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Introduction

BERNARD MANDEVILLE'S *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* was one of the most notorious books of eighteenth-century Europe. The subtitle itself, protested one critic, 'implies a Libel upon Virtue, and an Encomium upon Vice', a complaint echoed by others who charged Mandeville with exposing 'moral Virtue, as a Fraud and Imposition', or with representing 'Virtue as base and contemptible in Theory, and mischievous in Practice'.¹ While many attacked the *Fable* as a subversive apology for vice, irreligion, and decadence, some of the finest minds of the period discerned a greater seriousness of purpose. In the preface to her French translation, for example, Emilie Du Châtelet commended the *Fable* as 'the best book of ethics ever written, that is to say, the one that leads men to the true source of the feelings to which they abandon themselves almost all without examining them.'² Even if it was rare

1. See, respectively, John Dennis, *Vice and Luxury, Public Mischiefs: or, Remarks On a Book Intituled, The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices Publick Benefits* (London, 1724), 12; William Law, *Remarks upon A Late Book, entituled, The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (London, 1724), 1; George Bluet [or Blewitt], *An Enquiry whether A general Practice of Virtue tends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage of a People?* (London, 1725), 23. These and other contemporary responses are helpfully collected in J. Martin Stafford (ed.), *Private Vices, Publick Benefits? The Contemporary Reception of Bernard Mandeville* (Solihull: Ismeron, 1997).

2. Emilie Du Châtelet, 'Translator's Preface for *The Fable of the Bees*', in her *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings*, ed. Judith P. Zinsser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 50. For discussions of how Du Châtelet's translation reworked Mandeville's ideas, see Judith P. Zinsser, 'Entrepreneur of the "Republic of Letters": Emile de Breteuil, Marquise Du Châtelet, and Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*', *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 4 (2002): 595–624; Felicia Gottmann, 'Du Châtelet, Voltaire, and the Transformation of Mandeville's *Fable*', *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 2 (2012): 218–32; Elisabeth Wallmann, 'The Human-Animal Debate and the Enlightenment Body Politic: Emile Du Châtelet's Reading of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*', *Early Modern French Studies* 42, no. 1 (2020): 86–103.

to encounter such exalted praise in print—Du Châtelet’s translation remained unpublished—Mandeville’s philosophical importance was more widely acknowledged. David Hume listed him amongst the ‘late philosophers in *England*, who have begun to put the science of man on a new footing’, with Adam Smith placing Mandeville in similar company.³

Mandeville is no longer a household name and where the *Fable* does occupy a place in the public imagination it is, regrettably, because it has come to be regarded as an early iteration of *laissez-faire* capitalism. Writing in *Prospect Magazine*, for instance, Julian Baggini declaims the ‘radical wrongness’ of ‘Mandevillian *laissez-faire*’, informing us that the 1705 verse, *The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves Turn’d Honest* (later incorporated into the *Fable*), set out ‘the most enduring argument for the value of the free market.’⁴ Tomas Sedlacek similarly reads Mandeville as ‘a key proponent of the *need for greed* philosophy’ and accords him the dubious honour of being ‘the very first modern economist.’⁵ It is no surprise, then, that more nuanced discussions feel the impetus to correct those who ‘have taken Mandeville to be the first uber-capitalist.’⁶

This caricature of Mandeville builds upon what his contemporaries found most scandalous about his ideas—typically updated to reflect the malaises of twenty-first century capitalism—rather than what remains of greatest philosophical interest today. I instead follow the likes of Du Châtelet, Hume, and Smith in taking his philosophical credentials more seriously. Within specialist circles, Mandeville is increasingly recognised as a central figure for many debates in early modern European philosophy,⁷ and some of the most important

3. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [1739–40], ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Intro.7; Adam Smith, ‘Letter to the *Edinburgh Review*’ [1756], in his *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, ed. W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 250.

4. Julian Baggini, ‘The radical wrongness of Bernard Mandeville: the free marketeer whose bee analogy came back to sting him’, *Prospect*, May 10 2020: <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/philosophy/bernard-mandeville-free-market-economics-fable-bees> (accessed May 27, 2022).

5. Tomas Sedlacek, *Economics of Good and Evil: The Quest for Economic Meaning from Gilgamesh to Wall Street* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 183–90.

6. Callum Williams, *The Classical School: The Turbulent Birth of British Economics in Twenty Extraordinary Lives* (London: Profile Books, 2020), 27.

7. In the past few years alone, see Daniel J. Kapust, *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 132–69; Elena Muceni, *Apologia della virtù sociale: L’ascesa dell’amor proprio nella crisi della coscienza europea*

studies of his thought have considerably improved our understanding of the intellectual context in which his ideas were both conceived and received.⁸ This book focuses less on the historical impact of his ideas and more on their philosophical strengths and weaknesses. I endeavour to do for *The Fable of the Bees* what countless scholars have done for canonical texts in the history of moral and political thought; that is, to analyse it philosophically, first and foremost, by attempting to make sense of and evaluate Mandeville's ideas and arguments on their own terms. I hope to show that one of the many ways we can profitably read the *Fable* is by taking Mandeville at his word when he claimed that it was largely 'a Philosophical Disquisition into the Force of the Passions, and the Nature of Society'.⁹

This quotation also sets the scene for what follows by drawing attention to Mandeville's theory of sociability, a strand of his thought that spans topics now associated with the fields of moral psychology, social theory, and political philosophy, amongst others. The main aim of this book, in short, is to offer a sympathetic interpretation and qualified defence of Mandeville's pride-centred theory of sociability. In the remainder of this chapter, I introduce the book's central themes and justify my approach in greater detail. This involves,

(Milan: Mimesis, 2018), 133–80; Paul Sagar, *The Opinion of Mankind: Sociability and the Theory of the State from Hobbes to Smith* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 39–49, 81–93; Roger Crisp, *Sacrifice Regained: Morality and Self-Interest in British Moral Philosophy from Hobbes to Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 60–73; Christian Maurer, *Self-love, Egoism and the Selfish Hypothesis: Key Debates from Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 58–85; Tim Stuart-Buttle, *From Moral Theology to Moral Philosophy: Cicero and Visions of Humanity from Locke to Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 118–48; Samuel Hollander, *A History of Utilitarian Ethics: Studies in Private Motivation and Distributive Justice, 1700–1875* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 47–54.

8. For book-length studies, see Thomas A. Horne, *The Social Thought of Bernard Mandeville: Virtue and Commerce in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978); Maurice M. Goldsmith, *Private Vices, Public Benefits: Bernard Mandeville's Social and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Edward J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For Mandeville's life and background, see additionally Rudolph Dekker, "'Private Vices, Public Virtues' Revisited: The Dutch Background of Bernard Mandeville', trans. Gerard T. Moran, *History of European Ideas* 14, no. 4 (1992): 481–98; Harold J. Cook, 'Bernard Mandeville', in *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 469–82; Mauro Simonazzi, *Le favole della filosofia: Saggio su Bernard Mandeville* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2008), 33–69.

9. *Letter to Dion*, 54–55.

first, outlining Mandeville's theory of sociability and highlighting its distinctiveness in comparison to those of several other early modern philosophers; second, discussing the relationship between satire and philosophy to address some doubts about reading the *Fable* philosophically; third, explaining how the focus on what I call Mandeville's 'origins of sociability' thesis departs from the more familiar 'private vices, public benefits' paradox; and, finally, providing a brief roadmap of how my arguments unfold in subsequent chapters.

