, for Hausman, it merely points toward the

restrictions that have to be imposed on CEA's application. These are quite extensive indeed, since health care rationing also has to take into account the values of opportunity, solidarity, and equal respect (p. 215). Hausman thus concludes that the "ethical restrictions on the use of cost-effectiveness information to allocate health-related resources are severe, and it is a mistake to expect cost-effectiveness analysis to make fine discriminations" (p. 218).

## UPSHOT

Hausman's contribution to the debate on generic health measures is a very important one. I do not know of any other book presenting such an elaborate philosophical inquiry of the topic. Serious readers need stamina and should be prepared for the book's intricate conceptual analysis. The innovative concept of public value seems very promising, not least because it solves the problems of adaption and does not rely on conceptually shaky preference surveys. I think there are some problems with the evidential view of the connection between preference satisfaction and well-being and I am less convinced than Hausman seems to be that in the face of the serious ethical challenges, CEA can play any major role in allocating resources. Here, additional research carving out the specific implications of Hausman's considerations seems necessary. That being said, I emphatically recommend the book to anyone interested in generic health measurement.

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