



## LIBERTY MATTERS

### MANDEVILLE, HAYEK, AND THE POLITICS OF SELF-ESTEEM

*Welcome to our October 2020 edition of Liberty Matters. In this essay and discussion forum [Mikko Tolonen](#), Associate Professor of Digital Humanities at the University of Helsinki, discusses the work of [Bernard Mandeville](#), one of the most original thinkers and personalities of the 18th century. Tolonen discusses various aspects of Mandeville's thought, in particular the insight concerning people's faith in their own opinions and their inability to be impartial in moral and political matters. Tolonen then compares Mandeville's critique of human knowledge with [F.A. Hayek](#)'s well known discussion of the limits of human reason. According to Tolonen, Hayek's work on the use of knowledge deftly compares Rousseau's view of rationality with Mandeville's *Scottish Enlightenment* thinking. His provocative essay, and the three excellent response essays from our other contributors, raise interesting questions about the way in which ideas transcend various eras, particularly those that describe human nature and the norms that dictate human behavior in markets.*

#### MANDEVILLE, HAYEK AND POLITICS OF SELF-ESTEEM

by Mikko Tolonen

Bernard Mandeville and Friedrich Hayek shared a view on the role of self-deception in human affairs. People are naturally partial. But that is not the issue. The root of the problem is that people deceive themselves in believing that they are right in their convictions while being incapable of taking an impartial perspective in moral and political matters. For Hayek, our propensity to self-deception meant that we cannot trust the perspective of any individual – no matter how enlightened they may seem – to guide us towards a planned, centralised future. Thus, it is best to let individuals and corporations make their own plans, which at the same time limits the authority that anyone can exercise over others. In his famous attack on constructivist rationalism, Hayek, in the Mandevillian vein, takes as an enemy what he calls the wrong kind of individualism based on faith in human reason.<sup>[1]</sup> Hayek does a great (and still somewhat unappreciated) job in intellectual history of juxtaposing Rousseauian rational individualism to Mandevillian

Scottish Enlightenment thinking.<sup>[2]</sup> For Hayek, acknowledging the role of self-deception and our inability to take an unbiased perspective was a premise for living in a post-WWII liberal Western world. This shared view on human nature suggests there are good reasons for us to compare Mandeville and Hayek on their extended views on civil society.<sup>[3]</sup>



***Bernard Mandeville***

What I want to underline in this essay is that in neither the Mandevillian or Hayekian understanding of civil

society is protecting property rights and limiting governmental interference enough to explain how civil society is able to function.<sup>[4]</sup> We need societal peace, and in order to achieve that we also need to be able to protect people's self-esteem and feelings of self-worth, which is a complicated matter. Mandeville lived in the eighteenth century, unfamiliar with the concept of modern state or progressive taxation. His idea of management of protection of self-esteem was based on two components: the principle of politeness and clear class distinctions that also functioned as a psychological barrier. The relevance of class distinction was that the working poor (the largest part of the population) would not begin to compare themselves to the people higher up on the social ladder. This way the poor would remain happy and satisfied in their condition.<sup>[5]</sup> These measures seem outdated or even discriminating in the twenty-first century Western world, but the need to guard people's self-esteem is still fundamental and should not be taken for granted.



*Friedrich von Hayek*

Friedrich Hayek defines spontaneous order as "well-structured social patterns, which appear to be a product of some omniscient designing mind yet which are in reality the spontaneous co-ordinated outcomes of the actions of, possibly, millions of individuals who had no intention of effecting such overall *aggregate* orders."<sup>[6]</sup> This is a Mandevillean formulation.<sup>[7]</sup> But which social patterns are we talking about? For Mandeville, the relevant social patterns are

not just any conventions. All social patterns evolve in the same manner, but what matters are the political conventions where the government plays a role coining the convention and turning it into a rule.<sup>[8]</sup> Conceptually, this is important because it guides us towards the question of what is the role of the public and in what manner it can be defined. Unlike Mandeville, Hayek does not specify what social patterns he is interested in, but treats them more like fashions. The most useful social patterns will survive, and the less viable ones will disappear in the same way that some groups of people and countries will do worse in the competition against others. There are thus no determined political conventions to be discovered for Hayek based on human nature. He is interested in the *principle* of spontaneous order and not in its resolved political outcomes.

For both Mandeville and Hayek, general rules are negative and there is a crucial division between small and large societies.<sup>[9]</sup> In other words, it is important to understand that the flourishing of a large society is based on a different logic than a small one, which can be built on frugality and self-denial. At the same time, in large societies, the question of societal peace becomes central for the free market to operate and produce prosperity. It is this societal peace that general rules ultimately protect.

With respect to large societies, Mandeville places much relevance on the determined connection between a particular passion and the general rule that guides or redirects it. A general rule of private property is necessary so that everyone has the chance to accumulate wealth and people can trust that neither individuals nor the government can take away what one has acquired legally. Once people learn that in the long run it is easier to accumulate wealth by following this principle, it becomes their interest to promote education that supports the rule. There is no natural motive for people to refrain from taking other people's possessions, but in this way a virtuous pattern emerges. It is important for the logic of the argument that the working poor become wealthier in absolute terms. This also creates moral feelings towards the social convention. This long-term interest might be at times forgotten by chance, circumstances, or relative

differences between people. Hence, there need to be punishments in place as well, enforced by the government against violations on private property. It needs to be understood that civil societies built on such artificial virtues might collapse, too, if the political structure is unable to protect its fundamental values.

What is important in the Mandevillean scheme is that there is a further dimension to this geometrical interplay of passions and general rules. Namely, we need to be able to deal with people's pride and protect their self-esteem at the same time in order for them to be productive contributors to the market. Mandeville does not consider the accumulation of wealth as the pinnacle of human nature. People need to survive, but more important is their social existence based on self-esteem. Following the same logic of private property, also with respect to self-esteem, the absolute feelings of self-worth should be higher than in earlier times through social evolution. Or, to put it in other words, with time citizens should become happier. The feeling of self-worth is developed in interaction with others, and it is one kind of trafficking and commerce. In the case of self-love, if there is a fear of arbitrary loss of one's possessions, this cripples the market. At the same time, people tend to overvalue themselves. If they are constantly facing a situation where their self-image is put down either by differentiating societal values or by nasty individuals, this makes them unproductive also. In the Mandevillean scheme, self-esteem can be interpreted as a political question.

A large part of the Mandevillean psychology is devoted to the role of pride and the feeling of self-worth. While Mandeville and Hayek share a crucial point of departure with respect to an ideological stance on the role of human fallibility, yet the understanding of the relevance of individual freedom and autonomy diverges Hayek from the Mandevillean path. In the Mandevillean view of self-esteem, reciprocity is crucial and reference groups tie individuals to larger society. Hayek's understanding of the fundamentals of what is needed for civil society to function is different, even when he emphasises Mandeville's role in developing the ideas of spontaneous order, division of labour, and critical rationalism of the

passions as the main lines of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>[10]</sup>

Hayek builds his view of the self on autonomy, which shows a somewhat paradoxical optimism towards human nature and is unlike anything we witness in Mandeville. According to Hayek, "nothing makes conditions more unbearable than the knowledge that no effort of ours can change them."<sup>[11]</sup>



In contrast Mandeville thinks that all human connections are entangled and there is no sight of the autonomy that Hayek is after. The possibility of autonomy is traded for the cultivation of self-esteem that is possible only by being dependent on the society around us. Hayek's concept of "opportunities of choice" also relates to autonomy. In this way, it becomes understandable why in Hayek's view competition has such a decisive and penetrating role in civil society. Rene Prendegast has perceptively evaluated the overwhelming role of the concept of capital and how different aspects of Mandevillean thinking fade away as the price system as regulating principle takes over in Hayek.<sup>[12]</sup>

While there are elements in Hayek's prose that come close to grasping the central parts of Mandeville's ideas on customs and laws with respect to politeness and self-esteem,<sup>[13]</sup> it is the focus on autonomy that keeps his attention at the level of spontaneous order without engaging with particular passions, or analysing their relevance with the intent of finding general political conclusions. For example, in *Road to Serfdom* the idea of property and ownership clearly trump self-esteem, which is built on reciprocity within the community. The psychological question of upholding the self-image of the

poor or minority groups for the sake of societal peace, for example, does not play a central role in Hayek's prose.

The demand for autonomy and individualism is indeed high in Hayek. Inspired by a comparison to feudalism, Hayek also wants to free the modern individual from the ties that bind him. This would be an illusion for Mandeville. At the same time, the tug of war between individualism and collectivism is complex in the Mandevillean setting. The Mandevillean social theorist does not work in planning the future but discovering the social anatomy that reveals the structures of civil society. An anatomist of civil society serves an important role revealing what has to be done with respect to general rules and their protection. This is also David Hume's idea in his essay "That Politics May be Reduced to a Science\_" when he discusses "eternal political truths" that are discovered over time.<sup>[14]</sup> In a contrasting manner, Hayek wanted to explain the principle of spontaneous order and engage with policy without focusing on particular passions and fixed political principles derived from them. A Mandevillean idea is that there is enough data to conclude that all large societies that are able to function have developed particular general rules with respect to self-love and self-liking/self-esteem. This is a point where there is a crucial difference between Mandeville and Hayek.

In his Charity-school essay, Mandeville writes that "it is the Business of the Publick to supply the Defects of the Society, and take that in hand first which is most neglected by private Persons."<sup>[15]</sup>

With a limited role of choice and autonomy for the individuals, it logically becomes the government's role to relieve different tensions in civil society. Governmental responsibility also concerns the unskilled poor and their management in order for the civil society to function.

The Mandevillean social structure is built on the idea that working for someone else, or being under someone else's rule and especially at the mercy of people's opinion is nearly unavoidable. He takes this as a social fact when examining the eighteenth-century reality and underlines that it is not a particularly cruel way of perceiving the world. This is also demonstrated in Mandeville's

comments on the working poor and slavery. According to Mandeville, slavery is against the basic principles of Christian countries. His example of apparent hypocrisy is the eighteenth-century Dutch who keep their criminals in seemingly similar conditions to slaves. The point is that the working poor are also in a situation where their autonomy and self-ownership can be seen to be severely curbed. Yet, Mandeville claims, the poor can still remain happy in a way upper classes are not. Hayek underlines that the unskilled labourers have a *de facto* choice to submit to others in the free world. The role of choice is irrelevant in Mandeville's opinion for his psychological argument. In normal situations, the poor are simply happier without the need to climb the social ladder or dream about it. In this way of thinking about social classes, everyone cannot and shouldn't aspire to be middle class. Social mobility is not a fundamental value. But, importantly for the logic of the argument, free ranging competition in all areas of life is not the solution to deal with the poor either.