A pride-centred theory of sociability

What do I mean by a pride-centred theory of sociability? A theory of sociability seeks to explain why humans associate with one another and how they continue to live together in various forms of social organisation. Plausible theories will typically have something to say about the basis of our social or moral norms and may also accord a central role to formal institutions, such as government or the law, in coordinating and regulating human interaction. Humans associate very differently in a wide range of social contexts and settings. The social norms we observe in families, for example, differ in both intensity and kind from those that predominate in largescale political societies. A theory of sociability should be attentive to these differences, but Mandeville's focus throughout much of his work is on largescale society. From his earliest discussions of the notion 'that *Man is a Sociable Creature*', he casts the problem in terms of how 'even the greatest Numbers may . . . compose a lasting Society'.¹⁰ In taking this approach he was in good company. All eighteenth-century debates on sociability had to grapple with Thomas Hobbes's famous repudiation of the Aristotelian assumption 'that Man is an animal born fit for Society', which involved distinguishing between the initial factors that drive humans to associate and the basis of a 'large or lasting society'.¹¹

10. *Female Tatler*, no. 62: 99; see also *Fable I*, 4, 347; *Fable II*, 183.

11. See Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen* [1642], ed. and trans. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), i.2. On the importance of the 'large or lasting' condition to Hobbes's theory and subsequent debates, see Sagar, *Opinion of Mankind*, 30 and *passim*. On Hobbes's response to Aristotle in this passage, see Nicholas Gooding and Kinch Hoekstra, 'Hobbes and Aristotle on the Foundation of Political Science', in *Hobbes's On the Citizen: A Critical Guide*, ed. Robin Douglass and Johan Olsthoorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 31–50, which shows that Aristotle's position was more complex than Hobbes suggested.

Explaining sociability in large and lasting societies is a complex task and we should not assume that it can be reduced to any single quality, such as pride. Mandeville's pride-*centred* theory does not hold that pride is the *only* passion or quality relevant to explaining human sociability; it maintains, rather, that it is the *predominant* one.¹² I shall say a lot more about how Mandeville understands pride throughout the book, but provisionally it helps to focus on his claim that the 'true Object of Pride or Vain-glory is the Opinion of others', from which we desire to 'be well thought of, applauded, and admired by the whole World, not only in the present, but all future Ages.'¹³ Pride is a passion that leads us to care about how other people think of us. We conform to societal norms and perform actions that appear virtuous because we expect other people to think more highly of us for doing so and lowly of us for not doing so (the latter gives rise to shame). Crucially, for Mandeville, we are not always aware of the myriad ways in which pride regulates our behaviour. We learn to internalise social norms requiring us to conceal pride from a young age, which is one reason why it should be regarded as 'the *hidden Spring*' behind so much of what we do.¹⁴

Why should our desire for the good opinion of others be regarded as a form of pride? Philosophers sometimes use terms like the desire for esteem or recognition,¹⁵ or, for those who approach the problem via Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *amour-propre*.¹⁶ While fine-grained distinctions between these terms can

12. See, for example, *Fable II*, 75–77, where Mandeville refers to pride as our 'predominant Passion', which is capable of (but does not always succeed in) governing the rest. See also Malcolm Jack, 'Men Become Sociable by Living Together in Society: Re-assessing Mandeville's Social Theory', in *Bernard de Mandeville's Tropology of Paradoxes: Morals, Politics, Economics, and Therapy*, ed. Edmund Balsemão Pires and Joaquim Braga (New York, Dordrecht, and London: Springer, 2015), 5–6.

13. *Fable II*, 64.

14. *Fable II*, 79 (emphasis added).

15. On Mandeville as a theorist of recognition, see Simonazzi, *Le favole della filosofia*, especially 159–81; idem., 'Reconnaissance, *Self-liking* et contrôle social chez Mandeville', in *La reconnaissance avant la reconnaissance: Archéologie d'une problématique moderne*, ed. Francesco Toto, Théophile Pénigaud de Mourgues and Emmanuel Renault (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2017), 127–44; Bjorn Wee Gomes, 'The Desire and Struggle for Recognition' (Columbia University PhD thesis, 2017), 24–164; Robin Douglass, 'The Dark Side of Recognition: Bernard Mandeville and the Morality of Pride', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (2021), online first.

16. See, at greatest length, Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality, and the Drive for Recognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and, more succinctly, idem., 'Rousseau and the Human Desire for Recognition (*Amour Propre*)', in *The*

be drawn, they all highlight the fact that we care deeply about our reputation and social standing. These are intersubjective social phenomena, which is to say that how we think about ourselves depends on the views that other people hold of us. Unlike our desire for esteem or recognition, however, the term pride has negative moral connotations, having long been associated with Original Sin in Christian and especially Augustinian thought. Scholars are divided over Mandeville's relationship with this tradition and (to anticipate Chapter 2) my view is that his moral psychology lends support to many of the reasons why pride has traditionally been considered a vice. Whether or not my reading proves persuasive, it remains the case that pride is the term that Mandeville regularly used, fully aware of its association with vice and sin, and any plausible interpretation should have something to say about his reasons for doing so.

The foregoing remarks provide a preliminary sketch of Mandeville's pride-centred theory of sociability, with more details and nuances to be added in due course. To start teasing out the distinctiveness of that theory, it may also be helpful to offer some brief comparisons with several other prominent philosophers from the period.¹⁷ Indeed, although this book is not a comparative study, I hope at least to motivate the claim that Mandeville articulates the most sophisticated version of a pride-centred theory of sociability in early modern European philosophy (and perhaps beyond). The plausibility of this claim will largely depend on whether I succeed in presenting his theory as worth taking seriously in its own right, yet we cannot assess the comparative dimension of the claim without some idea of the competition.

Connections have long been drawn between Hobbes and Mandeville, and Hobbes could be viewed as the first philosopher to place questions of pride and recognition at the heart of debates on sociability. In his posthumously published lectures on Rousseau and Smith, István Hont declared that 'the politics of recognition was Hobbes's—not Rousseau's or Smith's—invention.'¹⁸

Philosophy of Recognition: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch and Christopher F. Zurn (Lanham, MA and Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 21–46.

17. For a recent and more wide-ranging survey focusing on the desire for esteem in early modern philosophy, see Andreas Blank, 'Esteem and Self-Esteem in Early Modern Ethics and Politics. An Overview', *Intellectual History Review* 32, no. 1 (2022): 1–14, along with the subsequent articles in the special issue that Blank's piece introduces.

18. István Hont, *Politics in Commercial Society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, ed. Béla Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press,

Hobbes certainly thought that the desire for self-esteem is central to human psychology, going so far as to claim that every ‘pleasure of the mind is either glory (or a good opinion of oneself), or ultimately relates to glory’. While all society ‘exists for the sake either of advantage or of glory’, he denied that ‘large or lasting society can be based upon the passion for glory’. Pride is central to explaining human conflict, but for that very reason our desire for pre-eminence must be tamed by mutual fear in largescale societies.¹⁹ Even amongst commentators who see in Hobbes’s theory the potential to harness pride for social stability,²⁰ none would attribute to him the view that there is no other passion ‘so beneficial to Society.’²¹

If not Hobbes, then perhaps we could look to some of Mandeville’s other predecessors for rival pride-centred theories of sociability. As has been extensively documented, Mandeville owed much to seventeenth-century French moralists, for whom pride, or *amour-propre*, was key to understanding human nature, at least in our fallen state.²² These debts were not missed by Mandeville’s contemporaries, who highlighted the influence of François de la Rochefoucauld, Jacques Esprit, and Pierre Bayle, amongst others.²³ Mandeville

2015), 12. For doubts about Hont’s claim, see Axel Honneth, *Recognition: A Chapter in the History of European Ideas*, trans. Joseph Ganahl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 10–12.

19. Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, i.2.

20. For a recent example, see S. A. Lloyd, ‘All the Mind’s Pleasure: Glory, Self-Admiration, and Moral Motivation’, in *Hobbes’s On the Citizen: A Critical Guide*, 51–70. For analysis of how Mandeville’s ideas of pride and sociability build upon and depart from Hobbes, see Sagar, *Opinion of Mankind*, 27–49.

21. *Fable I*, 124.

22. See F. B. Kaye, ‘Introduction’ [1924], to *Fable I*, lxxix–lxxxiv; Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Reflections on Human Nature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 153–79; Horne, *Social Thought*, 19–31; Dickey, ‘Pride, Hypocrisy and Civility’; Hundert, *Enlightenment’s Fable*, 30–38; Jean Lafond, *L’homme et son image: Morales et littérature de Montaigne à Mandeville* (Paris: Champion, 1996), 441–58; John M. Parrish, *Paradoxes of Political Ethics: From Dirty Hands to the Invisible Hand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 185–231; Michael Locke McLendon, *The Psychology of Inequality: Rousseau’s Amour-Propre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 84–92. For the argument that the French influence has been overstated to the neglect of Dutch sources (especially Johan and Pieter de la Court), see Rudi Verburg, ‘The Dutch Background of Mandeville’s Thought: Escaping the Procrustean Bed of Neo-Augustinianism’, *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 9, no. 1 (2016): 32–61.

23. See, for example, Richard Fiddes, *A General Treatise of Morality, Form’d upon the Principles of Natural Reason only* (London, 1724), lxxvi, xc–xciv; Bluet, *Enquiry*, ‘Preface’, 90–91, 98, 121–22, 127–34; Law, *Remarks*, 53–54; William Warburton, *A Critical and Philosophical Enquiry into the*

clearly follows this tradition in unearthing the hidden depths of pride and showing how our vices can be masked to give the outward appearance of virtue. La Rochefoucauld's memorable epigraph, 'Our virtues are, most often, only vices in disguise,' could have easily adorned the *Fable*,²⁴ and Bayle—probably the single greatest influence on Mandeville—underscored the 'falseness of the majority of human virtues' when advancing his infamous argument that a society of atheists could subsist just as peacefully as a society of pagans, or even Christians.²⁵ Central to this tradition is the notion that pride is the one vice, above all others, that governs our conduct. Consider Esprit: 'Pride is so much the absolute Master of Man, that it is the Prince of all his Internal Inclinations, and of all his Actions.'²⁶ Or Bayle: 'The more one studies man, the more one becomes aware that pride is his dominant passion.'²⁷ Read against this backdrop, the prominence Mandeville accords to pride is by no means original. Yet where his theory comes into its own, especially in his later work, is in historicising the accounts of pride and self-love that he inherited from the French moralists within an extensive conjectural narrative charting the development of society.²⁸

In historicising questions of human sociability, Mandeville can be read as foreshadowing Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, such as Hume and Smith.²⁹ Even if they offer more sophisticated accounts of the development of

Causes of Prodiges and Miracles, as related by Historians (London, 1727), 31; John Hervey, *Some Remarks on the Minute Philosopher. In a Letter from a Country Clergyman to his Friend in London* (London, 1732), 45.

24. François de la Rochefoucauld, *Collected Maxims and Other Reflections*, trans. E. H. and A. M. Blackmore, and Francine Giguère (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3. The epigraph was added to the 1674 edition of the *Maxims*. See also Kaye, 'Introduction', cv.

25. Pierre Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet* [1682], trans. Robert C. Bartlett (New York: State University of New York, 2000), §164. On Mandeville's debt to and engagement with Bayle, see especially E. D. James, 'Faith, Sincerity and Morality: Mandeville and Bayle', in *Mandeville Studies: New Explorations in the Art and Thought of Dr. Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733)*, ed. Irwin Primer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 43–65; Maria Emanuela Scribano, *Natura umana e società competitiva: studio su Mandeville* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980), 21–46; John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 261–80; Mauro Simonazzi, 'Atheism, Religion and Society in Mandeville's Thought', in *Mandeville's Tropology of Paradoxes*, 221–42.

26. Jacques Esprit, *The Falsehood of Moral Virtue: A Moral Essay* [1678] (London, 1691), 195.

27. Bayle, *Various Thoughts*, §131.

28. See Dickey, 'Pride, Hypocrisy and Civility'.

29. See Hundert, *Enlightenment's Fable, passim*; Jack, 'Men Become Sociable'.

social norms and institutions than Mandeville, theirs are not generally classified as pride-centred theories. Hume and Smith are more often considered exponents of ‘commercial sociability’; that is, a theory based on ‘the utilitarian bonds created by commercial reciprocity.’³⁰ The core idea here is that, at least in largescale societies, the appeal to self-interest and mutual utility that we typically associate with market transactions is central to explaining human coordination, with pride ‘relegated to the margins.’³¹ The extent to which Hume and Smith depart from Mandeville on questions of sociability is a matter of some debate,³² but for the purposes of this book I treat them as critics of his position, in so far as they offer reasons to think that he both overstates the explanatory importance of pride and is too quick to condemn as vicious forms of esteem-seeking that are better understood as morally neutral and compatible with virtuous conduct. To the degree that my qualified defence of Mandeville is persuasive, it may lend some support to the view that Hume and Smith are more Mandevillian than they first appear—if that is the case, then I take it to count in Mandeville’s favour.

When evaluating Mandeville’s moral psychology, I often turn to Hume and Smith for objections, yet neither was as starkly opposed to Mandeville as some other eighteenth-century philosophers. Mandeville came to regard his own

30. Hont, *Politics in Commercial Society*, 6–7. See also idem., *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 45–51, where Hont suggests that Smith’s understanding of commercial sociability can be traced back to Samuel Pufendorf, while also associating the position with neo-Augustinian French moralists, such as Pierre Nicole, and indeed with Mandeville himself. Although the pursuit of utility is important for Mandeville, it is not as central to explaining human sociability as pride, so I would resist the claim that Mandeville should be classified (first and foremost) as a theorist of commercial sociability.

