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Robin Douglass. *Mandeville's Fable: Pride, Hypocrisy, and Sociability.* Princeton University Press 2023. 256 pp. $95.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780691218670); $35.00 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780691219172).

Mandeville's Fable aims to convince us to take Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733) seriously as a philosopher, not only as a satirist best-known for the catchy slogan 'private vices, public benefits.' At the core of the book is another, much less studied aspect of Mandeville's thought—his 'pride-centred theory of sociability'—which Douglass considers 'the most sophisticated … in early modern European philosophy (and perhaps beyond)' (6). This is a high bar indeed, not least because the notions of pride and sociability might seem rather incompatible at first glance, and pride (as well as self-love) could perhaps more intuitively be seen as the cause of our natural *un*sociability (in this sense, this book is an excellent companion to Paul Sagar's equally excellent *The Opinion of Mankind*. Yet precisely because of this apparent tension, Mandeville's 'origins of sociability' thesis, as laid out here, turns out to be powerful and innovative.

We start with a clear introduction to Mandeville's account of pride and its central place in human nature (Chapter 1). Pride, to which overvaluing ourselves is key, is the hidden motive—sometimes hidden even from ourselves—that underpins a great deal of our behaviour and operates alongside other dominant passions such as fear and shame. As pride is interwoven with desiring social esteem, it dictates how we behave in society, as Mandeville shrewdly observes: 'all good Manners consist in flattering the Pride of others, and concealing our Own' (35). From here we move naturally to the moral implications of this analysis, where the main argument is that Mandeville consistently considers (acting out of) pride to be a vice (Chapter 2). Especially interesting is the question of the extent to which Mandeville engages with the Augustinian view of our fallen condition, whether to reaffirm or subvert it, which Douglass also connects to the overarching question of Mandeville's sincerity. Furthermore, these issues ultimately lead to the methodological question of whether his sincerity, or lack thereof, matters for our interpretation. The upshot is that Mandeville might invoke an Augustinian picture without necessarily embracing the theological commitments that go with it, and that in any case, there is good reason to take him at his word—that we *are* morally compromised due to our pride—even if he at times seems to employ a rather playful style. There is a bigger lesson to be learnt: not only should we take Mandeville seriously as a philosopher (which, based on Douglass's book, we clearly should!) but we should also avoid excluding writers who attempt to convey moral truths using different genres,

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such as novels or indeed satires, from the philosophical canon.

Based on this account comes the discussion of one of the most complex conceptions in the book, namely, hypocrisy (Chapter 3). The main context for this debate is the disagreement between Mandeville and the third earl of Shaftesbury, previously a critic of Hobbes and Locke. Where for Shaftesbury we share an innate 'sense of fellowship' and 'natural affection,' hence our moral sense (98–9), for Mandeville these are naïve and misleading notions that amount to self-deception. Mandeville's point against Shaftesbury is that virtue must require self-denial and thus sociability must require a considerable amount of hypocrisy. There are several intriguing, interrelated questions that Douglass unpacks at this point: on this account, how, if at all, can we actually conquer our passions, and can we truly distinguish between real and counterfeited virtues? Is hypocrisy ultimately more socially beneficial or harmful—and, connectedly, under what conditions should it be exposed? We can add here another question at which Douglass hints towards the end of the chapter: what would have been the result of spreading Mandeville's theory widely—and potentially of us all becoming consciously Mandevillean? It is in such sections of the book that the philosophical (and somewhat meta-philosophical) discussions are particularly rewarding.

We now turn to explore the human basic desire of dominion and the problem it raises (Chapter 4), typically captured by Mandeville's view that we enter 'the World with a visible Desire after Government, and no Capacity for it at all' (137)—a statement that resonates all too well with the twenty-first-century reader. Douglass carefully investigates the nuanced development of Mandeville's thought, which results in a coherent account of his conjectural history of the origins of society, from families, through 'bands and companies' (166), to the emergence of leaders and subsequently written laws and further norms of politeness. The latter are crucial for the process of civilisation by 'providing a sophisticated outlet for tempering and concealing our desire of superiority without leading to discord and quarrels' (171). It follows that our desire of domination, which is tamed by civilisation, is also what enabled us to form society—and thus to be civilised—to begin with. In this sense, it is fascinating to see how this conception plays a theoretical dual role, positive and negative as it were, not unlike what we have seen in the case of hypocrisy. Furthermore, this duality seems to lie at the very heart of Mandeville's thought as a whole, and fleshing out these various complexities is one of this book's greatest strengths. This even includes pointing out nicely that today, though not for Mandeville, pride itself is often invoked in positive contexts, for instance, 'in an emancipatory sense by social groups who have long been treated as inferior' (229).

In the Introduction, Douglass clarifies that the intention of his work is philosophical, and while some of Mandeville's contemporaries are discussed in depth, questions of influence and reception remain mostly outside of the book's scope. This is of course fair enough, but it means that there is much room to follow up on Douglass's novel interpretation of Mandeville with methods of intellectual history. One such avenue is the contextualisation of Mandeville's views on religion, a topic which culminates in the discussion of honour (Chapter 5). Modern honour, according to Mandeville, was essentially invented to compensate for what Christianity failed to provide and to motivate soldiers to go to war. Thus, for example, 'the interplay between fear and honour' (185), emphasised by Douglass, is something that appears in the works of previous anticlerical and deist writers such as Charles Blount who states in *Great Is Diana* that superstition was 'the off-spring of too much Honour, and too much Fear' (1680, 22). So is Mandeville's sharp observation that 'the seeds of religion can be found in uneducated savages who would fear all natural phenomena that appear threatening … and then start attributing these events to invisible causes', a fear which is then exploited by 'designing priests' (161–2): this precise position goes back to a line of writers from Hobbes to John Trenchard and others (I elaborate on this in *Anticlerical Legacies*, Manchester University Press 2024). It is hard to know whether there is a direct or even an indirect connection here, not least because Mandeville tried to distance himself from deism (although this strategy was not uncommon). In any case, this is at least one intellectual tradition that might be studied further now, especially thanks to Douglass's recovery of the importance and depth of the hitherto understudied *Origin of Honour* (1732).

How should we characterise Mandeville's thought, then? Douglass's book is extremely thought-provoking (also) in that it makes the reader wonder about this question throughout without giving one definitive answer. Then, the Conclusion suggests aptly that perhaps we should take Mandeville as anti-utopian (221–2): indeed, he seems to belong to a group of thinkers that are more easily described by what they are *not*. Throughout the book, it is easy to identify with Douglass's 'sympathetic' or 'charitable' interpretation of Mandeville (e.g., 3). It would have been interesting to read more about the meaning of this approach, which constitutes searching for the 'most coherent interpretation … from the available evidence' (15) in addition to 'joining the dots' on Mandeville's behalf in places where he did not do so. What is more, it is easy to feel sympathetic towards Douglass's own reconstruction of Mandeville's position. I suspect nevertheless that even those who might disagree with either or both will still enjoy this book, which succeeds remarkably in achieving the goal it sets out, namely, 'striking the right balance between scholarly rigour and

accessibility' (xii).

In the end, there is something refreshingly engaging and compelling about Douglass's defence of Mandeville which draws our undivided attention to a thinker who is usually a marginal character in the story of eighteenth-century European philosophy and whose views are presented often in a reductive if not caricatured way. This book is therefore a must-read for anyone interested in the history of philosophy and political philosophy in the broadest sense, as well as moral and social psychology—and indeed for anyone who is, or who wishes to quickly become, interested in Mandeville.

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