While Mandeville and Hayek agree that arbitrary governmental intervention is to be avoided, this does not mean that government would not have a role in the protection of general rules. It is important to consider the nature of these general rules and what governmental interventions ought to be about. One way of interpreting the Hayekian vision of civil society is that it is fundamentally focused on the side of private property. In this setting, the price system applied to different areas of human life is seen as the best method for bringing social order, and the government should focus on making sure that it functions freely. This scheme places great hope on the idea that competition will take care of most of the business. But if the logic of general rules is not based on private property alone, then such questions as the feeling of self-worth can be seen in a different political light also for the sake of mutual peace.

In the Mandevillean perspective, because of the relevance of self-worth, governmental responsibility towards the poor is more extensive when considered in the modern setting in which having a large stock of people accustomed to hard labour is no longer necessary as it

was in the eighteenth century. The underprivileged need help in many areas of life to get along. Hayek also thinks that we need an extensive system of social services and he offers many practical solutions to questions of welfare.<sup>[16]</sup>

The Mandevillean way of looking at this is that social services have two different purposes. First, they promote the basic survival of individuals and link to self-love. But an extensive network of social services (for example, affordable housing and health care) that are within the reach of everyone can be seen to uphold the baseline of people's self-esteem as well.



Hayek's way of looking at progressive taxation is that it violates the principle of autonomy. In the best of possible worlds scenario, he would rather have people helping the poor and doing community service voluntarily rather than through progressive taxation. In contrast, from the Mandevillean perspective, charity is the worst form of humiliation. Accepting alms turns people beggarly by downgrading their self-esteem and pushing them further from the market and circumstances where competition is possible. Naturally, Mandeville did not live in a modern world familiar with progressive taxation or basic income. But one conclusion that can be drawn from the Mandevillean principles is that it might be better to organise necessary social services in a centralised, cost-regulated manner once we have been able to define basic needs. Even in the Hayekian vision, a system of basic welfare can be set up in a way that helps people's self-image.

Hayek of course is not a full-blown *laissez-faire* thinker either. Societal peace requires other things besides

property rights and regulation of the market. One of the key issues is who you are comparing yourself to when developing your image of self and self-esteem. The idea of wholehearted equality of choice and competition in all areas of life without recognition of class or cultural differences doesn't fit into this setting, and it is grasped clearly in parts of Hayek's oeuvre. Mandeville pays crucial attention to social distance, and Hayek leans towards the idea that people's passions are different based on their circumstances. If we follow the logic of this Mandevillean argument, we come to accept that pride or self-esteem is a fundamental passion that needs to be regulated in large society. This means that a moral convention such as politeness – that is blind to the actual worth of the people cultivating the positive feeling they have of themselves – follows in the spirit of spontaneous order. At the same time, it is possible to recognise that there are further requirements for the basic structure of political order beyond the focus on private property and free markets. In Mandeville's vision, any large society that is able to function would have established, and preserved general rules with respect to both self-love and self-esteem. Guarding self-love through property rights in a Mandevillean manner has been well established in the Western liberal tradition. The question of protecting and upholding self-esteem is still unclear, even at the level of a political principle. They are like Yin and Yang, except the political relevance of Yang has been largely neglected.

Hayek thinks that there are "certain fields where the system of competition is impracticable." Protecting the baseline of self-esteem for all citizens, in spite of their background could be seen to be one of these fields in the Mandevillean evolutionary setting (environmental issues, such as deforestation and factory smoke, are examples that Hayek mentions of fields where the system of competition does not work). The main point of this essay has been that Mandeville and Hayek's different emphasis on autonomy is the decisive factor that leads them logically towards different conclusions. The Mandevillean task was to define the nature of civil society by studying the evolution of social patterns based on human nature and what spontaneous order produces. If we follow this logic, we end up with a fundamental

political need to also protect people's self-esteem. In the Hayekian vision this was overshadowed by the emphasis placed on the side of competition over objects of self-love. It is not farfetched to think that this requirement for societal peace could be incorporated into the Hayekian vision as well. In his *Constitution of Liberty*, Hayek understands that the most "effective method of providing against certain risks common to all citizens of a state is to give every citizen protection against those risks." We may disagree about the particulars on how to guard people's self-esteem, but we should keep this fundamental political principle in mind when thinking about spontaneous order and the role of the public based on human nature.

#### Endnotes

- [1.] Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, vol. I, *Rules and Order*, 1973; vol. II, *The Mirage of Social Justice*, 1976; vol. III, *The Political Order of a Free People*, 1979.
- [2.] See especially, Hayek (1945). "Individualism: true and false" in *Individualism and Economic Order*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948.
- [3.] Hayek was deeply influenced throughout his career by Mandeville. This culminated in a streamlined lecture on Mandeville in 1966, but different aspects of Mandevillean influence are apparent already in the 1940s, especially in his "Individualism: true and false" and *Road to serfdom* (but also, for example, in "Facts of the social sciences" and "Use of Knowledge in Society"). In the 1950s, Hayek also supervised a doctoral dissertation on Mandeville (Nishiyama, Chiaki (1960). "The Theory of Self-Love. An Essay on the Methodology of the Social Sciences, and Especially of Economics, with Special Reference to Bernard Mandeville." University of Chicago Ph.D. Dissertation). This coincided with Hayek's first publication solely on Mandeville that was in German in 1959 ("Bernard Mandeville." *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften* 7 (Stuttgart-Tübingen-Göttingen)).
- [4.] In this essay, I take the liberty in my use of the concept "Mandevillean" to extend it beyond the eighteenth-century setting to follow what I take as the logic of the argument.
- [5.] Pongiglione, F., & Tolonen, M. (2016). "Mandeville on charity schools: happiness, social order and the psychology of poverty." *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics*, 9(1), 82-100. <https://doi.org/10.23941/ejpe.v9i1.215>
- [6.] Hayek (1944). *The Road to Serfdom*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- [7.] Mandeville as a forerunner of Hayek's idea of spontaneous order has been analysed on several occasions. For useful historical constructions, see Nolan, Mark (2013). "Hayek's 1945 Finlay Memorial Lecture: Tracing the origins and evolution of his 'true' individualism." *Rev Austrian Econ* 26, 53–71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11138-012-0200-x> and Nolan (2016). "Paul Sakmann's and Albert Schatz's Mandeville studies: their link to Hayek's 'spontaneous order' theory." *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 38(4), 485-506. doi:10.1017/S1053837216000729
- [8.] Tolonen (2013). *Mandeville and Hume: anatomists of civil society*. (SVEC; Vol. 2013, No. 7). Oxford: University of Oxford, Voltaire Foundation.
- [9.] See also Hayek (1968). "A Self-Generating Order for Society." In John Nef (ed.), *Towards World Community*. The Hague.
- [10.] Hayek is not interested in Mandeville's outdated economic ideas.
- [11.] Hayek (1944). *The Road to Serfdom*.
- [12.] Prendergast, Renee (2010). "Accumulation of knowledge and accumulation of capital in early 'theories' of growth and development." *Cambridge Journal of Economics*. 34: 420. 10.1093/cje/bep009. See also Prendergast (2014). "Knowledge, Innovation and Emulation in the Thought of Bernard Mandeville." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 38: 87–107.
- [13.] Cf. chapter 10 in Hayek (1960), *The Constitution of Liberty*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

[14.] David Hume, *Essays, moral, political, and literary*, LibertyClassics, p. 21.

[15.] Mandeville, *Fable of the bees*, I, p. 321.

[16.] Cf. Hayek, *Constitution of liberty*, Part III, Freedom in the Welfare State.

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## MANDEVILLE, GRAPES, WINE AND GOVERNMENT

by Jimena Hurtado

Bernard Mandeville, also known as "Man-devil" in his times, was infamous for allegedly promoting private vices, opposing the activities of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, and attacking any form of asceticism as mere hypocrisy. Even though his books were burnt and he was treated as a public enemy, he was influential in the *querelle du luxe*, and many thinkers referred to his work as a focal point. Mandeville did not engage in personal controversies but he did, by name, oppose Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury's view of society and his idea of an innate moral sense that explained human sociability. Mandeville denounced the moral sense as the building block of natural sociability as an elitist view of morality only fit for the likes of Lord Shaftesbury. He argued that it denied the possibility of virtuous behavior to all those who had the misfortune of being born in a lower rank of society. This type of denunciation can be seen as Mandeville's trademark. This one is especially meaningful because of Shaftesbury's influence on the Scottish Enlightenment, and thereby on our own understanding of the social order.

Most of Mandeville's work revolves around sociability, about the possibility of human beings living together in a well-ordered society that could be both peaceful and prosperous. *The Fable of the Bees*, which includes both the poem "The Grumbling Hive" as well as all of Mandeville's explanatory material, deals with the nature of society and how human beings come to be sociable or governable. The deeper question, as Mikko Tolonen's piece reminds us, is about societal peace and how human

passions, which Mandeville sees as the essence of human behavior, can be governed to achieve it. If, as I believe Mandeville would have it, human beings are not naturally sociable, then something has to be done to enable them to live together and respect individual rights (i.e. life, property, promise) without which social order would simply become unsustainable. Mandeville argues it is through utilizing their passions, and not by denying or repressing them, that human beings become governable. Knowing, understanding, and managing these passions is the key to a prosperous and peaceful society.

“BERNARD MANDEVILLE, ALSO KNOWN AS "MAN-DEVIL" IN HIS TIMES, WAS INFAMOUS FOR ALLEGEDLY PROMOTING PRIVATE VICES, OPPOSING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETIES FOR THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS, AND ATTACKING ANY FORM OF ASCETICISM AS MERE HYPOCRISY.”