31. Sagar, *Opinion of Mankind*, 17–18, and *passim* on Hume and Smith as theorists of commercial sociability.

32. The most comprehensive study of Mandeville’s influence on Hume is now Mikko Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume: Anatomists of Civil Society* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013). For studies that stress the similarities between Mandeville and Smith, see Thomas A. Horne, ‘Envy and Commercial Society: Mandeville and Smith on “Private Vices, Public Benefits”’, *Political Theory* 9, no. 4 (1981), especially 562–65; Bert Kerkhof, ‘A Fatal Attraction? Smith’s “Theory of Moral Sentiments” and Mandeville’s “Fable”’, *History of Political Thought* 16, no. 2 (1995): 219–33; Daniel Luban, ‘Adam Smith on Vanity, Domination, and History’, *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 2 (2012), especially 285–88; Robin Douglass, ‘Morality and Sociability in Commercial Society: Smith, Rousseau—and Mandeville’, *The Review of Politics* 79, no. 4 (2017), especially 614–17.

theory as the antithesis to that of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson, in turn, defended a position close to Shaftesbury's against Mandeville and others who reduced all human action to various manifestations of self-love.³³ Against self-love theorists, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson both stressed the importance of our intrinsically sociable or benevolent affections. The central controversy in the sociability debate, according to Hutcheson, is whether 'all our benevolence toward the mass of mankind . . . has its origin in each man's want, weakness, and indigence', or whether we are 'disposed to benevolence by nature, and not because we expect a favour in return or calculate the advantage our benevolence will obtain for us.'³⁴ This way of framing the debate does not capture its full complexity, but it does identify one of the key points of dispute between Mandeville, on the one hand, and Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, on the other.

A final philosopher to mention at this stage is Rousseau, not least because he has been credited with inaugurating recognition theory. Frederick Neuhouser asserts that 'Rousseau is the first thinker in the history of philosophy to place the striving for recognition from others at the very core of human nature', and that 'nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophies of recognition are essentially a series of footnotes to Rousseau.'³⁵ Rousseau undoubtedly thought that much human conflict and misery could be explained in terms of the dynamics of *amour-propre*. Some scholars have further argued that his political vision in the *Social Contract* involves harnessing an egalitarian version of *amour-propre*, although I have my doubts.³⁶ Elsewhere Rousseau suggests

33. For present purposes, I elide the many important differences between Shaftesbury and Hutcheson (much as I did between Hume and Smith in the previous paragraph). For an excellent overview of the main contours of the sociability debates in Britain, which is more attentive to these differences, see Christian Maurer, 'Self-Interest and Sociability', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. James A. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 291–314.

34. Francis Hutcheson, 'On the Natural Sociability of Mankind' [1730], in *Logic, Metaphysics and the Natural Sociability of Mankind*, ed. James Moore and Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 202.

35. Neuhouser, 'Desire for Recognition', 21. For a more circumspect assessment, which regards Rousseau as leaving a double-edged legacy for recognition theory, see Alex Honneth, 'The Depths of Recognition: The Legacy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *Engaging with Rousseau: Reaction and Interpretation from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Avi Lifschitz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 189–206.

36. See Robin Douglass, 'What's Wrong with Inequality? Some Rousseauian Perspectives', *European Journal of Political Theory* 14, no. 3 (2015), especially 371–74.

that the passion can be scaled up into a form of patriotism (*amour de la patrie*), often turning to the republics of antiquity for inspiration. This could be classified as a pride-centred theory of sociability of sorts, but it departs sharply from Mandeville's when it comes to the question of how our desire for social esteem can be satisfied in a well-ordered political society. In many respects, Rousseau agreed with Mandeville's analysis of how pride and other vices operated in the European societies of their day, yet Rousseau did not view this as at all beneficial and instead set out an alternative political vision for societies that remained uncorrupted by luxury and inequality.³⁷

These remarks are intended merely to outline some of the broad contours of debates on pride and sociability in European philosophy at the time. A case could be made for comparing Mandeville's theory to those of other thinkers too: there has recently been some excellent work on the desire for esteem in the philosophies of Samuel Pufendorf and John Locke,³⁸ for example, or we could turn to Montesquieu's ideas on honour.³⁹ Nonetheless, this discussion

37. I defend this interpretation of Rousseau in Robin Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes: Nature, Free Will, and the Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), see 85–87 for the comparison with Mandeville, 160–67 on transforming *amour-propre* into patriotism, and 198–202 for the scope of Rousseau's political vision. More generally on the relationship between Mandeville and Rousseau, see Malcolm Jack, 'One State of Nature: Mandeville and Rousseau', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39, no. 1 (1978): 119–24; Hundert, *Enlightenment's Fable*, 105–15; idem., 'Mandeville, Rousseau and the Political Economy of Fantasy', in *Luxury in the Eighteenth-Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, ed. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Elgar (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 28–40; Pierre Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), especially 34–42; Simon Kow, 'Rousseau's Mandevillian Conception of Desire and Modern Society', in *Rousseau and Desire*, ed. Mark Blackell, John Duncan, and Simon Kow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 62–81; Mauro Simonazzi, 'Bernard Mandeville e Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *La filosofia politica di Rousseau*, ed. Giulio M. Chiode and Roberto Gatti (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012), 231–37.

38. Most succinctly, see Heikki Haara and Tim Stuart-Buttle, 'Beyond Justice: Pufendorf and Locke on the Desire for Esteem', *Political Theory* 74, no. 5 (2019): 699–723; and, for more details on each, see respectively Haara, *Pufendorf's Theory of Sociability: Passions, Habits and Social Order* (Cham: Springer, 2018), especially 99–136; Stuart-Buttle, "'A Burthen too heavy for humane Sufferance": Locke on Reputation', *History of Political Thought* 38, no. 4 (2017): 644–80. See also David Wootton, *Power, Pleasure, and Profit: Insatiable Appetites from Machiavelli to Madison* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 112–13, who argues that Locke's later psychology and account of human motivation was 'well on the way to being Mandevillian.'

39. For comparison of Montesquieu's and Mandeville's accounts of honour, see Alexander Welsh, *What is Honor? A Question of Moral Imperatives* (New Haven and London: Yale University

hopefully conveys some sense of the distinctiveness of Mandeville's theory by situating it within the relevant philosophical debates of the period, which sets us up for the more detailed examination and evaluation it will receive in subsequent chapters.

Satire and philosophy

This book takes Mandeville's philosophical credentials seriously. To some this will seem unobjectionable, but there is a strand of scholarship that has long remained resistant.⁴⁰ David Runciman, for instance, observes that Mandeville 'was not a political philosopher, but a polemicist and satirist of genius. It is dangerous to take what he has to say too literally, or expect too much overall coherence from it.'⁴¹ This nicely captures two interrelated concerns, which recur in much of the scholarship on the question. First, that Mandeville's satirical writing style counts against reading his work philosophically.⁴² Second,

Press, 2008), 88–96; Antong Liu, 'The Tragedy of Honor in Early Modern Political Thought: Hobbes, Mandeville, Montesquieu, and Rousseau', *History of European Ideas* 47, no. 8 (2021), especially 1248–55.

40. E.g. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 'Introduction' [1897], to his *British Moralists, being Selections from Writers Principally of the Eighteenth Century* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1964), xxxiii–xxxviii; Norman Wilde, 'Mandeville's Place in English Thought', *Mind* 7 (1898), 223; A. K. Rogers, 'The Ethics of Mandeville', *International Journal of Ethics* 36, no. 1 (1925), 5; Thomas R. Edwards, Jr., 'Mandeville's Moral Prose', *ELH* 31, no. 2 (1964), 203; Phillip Harth, 'The Satiric Purpose of the *Fable of the Bees*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2, no. 4 (1969), 325; Hector Monro, *The Ambivalence of Bernard Mandeville* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 247–48; Joaquim Braga, 'Simulation and Dissimulation. Mandeville's Satiric View of Commercial Society', in *Mandeville's Tropology of Paradoxes*, 243–44. The argument comes in stronger and more moderate forms. For example, Monro pushes back against Wilde's dismissive suggestion that Mandeville is a mere 'philosophical free lance', while nonetheless cautioning against expecting a consistent moral philosophy from Mandeville.

