

Editorial

Presentation of the “Mandeville” Dossier

This issue of the *Revista de Filosofia Moderna e Contemporânea* marks an important step in the development of the studies on Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733) in Brazil, as it is the first collection of papers dedicated exclusively to this author. While there is an abundance of literature on English philosophers of the 18th-century, there is still a paucity of written material on the thought of the Dutch physician and satirist. Similarly, Mandeville was an author whose ideas have often been overshadowed by his more famous and influential contemporaries, whether in literature, political commentary, or philosophy, such as Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Anthony Ashley-Cooper the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, George Berkeley, Alexander Pope, and Francis Hutcheson. It is evident that their works were more widely recognized and acclaimed within the intellectual circles and public opinion of their time than Mandeville's. Nevertheless, his seminal works, especially his masterpiece *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1714), challenged conventional notions of morality and society and sparked controversies that reverberated far beyond his time, providing a provocative stimulus to various debates.

It seems probable that Mandeville was inspired by a number of earlier writers, including Michel de Montaigne, Thomas Hobbes, Pierre Bayle, François de La Rochefoucauld, and possibly Miguel de Cervantes. He also drew on the ideas of ancient authors such as Cicero, but in an opposite direction. His satirical perspective on the intricate relationship between public morality and the commercial and emerging financial society of the 18th century, the political and religious institutions of his day, and the human passions that these forces aimed at was ingenious. He postulated that these forces were naturally indomitable in their impulsiveness, yet manipulable. “Flattery,” “Shame,” and “Pride,” as powerful and irresistible emotions, could be employed to guide them. This entailed the possibility of concealing their true nature from public view through the ostentatious display of politeness, which could be employed as a means of securing approval and compliments. Such a strategy could simultaneously be employed to enhance their satisfaction and, at the same time, to direct them through a world of luxury, at least in emerging wealthy circles of society, with the aim of increasing consumption and production.

Mandeville's ironic and satirical observations, presented in a continuous mix of writing genres, indicate that he was aware of the profound societal changes occurring around him and sought to express them in his work. In one of his *Fable* texts, a conjectural representation of the origins of human values, Mandeville presents a narrative in which the values themselves are conceived as the work of "cunning Politicians." This narrative provides him with an opportunity to develop his critique of society's codes and the defense of virtue, which he views as an inveterate yet *questionable* practice: questionable because the more it was openly standardized as the most important thing to be upheld in a worthy human character, the more it concealed what was obscured by these layers of morality. Mandeville's unique blend of skepticism, satire, and erudition, while never neglecting his medical training, illuminated the complexities of human behavior and social dynamics, offering insights that remain pertinent to contemporary debates.

Despite the constant criticism and vilification he faced from 18th-century moralists, politicians, and religious authorities, it is clear that Mandeville's influence on the European Enlightenment cannot be underestimated. Scholars such as F. B. Kaye, responsible for the groundbreaking two-volume edition of *The Fable of the Bees* (1924), have shed light on the historical significance and impact of Mandeville's work, emphasizing its relevance for understanding the intellectual movements of the 18th century. Nevertheless, a curious gap exists in the available biographical information about Mandeville and Kaye. Furthermore, Mandeville's enigmatic personality, coupled with the mischievous legends that surround him, and the relative obscurity of his life, may have hindered a complete understanding of his legacy.

These collected essays, written by some of the most prominent scholars of Mandeville currently working in the field, explore the multifaceted dimensions of his thought. Among the topics addressed are his explanations of human nature and the potential relationship between human political organization and that of bees; his distinctive perspective on women's conduct; the reception of his work in other languages; and his controversial assertions regarding the interplay between private vice and the public benefits. As Mandeville himself provocatively asserted in the preface to the *Fable of the Bees*, "The Satyr therefore to be met with in the following Lines upon the several Professions and Callings, and almost every Degree and Station of People, was not made to injure and point to particular Persons, but only to shew the Vileness of the Ingredients that all together compose the wholesome Mixture of a well-order'd Society"

(MANDEVILLE, 1924, p. 6). In light of Mandeville's observations of human frailty, the following essays seek to uncover more profound truths about society and morality, a search that continues to resonate in contemporary philosophical inquiry.