In the 17th and 18th centuries, and maybe even today, questions about why human beings are able to live together and benefit from social arrangements is at the center of philosophical and public debate. In those days the question turned around natural or artificial sociability: are human beings naturally drawn to each other or do they need to learn how to become members of society? The question aims at understanding why and how society is a way of containing conflict and enjoying the benefits of coordination and cooperation.

Mandeville weighed in on this controversy and spent many years after the publication of his infamous poem trying to explain his observations. He wrote essays, included explanatory remarks, and used dialogues to make his paradox understood. The Dialogues between Horatio and Cleomenes were one of these explanatory devices. In the Fourth Dialogue<sup>[1]</sup> Cleomenes, Mandeville's spokesperson, states "That Nature had design'd Man for Society, as she has made Grapes for

Wine" (Fable ii: 185) arguing that even if human sociability is the work of nature "there is nothing that requires greater Skill" because "it is human Sagacity that finds out the Uses" of this innate virtue (Fable ii: 185) so society "cannot subsist without the Concurrence of human Wisdom" (Fable ii: 186). Human wisdom appears to be a key ingredient in making human beings sociable and governable, and therefore, capable of living together in a well-ordered society.



Human wisdom makes it possible to observe, study and understand human passions, the raw material of society, which, as Tolonen points out, needs general rules and a political structure to work. Mandeville (Fable i: 206) underscores fear as "[t]he only useful Passion [...] that Man is possessed of toward the Peace and Quiet of a Society". "Fear, and some degree of Understanding", according to Mandeville (Fable ii: 184) make human beings governable, which is not the same as being submissive. The negative character of general rules that Tolonen discusses does not imply that we follow such rules only to avoid greater evils. Rather, we follow them because we want to please, and we have a "Willingness to exert ourselves on behalf of the Person that governs" (Fable ii: 184). We accept, embrace, and become sociable because we perceive the advantages of social life. Our self-interest makes those advantages apparent. This is why fear has to be accompanied with understanding for

human beings to become governable. And this would make the basis for the politics of self-esteem or, as Tolonen states, this means that self-esteem becomes a political question.

Hayek (1966) reminds us that Mandeville, beyond his *succès de scandale*, is a forerunner of social scientists in raising the question of how the human mind works and how social order emerges. Hayek praises Mandeville for having, even if unwittingly, stated a most powerful general principle "that in the complex order of society the results of men's actions were very different from what they had intended, and that individuals, in pursuing their own ends, whether selfish or altruistic, produced useful results for others which they did not anticipate" (Hayek 1966: 129). This complex social order, with its rules, practices, and institutions, was itself the result of individual actions and not of human design. Hayek saw in Mandeville a clear predecessor to his own social theory of spontaneous order.

However, this spontaneous order requires human wisdom. "The undoubted Basis of all Societies is Government" (Fable ii: 184). Government here should be understood as the art of turning grapes into wine or making human beings governable through their passions, through their fear, but most importantly through their desire to please. That desire plays into their self-esteem, as it is through the eyes of others that human beings satisfy their pride and have a clear sense of their own value. Mandeville (Fable i: 51) clearly states that "the nearer we search into human Nature, the more we shall be convinced, that the Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride". Flattery is then a political art that requires patience, observation, and tact. It is this political art that, following Tolonen, would mark the radical difference between Mandeville and Hayek as there is no possibility for autonomy in Mandeville's thought. Moreover, I advance, this same politics of self-esteem opens the door to a more active part for human wisdom.

Indeed, this wisdom is a main feature of Mandeville's insight on social order. On the last page of his essay on the *Nature of Society*, Mandeville addresses the "intelligent

Reader" hoping that he has been able to provide such a reader with the amusement he has found himself in writing the text, and leaves him "with regret, and conclude with repeating the seeming Paradox, the Substance of which is advanced in the Title Page; that Private Vices by the dextrous Management of a skilful Politician may be turned into Publick Benefits" (Fable i: 369). Let us note that Mandeville now qualifies his paradox to explain exactly how passions, usually taken as a source of evil, can be transformed and managed to make human beings governable and society advantageous for all. The politics of self-esteem that Tolonen brings to light, by addressing pride, can make passions incentivize pro social behaviors and prevent them from leading to crime. In Mandeville's terms, this is how a body politic becomes a social order where each member "can find his own Ends in Labouring for others, and under one Head or other Form of Government each Member is rendered Subservient to the Whole, and all of them by cunning Management are made to Act as one" (Fable i: 347).

#### Endnotes

[1] Dialogues written to continue the Defense, Vindication and explanation of his *Fable* intended to "illustrate and explain several Things, that were obscure and only hinted at" in the prior writings (Fable II; 8). Mandeville explains he has taken the time to write these documents because he simply cannot understand how anyone could ever think, if nor from "wilful Mistake and premeditated Malice" (Fable II; 6) that his intention was to promote vices and that his poem was responsible for increasing crimes or ill behavior. Horatio represents what Mandeville calls the *Beau Monde* "but rather of the better sort of them as to Morality; [...] He is a Man of strict Honour, and of Justice as well as Humanity; rather profuse than covetous, and altogether disinterested in his Principles" (Fable ii: 16). "Cleomenes had been just such another, but was much reform'd" (Fable ii: 16) who, arguably, speaks for Mandeville.

#### References

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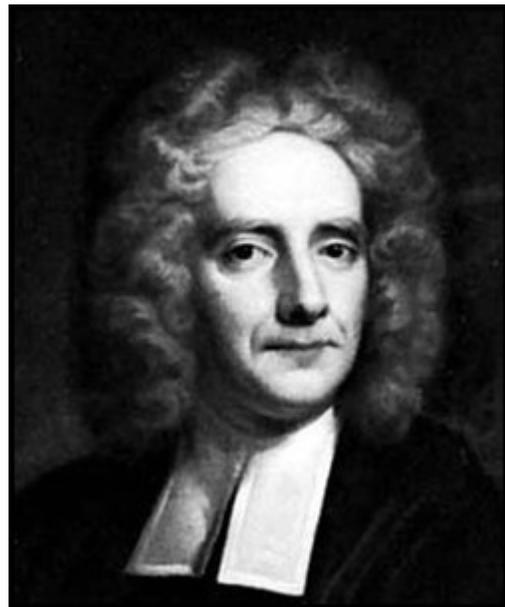
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## HONOUR AND THE ART OF POLITICS

by Andrea Branchi

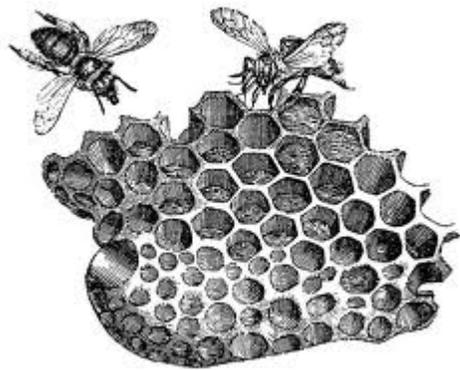
A review of Mandeville's *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour* published in Rome in 1743 remarks that the English had written the most dangerous works because in some matters they are the most learned and profound. Among them "The late dr. Mandeville goes further. In the Fable of the Bees and on the Enquiry on Honour he foolishly endeavours to prove that Vices are necessary and useful devices to govern and make states flourish – and that the point of honour is the most ingenious invention of Politics." [1]



***Bernard Mandeville***

Many commentators have stressed the importance of such notions as pride and fear of shame in Mandeville's

analysis of human nature, nevertheless they have by and large overlooked Mandeville's "perennial attraction to the subject of honour,"<sup>[2]</sup> his tenacious attentiveness to the origin, growth, and evolution of shared systems of sentiments of approval and disapproval based on the fear of shame. The issue of honour and its political uses is a key perspective in considering the question raised by Mikko Tolonen in his inspiring comparison between Mandeville's and Hayek's social theories, particularly in addressing the political question of self-esteem and its political dimension.



Already in his early writings Mandeville differentiates between two components of men's self-interested passions. Humans are "*Lovers of Self-Preservation*" and at the same time "*great Admirers of Praise*."<sup>[3]</sup> In the second part of the *Fable of the Bees* Mandeville distinguishes between *self-love*, the instinct of self-preservation, the love for one's physical being and *self-liking*, that sentiment of overvaluation of one's self which is constantly reliant on other people's approval in order to be confirmed.<sup>[4]</sup> For Mandeville human behaviour, in its apparent variety of motivations, can generally be traced back to the passion of self-liking, its effects and the efforts carried out to control, hide, and gratify it.<sup>[5]</sup> Pride and fear of shame play a central role in the 'origin of moral virtue' sketched by Mandeville in the 1714 edition of the *Fable*. Aware of the radically selfish nature of man, those 'Skilful Politicians' who took it upon themselves to civilize mankind, conceived a way to make people subdue their appetites and pursue public good rather than their own interest by manipulating man's natural instinct of pride. The imaginary reward that the lawmakers devised to

repay individuals for the trouble of self-denial was praise for those who subordinate their inclinations to public welfare and blame directed at those who indulge their appetites. Human beings accept an idealized conception of themselves and act in accordance with it. That is: men reckon themselves rational creatures, and they share a criterion of moral worth based on this belief. Yet, passions are the only motives for action that Mandeville acknowledges.<sup>[6]</sup> According to Mandeville morality derives from a process in which individuals share false beliefs about their own nature and their own motivations. They perform a behaviour worthy of approval and are dominated by pride to the point of not being able to recognize their own motivations. Social relations are based not only on hypocrisy, but also on a systematic self-deception in which the individual controls his own self-interest through an additional passion that is not recognized as such.<sup>[7]</sup> The basis of civilized society is grounded exclusively in the wish to live up to our inflated self-image and to be reputable and well thought of. Hence the centrality of honour in Mandeville's thought.