41. David Runciman, *Political Hypocrisy: The Mask of Power, from Hobbes to Orwell and Beyond* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 72; see also 168: 'Mandeville was not a philosopher.'

42. Some scholars have doubted whether Mandeville's writing style should even be classified as satire. For the argument that the *Fable* is better understood as paradox than satire, see Philip Pinkus, 'Mandeville's Paradox', in *Mandeville Studies*, 193–211; and for the argument that it is irony and not satire, see Louis Schneider, *Paradox and Society: The Work of Bernard Mandeville* (New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1987), 221–22; Simonazzi, *Le favole della filosofia*, 92–96. For criticism of these (false) dichotomies, see Béatrice Guion, 'The Fable of the Bees: *proles sine matre*', in *Mandeville's Tropology of Paradoxes*, 95–96. For present purposes, it is

and by implication, that we should not expect the levels of coherence and consistency from Mandeville that we do of most philosophers.

Consider first the alleged tension between satire and philosophy. Even if it is thought that someone cannot write philosophically and satirically at the same time, Mandeville donned many hats, with some of his writings having a stronger claim to satire and others to philosophy.⁴³ The second volume of the *Fable*, for example, is more clearly a philosophical work than the *Grumbling Hive* verse, which Mandeville himself presents as ‘a Story told in Dogrel’.⁴⁴ There are valid questions that might be asked about the relative importance of Mandeville’s satirical and philosophical goals,⁴⁵ and how the two interact, but the answers are likely to differ depending on the precise texts and even passages under consideration. We can address these questions, however, without succumbing to the false dichotomy of classifying Mandeville as *either* a philosopher *or* a satirist.

One response to the point about satire, then, is that Mandeville had both satirical and philosophical goals.⁴⁶ Indeed, we should not assume that there is any inherent tension between the two. Suppose, in very general terms, that where a philosophical goal aims to uncover the truth of the matter, a satirical goal aims to ridicule another party through an appeal to humour, irony, or other such devices. If the party in question deserves ridicule because of the falsehoods they expound, then the two goals may prove complementary. Mandeville’s philosophical goals sometimes serve his satirical ones. As is well known, much of his satirical ire was directed at the hypocrisy of those who enjoyed the worldly benefits of living in a flourishing state while constantly

less important whether Mandeville should be classified as, say, a satirist or ironist, and more important whether any of these labels preclude taking him seriously as a philosopher. That said, satire is the term that Mandeville repeatedly uses; see *Pamphleteers: A Satyr; Female Tatler*, no. 94: 193; *Treatise*, 155; *Fable I*, 6; *Fable II*, 20, 43, 59, 105.

43. On this point, see also J. C. Maxwell, ‘Ethics and Politics in Mandeville’, *Philosophy* 26 (1951), 242; Hundert, *Enlightenment’s Fable*, 50; Timothy Dykstal, *The Luxury of Skepticism: Politics, Philosophy and Dialogue in the English Public Sphere, 1660–1740* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 117.

44. *Fable I*, 5.

45. Scholars emphasising the importance of satire sometimes take aim at Kaye for neglecting Mandeville’s satirical goals in favour of his philosophical ones; see especially Harth, ‘Satiric Purpose’, 323–25; Jacob Viner, *Essays on the Intellectual History of Economics*, ed. Douglas A. Irwin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 314.

46. See, for example, John Robertson, *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 55.

decrying the vices that underpin material prosperity.⁴⁷ A clear-headed analysis of how human nature and society actually function was precisely what was needed, Mandeville thought, to see through the moralising bluster of so many of his contemporaries.⁴⁸ This argument runs the other way too and there is a rich history of satire being adopted for philosophical purposes. Mandeville's approach resembles Francis Bacon's discussion of 'serious satire', the aim of which is to search into the depths of human depravity and corruption to unmask 'what men do in fact, and not what they ought to do.'⁴⁹ For Mandeville, satire could be deployed to help uncover the dark recesses of human nature, or to 'penetrate into the Heart of Man,'⁵⁰ precisely because we are otherwise inclined to look for the most pleasing explanation of our conduct, rather than the most accurate one. This is why there is generally 'less Truth in Panegyrics than there is in Satyrs.' If we do not find what we read unsettling or disagreeable then 'we are most apt to mistake outward Appearances for Realities, and judge of Things more favourably than they deserve.'⁵¹ A satirical approach can unnerve us and thereby encourage the introspection and self-examination required to see through the illusions we hold of both ourselves and others, which should lead to a more accurate appraisal of human nature.

Consider next the concern about coherence. Even if we acknowledge that Mandeville had philosophical and satirical goals, the objection could still be pressed that he did not write a systematic treatise in the style of, say, Hobbes,

47. *Fable I*, 6–7.

48. On this point, see also Malcolm Jack, *The Social and Political Thought of Bernard Mandeville* (New York and London: Garland, 1987), 130–31.

49. Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* [1605], ed. Joseph Devy (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1901), Book 7, Chap. 2, 320–21. Mandeville adopts a similar contrast, berating those writers who 'are always teaching Men what they should be, and hardly ever trouble their Heads with telling them what they really are', *Fable I*, 39. On Mandeville's debt to Bacon's 'serious satire', see Dario Castiglione, 'Mandeville Moralized', *Annali Della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 17 (1983), especially 244–45. Building upon Castiglione's research, see, at greater length, Phillip Hilton, *Bitter Honey: Recuperating the Medical and Scientific Context of Bernard Mandeville* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 87–92, 177–93. Hilton situates Mandeville's satire within a tradition running from the ancient Cynics to early modern thinkers including Michel de Montaigne and Bacon.

50. *Fable II*, 43. In the passage in question, Cleomenes professes to hate satire and instead attributes this insight to various forms of panegyric. That he really holds the contrary view is clear from the fact that he is pretending to prefer Shaftesbury's system to the *Fable of the Bees*.

51. *Fable II*, 59. This is presumably why Horatio (Mandeville's interlocutor) 'hated Satyr', in contrast to the 'great Delight' he takes in reading Shaftesbury's 'polite manner of Writing', *Fable II*, 20.

Spinoza, or Kant.⁵² Yet there are plenty of other thinkers who did not set their ideas out in an especially systematic manner and are nonetheless taken seriously as philosophers. If Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* should be taken seriously as a philosophical work, then so too should much of what Mandeville wrote.⁵³ As long as someone is operating with a reasonably coherent theoretical framework then interrogating the conceptual relationship between their ideas may prove to be a worthwhile enterprise.⁵⁴ Mandeville's theory of sociability comfortably passes this threshold. By closely analysing the concepts that he worked with and the logic of his arguments, we can identify puzzles and tensions that repay further investigation and lead to a deeper understanding of his thought. Taking such an approach usually involves, amongst other things, applying the principle of charitable interpretation: we should search for the strongest and/or most coherent interpretation of a thinker's position from the available evidence. This can be even more important in the case of someone like Mandeville, who did not always set out his ideas in the most systematic manner, than it is with thinkers who wrote philosophical treatises. If Mandeville really was a systematic thinker but not a systematic writer, then the challenge (and fun) of piecing together a relatively coherent theory is all the greater.