In the first contribution, Laura J. Rosenthal analyzes Mandeville's critique of sentimental and religious ideals in the burgeoning capitalist economy, focusing on the emotional costs and the role of the physician in alleviating suffering, as exemplified in works such as "The Planter's Charity," and highlighting the dynamics of hypocrisy in religion, a pervasive theme in Mandeville's reflections. In the second essay, Andrea Branchi, focuses on Mandeville's perspective on women, examining his reflections on chastity and artificial virtues in the context of human sociability driven by passions such as pride and shame. Branchi elucidates Mandeville's portrayal of the societal double standards imposed on women and his explanation of the motivations behind self-love.

In her analysis, Sylvie Kleiman-Lafon scrutinizes Bernard Mandeville's reputation for employing paradox and irony, questioning whether his intentions truly align with laissez-faire capitalism or controversial social policies like denying education to the poor or institutionalizing prostitution. Kleiman-Lafon argues that Mandeville's use of paradox is not intended to persuade readers of particular moral positions, but rather to engage them in self-discovery, allowing them to draw their own conclusions from his deliberately disordered narrative style. In addition, Mandeville's approach to authorship remains wavering, as evidenced by his varied use of signatures and anonymity in his publications. Kleiman-Lafon suggests that his status as an author is marked by ambivalence, with the concealment of his identity as important as the revelation of his thoughts.

The next contribution explores Mandeville's critique of elitist moral philosophy, considered incapable of understanding and governing commercial society. Jimena Hurtado highlights Mandeville's challenge to accept social norms or advocate transformative change, and suggests the use of incentives aligned with utilitarian principles to reshape social norms. Hurtado emphasizes the asymmetrical nature of wealth-based social relations, in which individuals' abilities to satisfy desires vary, resulting in unequal relations despite shared desires.

The issue's next paper takes an in-depth look at Bernard Mandeville's mag-

num opus. Daniel J. Kapust and Brandon P. Turner examine *The Fable of the Bees*, focusing on his poem "The Grumbling Hive." They contextualize Mandeville's choice of apian metaphor by examining ancient and modern examples of social and political theories influenced by apiaries, and demonstrate the subversive nature of "The Grumbling Hive" and its subsequent iterations. Mandeville challenges conventional assumptions about the harmony of the hive and its relationship to human society. The authors point to Mandeville's innovative account of the origin and role of language, which departs from the traditional view of the divine gift to Adam and presents a naturalistic explanation based on communication and persuasion.

Pedro Paulo Pimenta's contribution explores parallels between the perspectives of Hume and Mandeville on the division of labor in European commercial societies, both rooted in the idea of human nature as driven by passions similar to those of other animals. Pimenta highlights the common theme of a disparity between the process of the division of labor and its results, a critique echoed by Hume in his examination of teleological proofs for the existence of God. The division of labor, while producing remarkable results, is presented as a gradual and experimental process rather than an intellectual one. Pimenta discusses Mandeville's moral exploration of this disparity, emphasizing the role of stable social conditions in facilitating the transmission of specialized skills across generations. Ultimately, the process is presented as driven by practical necessity rather than teleological design, with the concrete realization of products emerging from the increasing demand for their use rather than from the conception of a predetermined idea.

Béatrice Guion's paper examines the reception of Mandeville in the French Enlightenment, focusing on the mixed reactions his works provoked among leading writers and philosophers. While some saw Mandeville as an ally in challenging religious orthodoxy and advocating luxury, others questioned his egoist hypothesis. Mandeville was accused by both orthodox guardians and certain philosophers of undermining moral foundations. Guion's essay then proceeds to trace the circulation of these works from their initial English editions to their subsequent French translations and adaptations. Finally, Bruno C. Simões examines Mandeville's poem "The Grumbling Hive" and its satirical treatment of morality and business practices, particularly through a semantic interpretation of the term "knave" from the Remark B. of the *Fable of the Bees*. Simões analyzes Mandeville's portrayal of dishonesty and its incorporation into social dynamics, revealing tensions between ethical standards and the pursuit

of self-interest in Enlightenment society.

Finally, the last part offers a bibliographical note recovering various publications by or about Mandeville, edited by Leonardo Uderman, who in the first half of 2021 was a graduate student in my course on Mandeville at the University of Brasilia amid the waves of the covid-19 pandemic. Any important studies on Mandeville that have not been mentioned are solely my responsibility. I would like to express my gratitude to all the contributors to this special issue, as well as those who accepted the invitation but were unable to do or complete the work. Finally, but most importantly, I would like to thank Professor Alexandre Hahn, editor of the *Revista de Filosofia Moderna e Contemporânea*, and Jade Chaia for their inexhaustible patience.

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