In various places in Mandeville's writings the 'Cunning Politicians' endowed with superhuman powers and tasks are unequivocally a shorthand referring to a gradual, evolutionary process.<sup>[8]</sup> Still, in various other passages 'real' politicians have a paramount function. Laws, like language, are collective works, a distillation of wisdom that has been accumulated generation after generation. Politics itself is an outcome of the evolutionary process: "it is the Work of Ages to find out the true Use of the Passions, and to raise a Politician, that can make every Frailty of the Members add Strength to the whole Body, and by dextrous Management turn private Vices into publick Benefits."<sup>[9]</sup> Mandeville develops a number of similarities between politics and other complex human constructions. As there is no need for skill or experience to knit a pair of socks or wind up a clock, so, to administer a city like London, where a prodigious number of ordinances and regulations have stratified and evolved over time, the magistrates just have "to follow their nose."<sup>[10]</sup> Real political agents are thus not standing outside the stream of the spontaneous order of which they are themselves part and expression, but as a matter

of fact, they do perform their managerial function and they deserve to be commended for that.<sup>[11]</sup> Where is the room for political action? And what sort of action? Does it concern a general framework of rules, or rather a kind of intervention incompatible with that *laissez faire* perspective that Hayek ascribed to Mandeville?<sup>[12]</sup> It is a crucial question in assessing convergences and differences between Mandeville's and Hayek's social theories.

The most articulated reflections on political management--both in terms of principles and practices--are to be found in Mandeville's *Enquiry on the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War*, in his discussion of the 'political use of passions' in promoting ideals of religion and honour in medieval and modern Europe. Christianity, like other religions, originates from the human passions, and like other structures of social interaction it has developed without any design, through the permanence of what, from time to time, seemed functional to the maintenance of social order. Certainly, it is not in the power of politicians to 'contradict the Passions'<sup>[13]</sup> but when rulers encourage that fear of an invisible cause that all men are endowed with, making that invisible power the object of public worship, they obtain a formidable tool of social control. Mandeville singles out two major steps in the dynamics of religion and honour in shaping idealized social models of promotion of the self. The first took place in the early centuries CE, when the Church of Rome blended sacred rites with the emblems of vainglory to codify rudiments of barbarian courage in the morality of honour. The second major step in Mandeville's 'history of pride' took place at the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the spreading of the new standard of modern honour and politeness and of the practice of the duel. Provocatively showing the incompatibility of honour with virtue and religion, Mandeville simultaneously enhances its function as a hierarchical principle and social tie. The code of modern honour, whose extreme expressions--duelling and infanticide--testify to the strength of the fear of shame even above the basic interest in self-preservation, appears far more efficacious than virtue or religion in impelling individual to respect the rules of social

intercourse.<sup>[14]</sup> Men are more influenced by shame, by the fear of being publicly blamed, than by the fear of legal punishments, of religious precepts, or by the thoughts of a future life. Modern honour is a form of a substitute religion, a cult of the self: "human wisdom is the child of time. It was not the Contrivance of one Man, nor could it have been the Business of a few Years, to establish a Notion, by which a rational Creature is kept in Awe for Fear of it Self, and an Idol is set up, that shall be its own Worshiper."<sup>[15]</sup>



*Friedrich von Hayek*

It is puzzling that Hayek, who quoted precisely this passage in his 1966 lecture on Mandeville as an evidence of the 'critical rationalism' with which Mandeville laid the foundations for Hume's work, downplayed the role of political action.<sup>[16]</sup> With his survey of the forms of honourable conduct characterizing the moral history of post-medieval Europe Mandeville exemplified how the harmony of interests is not independent from the actions of the legislators. The art of politics itself is the result of a gradual process. Rulers and administrators are and remain part of a network of relationships, a hierarchy of mutual servitudes, wheels of vast systems, machinery forged over time. Politicians cannot change human nature, but they must possess the ability to understand it in order to turn individual's self-interested attitudes into public benefits, exploiting precisely those idealized representations of human nature that most dominate at different times. The Christian saint, the citizen of the ancient republics, the learned courtier, and the noble

warrior are all anachronistic ideals in the competitive commercial society of the early eighteenth century, but the principles shared in the last centuries by the ruling elites are still paramount in their function of social bond.<sup>[17]</sup> For Mandeville the synchronic harmony of a multiplicity of individual interests is not natural and spontaneous but is instead the outcome of the intentional intervention of political authority, exercised by playing human passions against one another in the framework of those aggrandized images of the self. Political obligation for Mandeville is grounded on the love of the self and not on reason, and it can only develop within a system of values that cannot be reduced only to written laws, nor to the mere economic advantage.

#### Endnotes

- [1.] *Notizie letterarie ultramontane*, in «Giornale De' Letterati», Roma, novembre 1743, II, 2, pp. 321-322 a
- [2.] Irwin Primer, *Bernard Mandeville*, in *Dictionary of Literary Bibliography*, 101, (Detroit: 1991), p.226
- [3.] «*The Female Tatlers*» No. 80, January 9, 1710
- [4.] B. Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* ed. F. B. Kaye, in 2 vols. (Oxford: 1924). Reissued in facsimile edition (Indianapolis: 1988). (hereafter *Fable*) Vol. II, p.130.
- [5.] *Fable* II, 155.
- [6.] *Fable* I, p.51; "Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery Begot upon Pride."see also *Fable* II, p. 402.
- [7.] See Tito Magri, *Introduzione a B. Mandeville, La Favola delle Api*, (Roma-Bari: 1987), pp.xxvii-xxxi.
- [8.] M. M. Goldsmith *Private Vices, Public Benefits: Bernard Mandeville's Social and Political Thought*, Revised ed. (Christchurch, NZ: 2001), in part. Ch.3.
- [9.] *Fable* II, 319
- [10.] *Fable* II, 323
- [11.] *Fable* II, p.330 "To be a consummate Statesman is the highest qualification human Nature is capable of possessing."
- [12.] F. Von Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas*, London 1978, p.259; see also N. Rosenberg, "Mandeville and Laissez-Faire," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24, 1963, pp. 183-96.
- [13.] *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour, and the Usefulness of Christianity in War*, by "the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*" (London: J. Brotherton, 1732) (hereafter *Honour*), p.28. See. *Fable* II, pp. 206 and fwd.
- [14.] See: M. Peltonen, *Politeness, duelling and honour in Bernard Mandeville*, in *The Duel in Early Modern England. Civility, Politeness and Honour*, (Cambridge: 2003), pp.263-302 and P. Olsthoorn, "Bernard Mandeville on Honor, Hypocrisy, and War," in *The Heythrop Journal*, 60, (2), 2019, pp. 205-218.
- [15.] *Honour* p. 41.
- [16.] Hayek 1978, p.263.
- [17.] E.J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable. Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society*, (Cambridge: 1994).

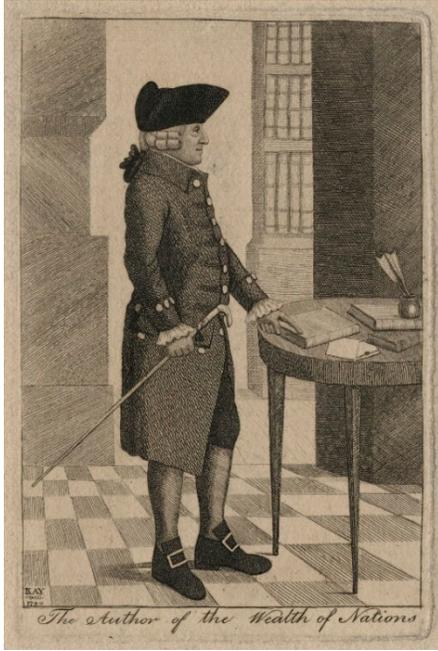
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## THE MANDEVILLEAN MOMENT RECONSIDERED

by Dario Catiglione

Words matter. They are the malleable tools of our social conversations. In my response to Mikko Tolonen's rich and stimulating essay I propose to concentrate on the vocabulary of self-love and self-esteem. No mere battle of words is here intended. By re-describing our social experience, theoretical idioms shape our understanding as much as they direct our politics. In his essay, Tolonen extends the Mandevillean line of argument beyond the eighteenth-century. This is nothing new, particularly in the history of economic thought where Mandeville's thought is often considered a direct predecessor of Adam Smith's invisible hand and of the basic architecture of his *Wealth of Nations*, which George Stigler once described as that "stupendous palace erected upon the granite of self-interest." <sup>[1]</sup> What is new is that Tolonen's interpretation of the Mandevillean moment is not

focussed on self-love and *laissez faire* politics, but on self-esteem and the principle of politeness.<sup>[2]</sup> Such an interpretation prompts his rethinking of the intellectual tradition from Mandeville to Hayek, and the suggestion that the latter may have missed something important of the Mandevillian moment.



**Adam Smith**

Tolonen accepts that there are strong affinities between Hayek and Mandeville in their anti-rationalist and individualist conceptions of a spontaneous social order. Although he suggests that they share a view of human nature, he admits that Mandeville's anthropological philosophy is decidedly more pessimistic, dealing with the murkier material of our passions, whereas Hayek seems to put great emphasis on a more optimistic view of individuals' "autonomy"<sup>[3]</sup> and striving capacity. Such a difference results in Hayek's privileging the protection of our freedom to pursue the objects of self-love rather than those of self-esteem, and in a greater emphasis on free socio-economic competition over political protection from risks. From the perspective of social peace, which is a necessary condition for the functioning of civil society, the difference between the Hayekian and Mandevillian views may not have mattered so much in Mandeville's own times and sometime afterwards. For, as Mandeville believed, and Tolonen says in his essay, the

protection of self-esteem was based "on the principle of politeness and clear class distinctions that also functioned as a psychological barrier." This is no longer the case in our contemporary societies, where distinctions of rank have given way to a more egalitarian ethos, and therefore, Tolonen concludes, we need a new politics "to guard people's self-esteem." Moreover, such a politics requires two further shifts in the Hayekian view of a free society, allowing for greater governmental intervention (something perhaps approaching the Mandevillian "skillful politician"),<sup>[4]</sup> and for the more complex regulation of the symbolic goods that arguably are the main objects of self-esteem in modern societies.