The principle of charitable interpretation sometimes runs up against the injunction, more often stressed by historians, not to assume coherence, especially between different works produced over many years.⁵⁵ Balancing the two is a matter of careful judgement, but the injunction is especially salient in Mandeville's case given that the *Fable* has a very complicated publishing history.⁵⁶

52. For an example of the contrast with Spinoza being used to downplay Mandeville's philosophical credentials, see Douglas J. Den Uyl, 'Passion, State, and Progress: Spinoza and Mandeville on the Nature of Human Association,' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (1987), 395.

53. For a self-consciously 'philosophical' analysis of Rousseau's *Discourse*, see Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Critique of Inequality: Reconstructing the Second Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). My choice of example is not without precedent. Reviewing the *Discourse on Inequality*, Adam Smith ('Letter to the *Edinburgh Review*', 250) famously remarked that 'Whoever reads this last work with attention, will observe, that the second volume of the *Fable of the Bees* has given occasion to the system of Mr. Rousseau.'

54. I thank Johan Olsthoorn for pressing me to clarify and helping me to articulate this point.

55. On the 'mythology of coherence', see, most famously, Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,' *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969), especially 16–22.

56. See, at greatest length, Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume*, 103–46. Kaye's 'Description of the Editions' also remains helpful; see *Fable* II, 386–400.

In brief, the *Grumbling Hive* verse first appeared in 1705 and was subsequently incorporated into the first edition of the *Fable* in 1714, accompanied by an essay entitled 'An Enquiry Into the Origin of Moral Virtue' and a series of 'Remarks' elaborating some of the key ideas from the verse. Mandeville published a considerably enlarged edition of the *Fable* in 1723,⁵⁷ expanding the original 'Remarks' and adding two new (and much longer) essays: 'An Essay on Charity, and Charity-Schools' and 'A Search into the Nature of Society'. Towards the end of 1728 (the frontispiece reads 1729) he published a new volume entitled *The Fable of the Bees. Part II*, which comprises six lengthy dialogues, mostly between the character of Cleomenes, who defends the original *Fable*, and his interlocutor Horatio, who is initially sceptical of Mandeville's ideas. These dialogues are resumed in *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour, and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* (1732), which Mandeville presents as a sequel to *Fable II*.

Earlier I said that I will approach *The Fable of the Bees* in the way that many scholars have long studied great works of moral and political philosophy. In light of this publishing history, however, it could be objected that the *Fable* is simply unlike many other such works. Yet all texts come with their own interpretative challenges. Hobbes, for example, published a Latin version of *Leviathan* in 1668, seventeen years after the English one, and the original *Leviathan* (1651) developed out of his earlier *Elements of Law* (1640) and *De Cive* (1642, revised 1647). How we interpret the relationship between these formulations of Hobbes's political philosophy matters both for making sense of his thought in general and for understanding *Leviathan* in particular.⁵⁸ There are plenty of scholarly debates about the extent to which Hobbes, Spinoza, or Kant changed their views between different works, as well as whether even their most systematic treatises achieved the internal coherence to which they aspired. It would be difficult to argue—and foolish to assume—that there is a perfectly consistent system underpinning Mandeville's thought, which barely changes across his various works, but this difficulty arises in respect to all philosophers, to varying degrees. As I hope to show, attending closely to the ways in which Mandeville revises his position between the different editions of the *Fable* can in fact improve our understanding of his theory of sociability, since it leaves

57. Following the charges levelled at the 1723 edition by the Middlesex Grand Jury, Mandeville published 'A Vindication of the Book' in the *London Journal*, which was then appended to the 1724 and subsequent editions of the *Fable*.

58. On these and other challenges, see Deborah Baumgold, 'The Difficulties of Hobbes Interpretation', *Political Theory* 36, no. 6 (2008): 827–55.

us better placed to distinguish the moving parts from the framing commitments of his argument.⁵⁹

‘Private Vices, Public Benefits’ and the origins of sociability

The *Fable*, in its various iterations, is a complex and multi-layered text, which spans several literary genres and touches on an eclectic array of topics. Anyone writing on Mandeville faces a difficult choice: they can either try to convey some sense of the full range and richness of his work or they can focus on unravelling a certain strand of his thought to see where it leads. I have opted for the latter approach, fully aware that there are many other paths that could be taken to find a way through either the *Fable* itself or Mandeville’s wider corpus.⁶⁰ In approaching the *Fable*, I find it helpful to distinguish between what I shall call Mandeville’s ‘private vices, public benefits’ and ‘origins of sociability’ theses—the latter being my principal focus.⁶¹ The most straightforward gloss of the ‘private vices, public benefits’ thesis is that most, if not all, of the benefits associated with living in a large and flourishing society are based on human vices, which is not, of course, to say that all vices are beneficial.⁶²

59. This formulation is borrowed from a point originally made about Hobbes, in Robin Douglass and Johan Olsthoorn, ‘Introduction’, to *Hobbes’s On the Citizen: A Critical Guide*, 5–6.

60. The two most wide-ranging Anglophone studies of Mandeville’s work are Richard I. Cook, *Bernard Mandeville* (New York: Twayne, 1974), and Monro, *Ambivalence*. In terms of Mandeville’s broader philosophical goals, important connections have recently been drawn between his medical work and the *Fable*, on which see Hilton, *Bitter Honey*; Harold J. Cook, ‘Treating of Bodies Medical and Political: Dr. Mandeville’s Materialism’, *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 9, no. 1 (2016): 1–31; Simonazzi, *Le favole della filosofia*, 97–151; idem., ‘Bernard Mandeville on Hypochondria and Self-liking’, *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 9, no. 1 (2016): 62–81; Brandon P. Turner, ‘Mandeville against Luxury’, *Political Theory* 44, no. 1 (2016): 26–52; Sylvie Kleiman-Lafon, ‘Introduction’ to her edition of the *Treatise*, especially 7–11.

61. A similar distinction runs through Tolonen’s *Mandeville and Hume*, although I disagree with his claim at 134 that ‘Mandeville wanted to distance himself’ from the private vices, public benefits thesis in *Fable II*. Passages where Mandeville (at least implicitly) defends the thesis, include *Fable II*, 48–50, 106–107, 127, 319–21.

62. Mandeville’s critics often attributed the latter view to him. See, for example, Dennis, *Vice and Luxury*, 4–5, 13; Bluet, *Enquiry*, 83, 93, 103, 136–37; [Anon.], *The True Meaning of the Fable of the Bees: In a Letter, &c.* (London, 1726), 5 and *passim*; Alexander Innes, ‘A Prefatory Introduction’, to [Archibald Campbell] *Aretē-logia, Or, An Enquiry Into the Original of Moral Virtue*

This is typically cashed out in terms of economic considerations, with the pursuit of certain vices, such as vanity, stimulating demand for luxury goods and fuelling economic prosperity. The ‘origins of sociability’ thesis, by contrast, operates at the level of social psychology and seeks to explain how we learn to conceal our self-centred desires and act in ways that elicit social approval.⁶³ I remain agnostic as to whether Mandeville himself regarded these as two separate theses; the distinction serves as an interpretative heuristic and should not be mistaken for a claim about authorial intention. We can start to see why it is a helpful heuristic by sketching out the trajectory of each thesis in the development of Mandeville’s thought.

Mandeville’s earliest statement of the ‘private vices, public benefits’ thesis occurs in the *Grumbling Hive* verse of 1705. Without using the precise phrase, he memorably writes of the flourishing beehive—his allegory for contemporary English society—that ‘every Part was full of Vice,/ Yet the Whole Mass a Paradise . . . The worst of all the Multitude/ Did something for the Common Good.’⁶⁴ Once the grumbling bees are granted their wish of rooting out the vices from the beehive, their numbers plummet and trade diminishes. Mandeville’s examples are mainly drawn from the economic sphere. The bees all work to support one another’s ‘Lust and Vanity’; vices underpin the trades of lawyers, physicians, and priests; luxury and pride keep the poor employed, while envy and vanity spur industry.⁶⁵ The overall benefits are similarly construed in economic terms: industry raises the conveniences of life ‘To such a Height, the very Poor/ Liv’d better than the Rich before.’⁶⁶ The verse focuses on showing that this economic activity, based on our vices, is necessary to sustain a large and prosperous state. Mandeville neither raises the question of

(Westminster, 1728), viii; Hervey, *Remarks*, 47; William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated*, vol. 1 (London, 1738), Book I, §6; John Brown, *Essays on the Characteristics* (London, 1751), 146–47; Laurence Nihell, *Rational Self-Love; or, a Philosophical and Moral Essay on the Natural Principles of Happiness and Virtue* (London, 1773), 156.

63. Similarly, see Harth, ‘Satiric Purpose’, 331, who distinguishes between Mandeville’s economic and psychological approaches. See also Daniel Luban, ‘Bernard Mandeville as Moralist and Materialist’, *History of European Ideas* 41, no. 7 (2015): 831–57, who argues that there are unresolved tensions throughout the *Fable* between the problem of unintended consequences and Mandeville’s social theory.

64. *Fable I*, 24.

65. *Fable I*, 18, 20–21, 25, respectively.

66. *Fable I*, 26.

sociability nor gives examples of the underlying psychological qualities that lead humans to associate with one another.⁶⁷

Mandeville's first explicit discussion of sociability appears four years later in a contribution to the *Female Tatler* from November 1709, which takes the form of a diary entry recounting a conversation between Arsinoe, Lucinda, and an Oxford gentleman. Arsinoe observes that there 'is no Animal that is naturally so little inclined to be Sociable as Man' and that we would be incapable of living together peacefully were it not for government and laws.⁶⁸ Lucinda challenges this bleak assessment by insisting that our faculty of reason raises us above the beasts and our generosity leads us to pursue the benefit of others,⁶⁹ but she is subsequently answered by the Oxford gentleman, who defends Arsinoe's position by explaining that the notion that '*Man is a Sociable Creature . . . is very true, but generally misunderstood*'. It does not mean that we possess any 'innate Virtue' or love one another's company more than other animals do—for that would be false—but, rather, that (amongst other things) the multiplicity of our desires, tastes, and opinions, along with our self-interested and discontent nature, mean that we 'are of all Animals the only Species, of which even the greatest Numbers may be made Subservient to one another, and by Skilful Management compose a lasting Society.'⁷⁰ This exchange leads into a brief recapitulation of the 'private vices, public benefits' thesis, which Mandeville then defends in his next contribution to the *Female Tatler*, published a few days later, without returning to the question of sociability.⁷¹ He does not explicitly bridge the two theses but from these entries it is not too difficult to see how they are related. If we were naturally inclined to be sociable then public benefits would not need to be based on private vices, for we would pursue the wellbeing of others out of a genuine desire to benefit them, rather than from self-interested or vicious motives. Conversely, if sociability involves

67. See also Maurice M. Goldsmith, 'Introduction', to his edition of *Female Tatler*, 24–25.

68. *Female Tatler*, no. 62: 96–97. On the importance of this entry to Mandeville's theory of sociability, see also Andrea Branchi, *Pride, Manners, and Morals: Bernard Mandeville's Anatomy of Honour* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 58–60.

69. *Female Tatler*, no. 62: 98. Lucinda invokes 'the Ingenious Mr. Bickerstaff's *Opinion*' here, which quells any doubts about which side of the debate the entry defends. Isaac Bickerstaff was Richard Steele's penname in *The Tatler*, to which *The Female Tatler* responded. On this background, see Goldsmith, *Private Vices, Public Benefits*, 37–41; idem., 'Introduction', 33–41.

70. *Female Tatler*, no. 62: 99.

71. *Female Tatler*, no. 64: 104–107.

harnessing our self-interested passions and desires then it could be regarded as one of the public benefits to which private vices give rise.⁷²

The contrast between the two theses is more apparent when we turn to the 1714 edition of the *Fable*, especially if we juxtapose the republished *Grumbling Hive* verse with Mandeville's new essay, 'An Enquiry Into the Origin of Moral Virtue'. The two texts are separated only by a short 'Introduction', where Mandeville suggests that the 'Enquiry' will complement the subject of the earlier verse,⁷³ although precisely how it does so remains somewhat unclear. The *Grumbling Hive* answers the question of how economic flourishing is attained in places like England at the turn of the eighteenth century. The question Mandeville addresses in the 'Enquiry', however, is quite distinct: how do humans first come to develop notions of virtue and vice? In answering this question, he explains how those who originally established society cultivated certain psychological propensities—pride, shame, and our desire for praise and flattery—without appealing to the economic considerations so prominent in the *Grumbling Hive*. Deeper tensions between the two theses can also be detected. At the very beginning of the 'Enquiry', for example, Mandeville claims that the 'Lawgivers and other wise Men' who established society must have made 'the People they were to govern, believe, that it was more beneficial for every Body to conquer than indulge his Appetites, and much better to mind the Publick than what seem'd his private Interest.'⁷⁴ Readers familiar with the 'private vices, public benefits' thesis will be surprised to find Mandeville now telling us that social order is dependent upon people overcoming their natural appetites and concerning themselves with the public good, rather than pursuing their private interest.⁷⁵ Whether this tension can be overcome is a matter of some debate;⁷⁶ the salient point, for present purposes, is simply that the

72. See Shelley Burt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 141.

73. *Fable I*, 40.

74. *Fable I*, 42.

75. For the most famous criticism along these lines, see David Hume, 'Of Refinement in the Arts' [1752], in his *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 279–80. See also Bluet, *Enquiry*, 23–24.

76. I do not take a firm stand on this debate in what follows, although I discuss one place where the tension surfaces in Chapter 3, 'Should hypocrisy be unmasked?'. For more general defences of Mandeville against Hume's criticism, see Monro, *Ambivalence*, 189–90, 203–209, 222; Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting On Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 271–72.

‘private vices, public benefits’ and ‘origins of sociability’ theses sometimes pull Mandeville’s thought in different directions.

In so far as the ‘private vices, public benefits’ thesis appeals principally to economic considerations, its main tenets appear to be in place by 1714.⁷⁷ When Mandeville finally clarifies the meaning of his infamous subtitle, in 1723, it is broadly consistent with earlier statements of the thesis: ‘that Private Vices by the dextrous Management of a skilful Politician may be turned into Publick Benefits.’⁷⁸ The ‘origins of sociability’ thesis, by contrast, undergoes far more significant developments from the 1723 edition of the *Fable* onwards, precisely because Mandeville turns his attention to refuting Shaftesbury. This is most apparent in ‘A Search into the Nature of Society’, which constitutes a scathing attack on Shaftesbury and contests his ideas of sociability and the origin of society, with some of the expanded ‘Remarks’ also reflecting this engagement. The opposition to Shaftesbury then structures the dialogues that comprise *Fable II* and *Origin of Honour*, with Cleomenes defending the *Fable* against Horatio, who starts out as an adherent of Shaftesbury’s philosophy. In these later works, Mandeville often extends, defends, or revises his theory of sociability from the suggestive remarks in the *Female Tatler* and its first full articulation in the ‘Enquiry’ of 1714.