To put my cards on the table at the start, I agree with each of Tolonen's contentions. I think, however, that this is no simple extension of the particular liberal paradigm within which Tolonen sets his argument, but a more radical subversion of some of its tenets, which points to a social and theoretical conversation that has been going on for some considerable time, involving very different political projects and currents of thought. I cannot here engage with the argument in full. I therefore limit myself to a few points mainly concerning the languages of self-love and self-esteem. In brief compass: on the historical instability of the dichotomy and the complexity of such languages; on the "reflective" turn behind the early modern fascination with ideas of pride, esteem, and approbation; and on the consequences of such turn for our conceptions of society, morals, and politics.

Tolonen's distinction between self-love and self-esteem is derived from the one introduced by Mandeville in the second volume of the *Fable of the Bees*<sup>[5]</sup> and the *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*,<sup>[6]</sup> between "self-love" and "self-liking." It is possible that Mandeville intended such a distinction as a repartee to Bishop Butler's criticism in his *Fifteen Sermons*,<sup>[7]</sup> who had faulted the reductionism of selfish systems, such as Mandeville's, on the ground that they were incapable of distinguishing between gratifications from actions that bring either advantage or security to oneself, and gratifications from actions that have no such effects, or indeed involve considerable personal cost and duress. In response to such charges,

Mandeville distinguished between self-love, as the instinct that moves us to do something in our own interest and for our self-preservation; and self-liking, as the naturally ingrained preference we have for ourselves over others. In the *Enquiry*, he calls the latter, "that great value," "that high esteem" that people put on themselves.<sup>[8]</sup>

In the context of his essay, Tolonen seems to use the distinction in a more abstract way. Self-love approximates the idea of self-interest, as this has become established in modern economic thinking, where self-interest offers a minimal and rational anthropology on which to base and analyse economic action. Self-esteem, on its part, is meant as the sense or feeling of being worthy as a person in a society no longer characterized by ranks and hierarchical distinctions. This abstract dichotomy offers Tolonen a "framework," as he suggests elsewhere, "with the least number of principles necessary"<sup>[9]</sup> capable of explaining the working of modern large and anonymous societies. There is value in simplification, but one runs the risk of what Hume, also with reference to Mandeville, once called the "love of *simplicity*."<sup>[10]</sup> I think there is also value in complexity, which is very often reflected in our language. To quote Hume once again: "it is no wonder, that language should not be very precise in marking the boundaries between virtues and talents, and vices and defects."<sup>[11]</sup>

The ambiguities of common, and indeed philosophical languages (in the plural) are in evidence in the case of self-love (*amour de soi*; *amore di sé*; *Selbstliebe*), which I take, at least historically, to be the master concept for the idiom we are here concerned with. Usually this idea is defined within a series of dichotomous structures in which self-love is generically opposed to love for others. In morality, this dichotomous structure is linked to debates about selfishness and altruism, or about prudence and moral conduct. In Christian theology, self-love was defined in relation to love of neighbour, or love of God. In political and economic discourses it has contributed to the discussions on rationality and cooperation, private interest and public interest. In sociology and psychology it has become part of reflections on individualism and

community, the relationship between the self and the other.

"SELF-LOVE AS "VICE": VANITY,  
NARCISSISM, INORDINATE LOVE OF  
ONESELF OR OUR CONCEPTION OF  
THE EGO."

On closer inspection, however, the semantic field covered by the idea of self-love, in a broad sense, includes four different and often intertwined meanings. Self-love as "vice": vanity, narcissism, inordinate love of oneself or our conception of the ego. Self-love as "passion": that feeling that pushes us to prefer ourselves, or what belongs to us or is near us or dearer to us, in the face of people or things that do not directly concern us. Self-love as "instinct": that conatus or impulse that pushes us to defend and protect ourselves and our things. Finally, self-love as "virtue": the cultivation of the self and one's honour, the perfectionist and rational idea that our good coincides with virtuous conduct.

From the point of view of theoretical analysis, all four of these connotations are important, but from the point of view of the history of ideas, they have often been reduced to the distinction between passion (sometimes called, *amour-propre*) and instinct (*amour de soi*, in the strict sense). The opposition of passion and instinct, and their intertwining, have characterised the modern debate about self-love and its transformation into "private interest" in economic language. In fact, if we exclude the more narcissistic and egotistic elements of self-love understood as "vice," this can be reduced to a series of passions and feelings, such as pride, ambition, a certain vanity, self-esteem, and a desire for approval coming from either oneself or from others' opinion.

In the rupture – albeit partial and not always explicitly argued – of the dichotomous structure in which self-love is placed lies the key to the transformation of this idea into modern thought. Playing on both conceptual and ethical ambiguities, the moralistic literature of the seventeenth century disarticulated the idea of self-love

into a series of passions such as pride and honour, for example, in which self-esteem depends on the esteem that others have for us. This, on the one hand, undermines the introverted character of self-love by socializing the criteria of approval of the individual. On the other hand, it makes the investigation of the "real" motivations for human actions superfluous, since they depend on our desire to be honoured and approved by others but not on the hidden reasons behind such a desire. In this sense, what matters are the actions of individuals and not the character of the individuals themselves. I think the richness and complexity of this early modern debate is as important to our understanding of the policies and politics of social regulation in modern society as the powerful attraction that strong and simplifying principles have on our scientific imagination.



*David Hume*

But, there is an important aspect of the early modern debate that centers in particular around ideas of pride, honour, glory, vanity, *amour-propre*, and self-liking, all ideas that in some respect involve comparison with others, their emulation, and their very esteem and approbation of what we are and what we do. Once again, Hume offers a useful foothold into the problem. In *An Enquiry concerning Moral Principles*, he suggests that we have a "constant habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in *reflection*," in other words, "we find it necessary to prop our tottering judgement on the correspondent approbation of mankind."<sup>[12]</sup> This "reflective turn" is

perhaps best expressed in Adam Smith's moral theory, which is constantly preoccupied with the process of approbation, and the complex relationship between the agent, the spectator within, and the social production of the spectatorial perspective that makes us judge others and ourselves through others' point of view. Such a process is fraught with difficulties for the reason implicitly suggested by Hume, since what he called the imprecision of language is the obvious sign of practical difficulties in judging people and their intention through signs or even through their very behaviour. Mandeville himself accepts that there can be "excessive" forms of self-liking (in the search for approval), which are counted as a vice; and "just" forms, which are generally praised.

In his general overview of the century-long debates over those reflective passions that exercise a regulatory function on people behaviour, Arthur Lovejoy distinguishes three abstract forms: "approbateness," or the desire we have for others' approval and admiration; "self-esteem," or the desire for a "good opinion" that others or oneself can have of one's own action and qualities; and "emulation," or the constant way in which we compare ourselves to others, in order to either feel or show our superiority.<sup>[13]</sup>

Although the distinctions may be real and convincing, it is often difficult to see how they map onto the intellectual debate, and in different contexts. More to the point, distinctions between excessive or just forms of the expression of such passions remain difficult to establish, regulate, and justify. But, there are important consequences, I think, when one takes the "reflective turn" seriously. Some of those emerge at the end of Lovejoy's excursus on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debate, when he quotes Kant as a way of summarizing the significance of this age-old debate in philosophical anthropology:

A craving to inspire in others esteem (*Achtung*) for our selves, through good behavior (repression of that which could arouse in them a poor opinion [*Geringschätzung*] of us), is the real basis of all true sociality (*Geselligkeit*), and, moreover, it gave the first hint (*Wink*) of the

development of man as a moral creature—a small beginning, but an epoch-making one.<sup>[14]</sup>

Following from this passage, one could venture two final observations in my response to Tolonen's stimulating essay. The first is that the need for the social regulation of the "reflective passions" is both unavoidable and contextual. In modern societies, more than in the past, this can only be achieved through the complex equilibrium between independence of spirit, mutual recognition,<sup>[15]</sup> and social accommodation. For such a task to be achieved, I agree with Tolonen, politics and human-designed institutions must play a conspicuous part, even in the knowledge that the resulting social order will inevitably escape human forethought. The second is that the "reflective turn" shows that even when sociability, benevolence, or sympathy are excluded as the "natural" basis of society, you cannot take society out of individuals. This is also true for those authors often considered as the classical exponents of the selfish system, such as Hobbes and Mandeville, since the importance they give to glory and self-liking respectively implies an inescapable intersubjective dimension, which can only obtain within a social setting, where trust and cooperation become second nature. There are no individuals without society, but there is no society without individuals. It is by attending at this balance that we may find the right politics for both self-love and self-esteem.

#### Endnotes

[1.] George J. Stigler, "Smith's Travels on the Ship of State," *History of Political Economy* 3 (1971), p. 265.

[2.] This interpretation, which rests on a considerable body of recent academic literature, is well developed in his excellent academic study: Mikko Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume: anatomists of civil society*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013.

[3.] Rather surprisingly, Tolonen talks of "autonomy" and not of "freedom" or "liberty," which are the usual currency in Hayek's vocabulary; while in current philosophical discourse autonomy has usually a stronger positive connotation of authenticity, or "the capacity to be one's own person," see John Christman, "Autonomy

in Moral and Political Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/autonomy-moral/>. I take that Tolonen's choice of words is meant to emphasize Hayek's conviction, expressed in the passage from *The Road to Serfdom* (Sydney: Dymock's Book Arcade, 1944) cited in the essay, that liberty consists in the capacity to make choices over conditions that come under human control, and that human imposition on such a capacity is felt as an arbitrary intervention limiting the ability to influence one's own environment.

[4.] The fact that Mandeville remarks how the work of the "skilful politician" is the result of the accumulation of knowledge over a long stretch of time does not exclude, in his view, that actual skilful politicians can use such accumulated knowledge for the "dextrous management" of the passions to the benefit of the "publick," see, for instance, *Fable*, vol II, p. 319. For a distinction between the "invisible hand" as a micro-mechanism and the idea of a "spontaneous order" within the context of a theory of social explanation, see amongst others Eric Schliesser, *Adam Smith: Systematic Philosopher and Public Thinker*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

[5.] Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F.B. Kaye, [1714-1729], Indianapolis, Liberty Classics, 1988.

[6.] Bernard Mandeville, *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War*, London: J. Brotherton, 1732.

[7.] Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*, London: London: J. and J. Knapton, 1726; see also Kaye's annotation in *Fable*, vol. II, pp. 129-30, note 1.

[8.] Mandeville, *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*, p. 3.

[9.] Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume*, p. 243.