In terms of Mandeville’s intellectual biography, then, the ‘private vices, public benefits’ thesis is developed mainly in the early stages of his writing career, whereas he continues to refine the ‘origins of sociability’ thesis throughout the 1720s. When, in 1723, he writes that political societies could be raised and maintained only with the ‘assistance of what we call Evil both Natural and Moral’,⁷⁹ we could read this as an instantiation of the broader ‘private vices, public benefits’ thesis: moral (but not natural) evil is the private vice and political society

77. See, however, Ben Dew, “‘Damn’d to Sythes and Spades’: Labour and Wealth Creation in the Writings of Bernard Mandeville”, *Intellectual History Review* 23, no. 2 (2013): 187–205, who shows that Mandeville’s economic thought takes a more mercantilist turn from the 1723 edition of the *Fable*, as he became increasingly concerned with questions of production and the organisation of labour, whereas his earlier writings focused more on consumption.

78. *Fable I*, 369, also 411–12; see also *Letter to Dion*, 36–37. Mandeville emphasises the role of politicians in redirecting vices towards public benefits from his earliest works; see, for example, *Female Tatler*, no. 64: 105–106; *Fable I*, 6–7. For the criticism of ambiguity, however, see Francis Hutcheson, *Reflections upon Laughter and Remarks upon The Fable of the Bees* (Glasgow, 1750), 41–42, who outlines five different propositions that ‘private vices, public benefits’ could signify.

79. *Fable I*, 325, also 369.

the public benefit.⁸⁰ Whatever his own views on how the two theses intersect, the interpretative heuristic I have proposed encourages us to see beyond the popular caricature of Mandeville as a forerunner of laissez-faire or capitalist economic doctrine. If today the ‘private vices, public benefits’ thesis conjures up an image of *homo economicus* guided by self-interest and instrumental rationality, then, by focusing on the ‘origins of sociability’ thesis, we can instead come to appreciate Mandeville as a theorist of social norms (*homo sociologicus*) who was acutely aware that human action is largely shaped by our desire for the recognition of others (*homo comparativus*).⁸¹

A brief roadmap

The remainder of this book is divided into five chapters, running over two parts, and a conclusion. As far as possible, I have endeavoured to write each chapter so that it can be read by itself, for the benefit of readers who prefer to dip in and out, although I of course hope that when read cumulatively the book is more than the sum of its parts. The first part, ‘Moral Psychology’, focuses on Mandeville’s general account of human nature and its implications for questions of sociability. Chapter 1 provides a detailed analysis of Mandeville’s understanding of pride and its relationship with other passions. I argue that we can accept much of what he says about the importance of pride in explaining human sociability while remaining sceptical of his attempt to reduce all human actions to some form of self-love. This should be the most accessible chapter of the book for those relatively new to Mandeville’s thought, so I would recommend starting with this even if you pick and choose from the remaining chapters (or read no further). Chapter 2 asks the question: what are the moral implications if we suppose that Mandeville’s analysis of human nature is largely accurate? This chapter, more than most, is oriented around some important debates within Mandeville scholarship, precisely because my own

80. Mandeville typically refrains from using the language of private vices and public benefits to make this point about sociability, although see *Letter to Dion*, 19–21, where his discussion of the necessity of vice (in the economic sphere) leads into the conclusion that we cannot conceive ‘how any Society could subsist upon Earth, exempt from all Evil, both natural and moral.’

81. On the comparison between *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus*, see Jon Elster, *The Cement of Society: A Study of Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 97; on that between *homo economicus* and *homo comparativus*, see Gloria Origgi, *Reputation: What It Is and Why It Matters*, trans. Stephen Holmes and Noga Arikha (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), especially 147–70.

views on the moral status of pride—along with questions about Mandeville’s sincerity and relationship with the Augustinian tradition—depart from many leading scholars.

Chapters 1 and 2 have a common format. The first half of each chapter, very roughly, defends my interpretation of Mandeville, and the second half then evaluates his position by addressing objections from other eighteenth-century philosophers, especially Hume and Smith. In doing so, my aim is not to tell a story about intellectual influence or reception history, but, rather, to treat these philosophers as interlocutors addressing similar questions to, and often raising direct criticisms of, Mandeville. A further feature of these chapters is that I draw freely from across the different editions of the *Fable* (and sometimes other works) to explain Mandeville’s moral psychology, with the aim of showing that his account of human nature is broadly consistent throughout.

Chapter 3 takes a slightly different approach, as it foregrounds Mandeville’s attack on Shaftesbury in ‘A Search into the Nature of Society’ from the enlarged 1723 edition of the *Fable*. Taking this essay as my point of departure, I look backwards to the 1714 edition and forwards to *Fable II* to address some of the puzzles and tensions in the relationship between Mandeville’s ideas of sociability, hypocrisy, and virtue. One of the points I seek to impress is that if we are interested in the intellectual progression of Mandeville’s ideas, then we should examine the changes between the 1714 and 1723 editions of the (first volume of the) *Fable* and not solely those between the first and second volumes.⁸² The chapter should also serve as the single-most detailed study to date of Mandeville’s engagement with Shaftesbury, as it emerges out of the ‘Search’.

The second part of the book, ‘Historical Narratives’, analyses Mandeville’s various explanations of how a range of interrelated moral and social phenomena first arose, including our ideas of honour, politeness, and virtue, as well as the origin of society itself. This involves studying some of Mandeville’s later writings in greater depth: Chapter 4 focuses mainly on the conjectural history of *Fable II* and Chapter 5 on *Origin of Honour*. In each case, I show how Mandeville revisits and expands his origin stories from the first volume of the *Fable*, often, it appears, in response to criticisms that his work encountered during

82. Cf. J. Martin Stafford, ‘General Introduction’, to his edition of *Private Vices, Publick Benefits?*, xvi–xviii; Robertson, *Case for the Enlightenment*, 266–77; Simonazzi, *Le favole della filosofia, passim*; idem., ‘Common Law, Mandeville and the Scottish Enlightenment: At the Origin of the Evolutionary Theory of Historical Development’, *Storia del pensiero politico* 7, no. 1 (2018): 107–26; Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume*, especially 41–102.

the 1720s, especially from William Law and George Bluet. Chapter 4 pays particular attention to the desire of dominion (a consequence of pride) and argues that it is the most important passion in Mandeville's explanation of the origin of society, while also drawing out the implications of his conjectural history for understanding political authority. Chapter 5 then turns to *Origin of Honour* and examines his account of the development of a distinctively modern sense of honour (another offshoot of pride) in recent European history. In exploring how ideas of honour, religion, and war intersect, the chapter sheds light on aspects of Mandeville's analysis of human nature and sociability that have passed under the radar of most studies.

In the Conclusion, I revisit the relationship between the 'private vices, public benefits' and 'origins of sociability' theses, highlighting one area where the pride-based considerations to which Mandeville so often appeals are surprisingly absent: his analysis of the labour supply in the economy. The book then closes with some reflections on whether we should find Mandeville's pride-centred theory of sociability compelling. Drawing together arguments from earlier chapters, I suggest that his moral psychology, in particular, holds up well not only against the criticisms that it encountered in the eighteenth century but also when considered in the light of more recent findings from social psychology.

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