[10.] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 166.

[11.] Hume *Enquiry*, p. 177.

[12.] Hume, *Enquiry*, p. 150.

[13.] Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Reflections on Human Nature*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins Press, 1961, p. 129.

[14.] Immanuel Kant, *Conjectures concerning the Beginning of Human History* (1786), cited in Lovejoy, *Reflections*, p. 193.

[15.] It would be interesting to draw the connection between the ideas of self-esteem and self-worth, with other debates on ideas of self-respect, dignity, and recognition, but this would take us much beyond the scope of my response.

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## MODELLING THE FUTURE AND SEMANTICS OF SELF- LOVE

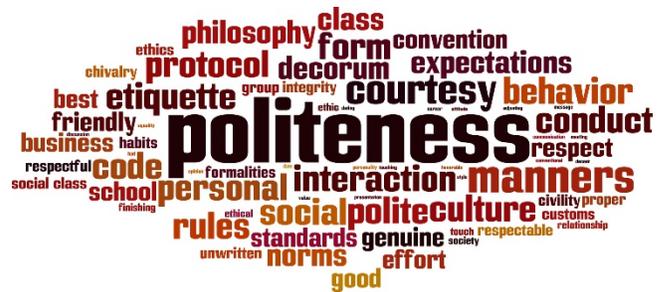
by Mikko Tolonen

It gives me great pleasure to engage in this discussion on Mandeville with three esteemed colleagues. In the opening essay, I wanted to bring Hayek forward with respect to Mandeville because the popular Enlightenment discourse today seems to be partly dominated by such rationalists as Richard Dawkins[1], Steven Pinker[2], and the like, a feature of contemporary intellectual climate that I am not very fond of. Regardless of different political outlooks, we should use our understanding of the key debates in eighteenth-century Britain to show that the glorification of reason was not part of the understanding of civil society during the Enlightenment. What can be called the "Scottish Enlightenment," for example, was built upon "Sceptical Sentimentalism." For me, rationalism, rational choice theory (also in relation to egoism and self-interest) and Benthamite utilitarianism are anti-"Scottish Enlightenment" perspectives. Judging by the three responses to my essay, we are all on the same page about the nature of Enlightenment thinking.

### Jimena Hurtado

My essay was partly written as an attempt to induce people to think about the politics of self-esteem and what

they might consist of when we unravel the logic of the "Mandevillian Moment" (as Dario Castiglione calls it). Therefore, in the essay, I did not dedicate much space to the necessary grounding of the argument in Mandeville's texts. I am thus grateful to Jimena Hurtado for the sensible discussion of wisdom and politics in Mandeville's works and to Andrea Branchi for his learned views on the relevance of honour, which both, in my opinion, nicely complement my essay. With respect to the question of natural and "not-so-natural" sociability, I find the category of "artificial" in contrast to "unnatural" interesting, and would be interested to hear Jimena further discuss her views on the relationship between these two categories.



For Mandeville, in my perspective, if there is a necessary bond between particular passions and the corresponding moral institutions, then the evolutionary process itself is natural, even when, for example, politeness as such is not. This then has unavoidable political consequences (or so I try to argue). The local variance in customs can be vast, but all large societies in one form or another have established a moral institution of politeness. The existence of politeness is thus inevitable for a flourishing large society. It is then the responsibility of political actors to guard the discovered foundational moral institutions during times of global turbulence. Wisdom is therefore also embedded in these customs.

Political actors need to have real power in order to be able to act, but also the wisdom to decide which levers to pull and for what reason. Like nature, customs need preservation, care, and sometimes innovation. If you unwittingly dismantle certain customs as a political actor (effectively we are all political actors these days) this might have undesired effects in the long term. My point about the relevance of the political underpinnings of

established customs is that they will be overrun if they are not cultivated, eventually taking down entire civil societies. Consequently, the reason *why* a custom is established based on human nature does not change, while in the course of history the customs themselves vary considerably. The wisdom of politeness is to secure people's feelings of their own worth regardless of the local variance of this moral institution. My further suggestion has been that we should be able to figure out more concretely what this means in our contemporary world.

### Andrea Branchi

I enjoyed Andrea putting the accent on the subject of honour for Mandeville (as I envisioned he might naturally do). Branchi is also correct to point us towards the relevant question of whether to read skilful politicians as a metaphor or not when thinking about Mandeville. As pointed out by Dario Castiglione, I took certain liberties in my essay to discuss matters at a higher level of abstraction. At the same time, the contemporary relevance of honour still puzzles me. What has become of horizontal honour with respect to transition to the modern world? What would Mandeville think about "our" politeness? Change in manners at a particular time could derail a nation or a civilization many years later. It is the government's responsibility to secure the customs. Or is it? I would like to hear more about what Andrea thinks about this.



Branchi asks: "Where is the room for political action? And what sort of action?" My answer here would be that if the interpretation of political wisdom, which Mandeville himself talks about, is correct--namely that we

need to secure self-love and self-liking--then we need to think about how we can ensure that the foundation of everyone's self-esteem is secured. This is a political question. Securing the moral institutions and making sure, for example, that crimes are punished in the designated space for concrete political action.

### Dario Castiglione

In his perceptive discussion of my essay as well as of my earlier work, Dario Castiglione puts his emphasis on the semantics of self-love. One of Dario's points is that I am oversimplifying things with my use of the distinction between self-love and self-liking -- Dario acknowledges that he is in basic agreement with me about the need for a politics of self-esteem and that it is important to figure out what this actually entails, but he does not see this as an extension of the liberal paradigm that I use as my context. To me, the position taken up by Dario resembles to some extent that of Christian Maurer's recent book, *Self-Love, Egoism and the Selfish Hypothesis*, which is a very careful study of the vocabularies of self-love.<sup>[3]</sup>

In my opinion, Maurer was not able to turn his meticulous analysis of eighteenth-century language of self-love into an engagement with contemporary issues relevant for current day civil society. The important lesson about self-esteem is lost in Maurer's book because of his focus on retaining all the complexity of particular historical discourses on self-interest and self-love. I would be very keen to see how Dario manages to put his ideas about the semantics of self-love into practice at the level of political theory. There are fruitful points in Dario's response where he mentions that more elaborated reflections could be carried out elsewhere. I sincerely hope that we witness this one day. I am very intrigued by Dario's take on Mandeville and politics of self-esteem precisely because of the potential contemporary relevance. As we see in Dario's reply, he is aware that what made the most famous twentieth-century analyses of eighteenth-century moral and political thought (Hirschman and Lovejoy) successful was their contemporary engagement.

I therefore find an attempt to discover the language of self-love admirable, but I am not sure if I see how adding

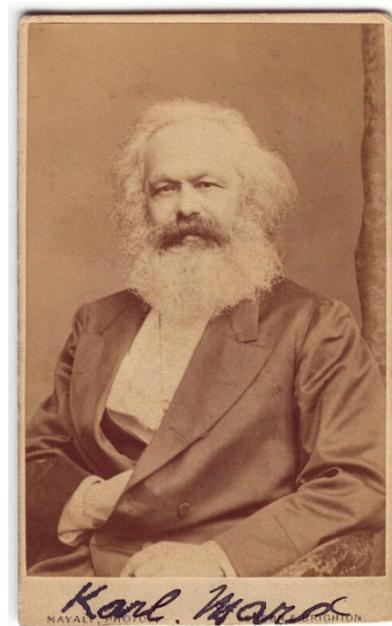
more complexity to the picture will help us advance in the political context. For example, in his book, Maurer found "5 concepts" of self-love and much complexity at the cost of turning the discussion into something that resembles antiquarianism. As Dario perceives it, I believe that only one conceptual distinction in this setting has relevant consequences. It is the distinction between self-love and pride (call it self-love, self-respect, amour-propre or whatever when pointing towards a passion in human nature that can be explained as due or undue pride -- but pride nevertheless). It is this distinction that gives us a fresh basis for understanding human nature and civil society from the modern perspective.

This matters as well when we practice intellectual history. Mandeville, Hume, and Adam Smith all belong to what I call the school of sceptical sentimentalism, and to make sense of their thinking we are best off talking about self-liking or pride without confusing this discussion with self-love. Thus, we are provided, in my opinion, with a solid foundation of making sense of the development of Enlightenment thinking. There is hence a good reason not to try to cover all of this under the umbrella of self-love (as Maurer attempted to do).

As human beings, we have different kinds of feelings and desires. As Butler pointed out (featured also in Dario's response), they cannot be explained away. Their relation to the self is complex, yet there does seem to be some kind of uniformity in human nature. But why is pride such a crucial category to analyse? I think the reason is that it takes us beyond the question of motives, and it liberates us from only thinking about moral motivation and self-interest. Instead of complexities of *real* moral motivation, what people are after these days are theories/models how to explain the world.

An economist's answer to what they are doing with a crude Hobbesian egoist interpretation is often simple: we are modelling human behaviour. They know the model does not explain everything (there could be for example genuine religious emotions that are purposely and simply ignored in the theoretical framework), but they don't care because on the large scale the model aggregates the world well enough and they are able to form predictions and

schemes. What is the intellectual historian's / history of philosophy person's answer to this? Or what is the use of reading eighteenth-century literature from this perspective? My claim is that we can and perhaps should try to formulate a better basis for models and offer them to others to use. It is not necessarily our business to become economists, really, although there is nothing wrong with this either. One way of doing this is by understanding the role of self-liking or pride as separate from self-love and self-interest and explaining why it matters. We are able to understand choices in a different way without slipping into rational (selfish hypothesis) and irrational (everything else) division, like people tend to do.



**Karl Marx**

From the modelling perspective, the idea of disinterested (or real moral) motivation is not so interesting. Or if it is, I would like to have Dario explain to me why this is so. I think we are better off focusing on the distinction between self-love and pride and offering this to other scholars from economics, sociology, philosophy, or whatever the disciplinary boundaries might be at a given time. This is because from the perspective of modelling, the distinction between self-love and pride takes us to a different track from Chicago school egoism and self-interest. This alternative, Mandevillean track served the purposes of Karl Marx and John Maynard Keynes as well

as Friedrich Hayek, who were versatile economists with different political outlooks but who were all avid readers of Mandeville. The interesting part here isn't that Mandeville's or Hume's thoughts are more complex than some oversimplifications suggest, but that we are perhaps able to build an interesting model to understand the world based on that complexity. We start approaching sociology instead of metaphysics and moral philosophy in the seventeenth-century sense, and we have at least a chance to look at civil societies differently.

I want to underline that we should make sure, as intellectual historians, that our interests are not *only* antiquarian. Perhaps we should worry more about this than we worry about oversimplification. In a review of my book on Mandeville and Hume, Pekka Sulkunen wrote: "Mandeville and Hume built their theory of social order much more on effects of action than on its causes or motives. This is prominently the case concerning their evolutionary perspective on the institutions of justice and politeness. Although the institutions of social order are, in the last instance, based on universal human nature, they can be variable according to context, or 'culture' in the narrower and historical sense of the term. These two aspects are crucial for any sociological reflexion on the possibilities of social order in the present world situation."<sup>[4]</sup> The reason I am very fond of this is because Sulkunen understood the idea about self-love and self-liking as a model for the theoretical origin of modern society.

This is one way in which the distinction between self-love and pride has value for modelling the contemporary world. The point is that such a model serves the interests of sociology in a way that was not anticipated before. But what about the economists? How could we encourage them to advance their thinking away from rational choice theories back to the realm where Marx, Keynes, and Hayek built their understanding of civil society? My short answer is by offering a more sensible theoretical setting about human nature. I don't claim that the "Mandevillean Moment" has already been exhausted. I encourage my three interlocutors to think further about the possibilities of analysing the early modern language of self-love and

self-esteem from the perspective of modelling the possible future. I think they have plenty to offer in this respect, as will many other intellectual historians when we find the courage to engage with contemporary issues.

#### Endnotes

<sup>[1]</sup> cf. Richard Dawkins, *God delusion*, Bantam Books, 2006.

<sup>[2]</sup> See especially, Stephen Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, Penguin Books, 2018.

<sup>[3]</sup> Christian Maurer, *Self-Love, Egoism and the Selfish Hypothesis*, Edinburgh University Press, 2019.

<sup>[4]</sup> Pekka Sulkunen, "The proto-sociology of Mandeville and Hume," *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* 15, 2014, pp. 361-365.

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## FROM COURTESY TO THE GLOBAL TOWN SQUARE?

by Andrea Branchi

*The strict Observance of the point of Honour, is a necessary Evil, and a large Nation can no more be call'd Polite without it, than it can be Rich and Flourishing without Pride or Luxury.*

B. Mandeville (The Female Tatler 52, November 4, 1709)

In the twentieth century honour has been generally reckoned as an obsolete system of values, characteristic of pre-modern, highly hierarchical, patriarchal, and violent societies, whose decline saw the rise of an historically unprecedented concern for the dignity and rights of the individual divested of all socially imposed roles or norms. Recent decades have witnessed a renewed scholarly interest in the concept of honour in moral philosophy, sociology, evolutionary psychology, and political theory. Scholars are now reassessing the potential functions of honour.<sup>[1]</sup> I agree with Mikko Tolonen that intellectual historians must avoid antiquarianism and, concerning Mandeville (and the

Scots) offer to the economists 'a more sensible theoretical setting about human nature'. One way to do this might possibly involve looking at what Mikko refers to in his second essay as the 'moral institution of politeness, established in one form or another by all large societies'. Many captivating questions were raised in this engaging discussion, and within this brief reply I limit myself to sketching a few tiles of a much broader mosaic.



In the 'public goods game' subjects receive start-up capital and can anonymously choose to donate some or none of it to a 'public goods' project. Donations are increased by a given factor and redistributed evenly among all players, regardless of whether they contributed or not. The greatest benefit is achieved if all donate, but individual players earn most if they keep their capital and profit from the generosity of the others. Typically, players exercise this 'rational' self-interest, and cooperation rapidly declines. In a particular performance of the test two further experimental conditions were added: the players were instructed that the two least generous individuals after a series of rounds would be exposed to the group, as well as the two players who were the most generous. [2] As a result, the reputational effects stimulated by shame and honour led to approximately 50 per cent higher donations to the public good compared with a control group. In what forms could honour be a resource to motivate cooperation and encourage groups to maintain shared resources? Relying on Dario Castiglione's valuable suggestion about the significance of the vocabularies we are dealing with, in order to build an answer to Mikko's question, 'what became of Mandeville's honour and politeness in the contemporary world?' we may look back to the tradition of courtesy and

civility from the Renaissance Italian treatises to Enlightenment's politeness. This form of honour and politeness was characterized by a compulsive focus on pride and vanity, and continually marked by an internal tension between being and appearing, complaisance and sincerity, internal and external honour, at the roots of the 'reflective turn' exposed by Dario. By arguing that contemporary moral discourse promoted self-deception and by stressing the hypocritical nature of all social intercourse Mandeville was indeed applying a central feature of the entire tradition of courtesy and civility to the new-born commercial society. And of course we can look forward to the vocabulary of respect, loyalty, integrity, dignity, and humiliation, and to the contemporary world of frequent, fast, and inclusive communication; of gossip & reputation, online shaming, calls-out, and cancellations.[3]

All this, without ever forgetting Hobbes' fifth law of nature: complaisance, "that every man strive to account himself with the rest" and Locke's remark that politeness lies in two things: "first, a disposition of the mind not to offend others; and, secondly, the most acceptable and agreeable way of expressing that disposition." [4]

#### Endnotes

[1] K.Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, New York, 2010; S. Krause, *Liberalism With Honor* Cambridge, Mass, 2002); M.Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, New York, 1997; P. Olsthoorn, *Honor in Political and Moral Philosophy*, New York, 2015; W. Kaufman, *Understanding Honor: Beyond the Shame/Guilt Dichotomy, Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 37, No. 4, October 2011.

[2] J. Jacquet et al., Shame, honour and cooperation, *Biology Letters* (2011) 7, 899–901. See also D. Sznycer, et al (2017). Cross-cultural regularities in the cognitive architecture of pride, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 114(8), 1874–1879.

[3] F.Giardini and R.Witteck, Gossip, Reputation, and Sustainable Cooperation: Sociological Foundations,

in *The Oxford Handbook of Gossip and Reputation*, F. Giardini and R. Wittek eds. (2019), pp.24-47

[4.] T. Hobbes *Leviathan* Ch. XXI, J. Locke. *Some thoughts concerning education* § 143.

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## MANDEVILLE, HONOR, PRIDE, SELF-LOVE, AND SELF-LIKING TODAY

by Jimena Hurtado

Mikko Tolonen's lead essay, as well as the responses and critiques by Andrea Branchi, Dario Castiglione, and Tolonen again, have been a wonderful opportunity to think, review, and ponder the ways authors like Mandeville and Hayek can enlighten and promote conversations on current topics. Tolonen raises the question when addressing Castiglione's essay, but it actually underpins all his interventions, and it is a question I believe we should all tackle. The question about the connection between ideas and practice, the "engagement with contemporary issues relevant for current day civil society," or of "potential contemporary relevance," or "what this means in our contemporary world" are questions historians of ideas should always keep in mind and address.

I agree with Tolonen that our common starting point is the view of the Scottish Enlightenment as skeptical sentimentalism where reason alone is not the fundamental building block for understanding the evolutionary process that leads to a sustainable (i.e. peaceful and prosperous) social order. And, I would add, this starting point is one of the features that brings the conversation into the present and makes it relevant to contemporary issues. Specifically, the issue that takes us from Mandeville's times, passing through Hayek's, and up to our own, is precisely that of what makes individuals governable, that is, capable of participating in and maintaining a peaceful and prosperous social order. The way this question was dealt with back then linked it directly with moral motivation and so called human

nature. Here is where what might appear a semantic discussion becomes relevant, and conversations become somewhat timeless because the discussion helps us explore, for example, why and how people make choices, what inputs they use, and how they process them. I agree with Tolonen that the relevant question today may not be what makes us good or bad but what makes us sociable, political, governable. Or, following Adam Smith's system of sympathy, we could ask what makes us moral beings, or using apparently old terminology, how is the harmony of interests possible, or in modern parlance, what allows coordination and cooperation in ever growing societies with increasing physical and psychological distance between diverse and heterogeneous human beings. All this has to do with the production and processing of information but also with persuasion and manipulation, or, again in modern parlance, with incentives design. It begins with exploring how we come to believe what we believe about ourselves and others, as individuals and citizens, and about our relationships and interactions with those multiple and diverse others.

This is what leads to the contemporary interest in Tolonen's proposal about the politics of self-esteem with honor and pride, but also praise, shame, self-love (*amour de soi*), and self-liking (*amour propre*) coming into play. These terms lay the ground for political action and also for the divide between autonomy and independence, and for the artificial as the extension of the evolutionary process that makes grapes into wine. The complexity, nuances, and possibilities these terms bring to the conversation are hardly translatable into models but then again models are, following Mary Morgan's research, idealizations, constructions, or thinking devices. They are not descriptions. Nevertheless, they can be a guide to assessing the scope and limits of models and what we can and cannot understand by using them. Identity, morality, and beliefs have been explored and make part of recent economic models,<sup>[1]</sup> but in a Utilitarian vein that misses precisely the core of how passions can be played, and how they model identities and communities. Therefore such models miss what or who is the reference of our social conduct, the criteria by which we judge it, and the

thing that leads us to expect certain behaviors from others.

“THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LOVE OF ONESELF AND SELF-LIKING POINTS AT WHAT PSYCHOLOGISTS AND BEHAVIORALISTS HAVE IDENTIFIED AS THE “LOCUS OF CONTROL” OR HOW WE PERCEIVE OUR CAPACITY TO CONTROL, TRANSFORM, AND DIRECT OUR OWN LIVES.”

The difference between the love of oneself and self-liking points at what psychologists and behavioralists have identified as the “locus of control” or how we perceive our capacity to control, transform, and direct our own lives. This difference, associated with the divide between being and appearing to be, marks what the source or the motivation of human action might be, whether it is internal (self-love and being) or external (self-liking and appearing to be). This distinction is a major concern for political action and for any system of incentives hoping to evaluate whether praise or praiseworthiness; pride, honor or vanity; the external bystander (i.e. public opinion); or the internal spectator (i.e. conscience), guide the actions of the members of the social order.

This connects directly to the question of what makes human beings governable, in the sense of how and to what extent human behavior can be predicted, and thus what is to be expected from each other, and what can be done to guarantee peace and prosperity. The alchemy performed by Rousseau, as Smith described it, on Mandeville’s “licentious system” shows clearly the implications. The distinction between natural and unnatural dependence or between autonomy and independence is derived precisely from taking seriously the effects of self-love and self-liking. The first leads to autonomous individuals who are capable of self-regulation and moved by praiseworthiness. The latter leads to heteronomous individuals, guided by public

opinion and moved by praise. Each member of society lies between these extremes, and the extremes could, eventually, be modeled. But all the shades between black and white could be ignored, the evolutionary process could be hindered, and the artificial would become unnatural.

References:

Morgan, M.S., (2012). *The World in the Model: How Economists Work and Think*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, A., (1982). “A Letter to the Authors of the *Edinburgh Review*”, in W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce (eds.), *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, pp.242-254.

Endnotes

[1] See, for example, the multiple articles by Bénabou, Falk and Tirole published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, the *American Economic Review* and the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. However, these economists, as most economic modeling associated with Rational Choice Theory, uses Classical Utilitarianism as its inspiration and starting point.

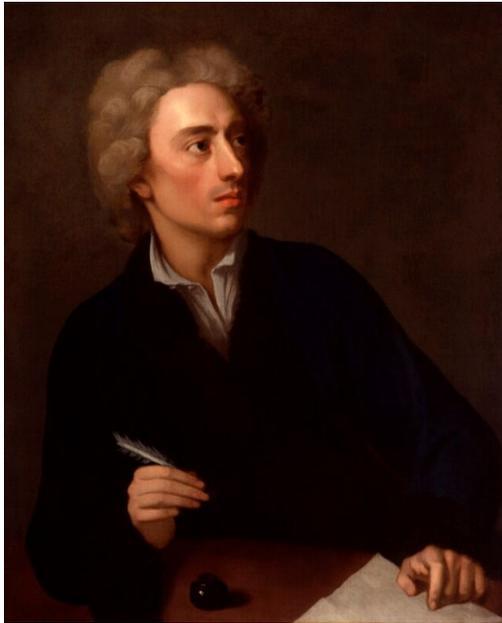
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## RUSHING IN WHERE ECONOMISTS FEAR TO TREAD: CONTINUING OUR CONVERSATION ON MODELS AND COMPLEXITIES

by Dario Castiglione

At the beginning of our enjoyable and instructive conversation, Mikko Tolonen enticed us to follow a revisionist path. Besides the self-interest motive, Mandeville’s analysis – Tolonen suggested – had “a further dimension,” which rested on the passion of pride: “people need to survive, but more important is their social existence based on self-esteem.” With different

qualifications, Jimena, Andrea and I were glad to follow Tolonen on the same path. Now, he has upped the stakes. He wants us to “encourage [economists] to advance their thinking” by moving away from their conception of rational self-interested agents to “a more sensible theoretical setting about human nature.” I am reminded of a line in Alexander Pope: “fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” With the economists playing the cautious “angels,” we risk making fools of ourselves. So be it, I’ll take the risk.



*Alexander Pope*

Here are my three easy lessons for “economists,” partly building on things already said in the course of this conversation. In such a foolish enterprise, you will allow me, I hope, to enlist several economists on my side, who, like Hayek, tend to trespass into other disciplines. After all, the true topic of our conversation is social order and human action.

The first lesson is, once again, about complexity. Tolonen is right: the intricate complexity of the intellectual historian sounds faintly antiquarian, when sketching general models for understanding human action. My brief excursus on the languages of self-love and self-approbation was not intended to offer the fine-grained complexity of historical context and reconstruction as a model. It was meant to suggest that even abstract models

of human passions have their complexity because of the way we interpret and reinterpret them. Such complexity needs to be internalized in our social and theoretical research. Economists are not strangers to such considerations. In his acute essay “Against parsimony,”<sup>[1]</sup> Albert Hirschman suggests that the “parsimonious postulate” of the self-interested, rational, and isolated individual of much economic thinking may be too clever by half. He illustrates this by showing how three important categories of economic thinking, such as preferences, work output, and scarcity of resources are not as straightforward as it seems. He analyses the implications of distinguishing between first- and second-order preferences, and how such a distinction illuminates the common phenomenon of preference change, which is otherwise unexplained by treating preferences as those merely revealed by agents’ choices. He also refers to Amartya Sen’s introduction of the idea of “commitment” in the analysis of self-interested behaviour, and to his suggestion that there are three different ways of conceiving one’s “self” in the calculations of what is in one’s “interest.”<sup>[2]</sup> Both complications rest on the fact that human beings have a self-evaluating capacity, which, I would argue, is intrinsic to the idea of “self-esteem.” In short, arguing for greater complexity in some economic categories, such as preferences and self-interest, is my first easy lesson.

The second lesson is equally related to the self-evaluating capacity of human beings, something that Mandeville, in his professional capacity as a physician working on the distempers of the mind was well aware of. Mandeville’s preferred therapy for diseases such as melancholy was not pharmacological, but based on language, through a dialogue between the physician and the patient aimed at the latter’s self-understanding and the repairing of his or her self-esteem.<sup>[3]</sup> This is a method that can be related to what Jimena Hurtado says in her first intervention in this conversation, when she insists that the “politics of self-esteem opens the door to a more active part for human wisdom.” Arguably, the learning and creative capacities of human beings, and the socially accumulated wisdom over time, are essential to solving the social trap dilemmas into which self-interested rational choosers tend

inevitably to fall. Such a capacity for mutually interested cooperation is well illustrated by the work that won Elinor Ostrom the Nobel Prize in Economics. Her research turns the social dilemma of the ‘tragedy of the commons’ into an illuminating analysis of how people “change the constraining rules of the game to lead to outcomes other than remorseless tragedies.”<sup>[4]</sup> One important element in this transformation lies in taking a less calculative and more deliberative (i.e. open to verification, communication, and reflection) view of how human beings reason in social contexts. Such a more deliberative understanding of rationality is my second easy lesson.<sup>[5]</sup>

“MOST MODERN INSTITUTIONS ARE  
THE STAGE (OR THE MASKS)  
THROUGH WHICH WE HIDE AS WELL  
AS REVEAL OUR “AUTHENTIC”  
SELVES.”

The third lesson follows from what Elinor Ostrom calls the “lattice of interdependence” in which collective action takes place. Interdependence is intrinsic to a conception of human nature that gives relevance to the passion of pride alongside that of self-interest and self-preservation: the two-model approach Tolonen proposes. In my first reply, I argued that the inter-subjectivity of the language of pride, approbation and self-esteem (Mandeville’s self-liking) implies a reflective conception of the self as the product of social mirroring and recognition, since the individual cannot be understood outside the “lattice of interdependence.” But there is another aspect to this reflective language, which is central to the institution of politeness, and to a modernized conception of honour. As much as revealing our “disposition not to offend” others (as Locke puts it),<sup>[6]</sup> it masks our most inner selves by providing “acceptable and agreeable” but institutionalized forms in which to express that disposition. Most modern institutions are the stage (or the masks) through which we hide as well as reveal our “authentic” selves.<sup>[7]</sup> In modern societies, the construction of our identity is a game of mirrors, but real

nonetheless. These mirrors provide social agents with rules, roles, and possibilities for collective identification and recognition, all of which contribute to the agents’ self-esteem. My third easy lesson is that economists may do well to pay attention to the institutional embeddedness of economic transactions, and to how the quest for recognition and self-esteem equally determines human choice.<sup>[8]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, “Against parsimony: Three easy ways of complicating some categories of economic discourse,” *Economics and Philosophy*, 1, 1985, pp. 7-21.

<sup>[2]</sup> Amartya Sen, “Why exactly is commitment important for rationality?” in F. Peter and H. B. Schmid (eds.), *Rationality and Commitment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 17-27. Sen distinguishes three ways in which “self-interested” behaviour can be understood: self-centered welfare; self-welfare goal; self-goal choice (p. 18). Sen’s argument is an extension of Bishop Butler’s type of criticisms of the selfish systems, which, directly or indirectly, prompted Mandeville to elaborate his own distinction between self-love and self-liking.

<sup>[3]</sup> Bernard Mandeville, *A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Diseases*, London, J. Tonson in the Strand, 1730. See also Mauro Simonazzi, *Le Favole della Filosofia. Saggio su Bernard Mandeville*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2008, pp. 134-51.

<sup>[4]</sup> Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 6-7. The kind of changes in the rules of the game analysed by Ostrom are very similar to those mentioned by Andrea Branchi in his second intervention, when he refers to the “public goods game,” where changes in the rules activates reputational and monitoring mechanisms, changing the game’s dynamics, thus producing more socially efficient outcomes.

<sup>[5]</sup> Given the limits of space, I take the liberty of a self-citation. For a fuller discussion of how the work of Elinor and Vincent Ostrom go beyond the economic paradigm, see Dario Castiglione, “Social learning and the bonds of self-governing communities,” in F. Sabetti and

D. Castiglione (eds.) *Institutional Diversity in Self-Governing Societies. The Bloomington School and Beyond*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2017, pp. 129-55. Another example of a more deliberative and reflexive conception of rationality can be found in Albert Hirschman's distinction between *exit, voice and loyalty* as strategies that individuals can adopt vis-à-vis a group or an organization.

[6] See the citation provided by Andrea Branchi's in his second reply.

[7] For a discussion of the social role of the "mask" (meant in a more anthropological sense), in connection with processes of identity and recognition, see Alessandro Pizzorno, "The mask: An essay," *International Political Anthropology*, 3, 1, 2010, pp. 5-27.

[8] It is not without significance, perhaps, that an economist like Thorstein Veblen was both attentive to the importance of institutions in economic life and of approbative sentiments. As for the importance of identity, recognition and self-esteem in economic activities, see Hirschman's distinction between instrumental and noninstrumental forms of activities in "Against Parsimony", pp. 11-15.

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