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## A Transatlantic Interpretation of Bernard Mandeville

### I. Introduction

During the eighteenth-century, the previously germinated seed of transatlantic communication and commerce was cultivated, matured and flourished. European powers and interests braved the vastness of ocean and committed great resources to exploring (and exploiting) the new continent, its residents, and its raw materials. An offshoot of European society soon grafted into the stock of the New World. This transplanted community incorporated to and adapted to the unfamiliar lands, and developed alternate identities. This budding culture juxtaposed itself to the venerable civilization of Europe, and the two formed a paternal relationship. While supplies and ideas crossed the waters in both directions, for much of the eighteenth-century, America received the disproportionately greater share. While not the definitive, indicative exemplar, the interesting case of Bernard Mandeville does highlight the transmission of European intellectual thought to America.

Bernard Mandeville was a philosopher and political economist in the fading years of the seventeenth century whose theories came to fruition and maturity in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. His most famous and influential work, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, was published in various forms, starting in 1705. In the forthcoming decades, this work was revised and updated, resulting in more than a half dozen editions

published. This treatise addresses a myriad of consequential issues, including the natural disposition and constitution of mankind and the source and system of morality, which contained implications regarding economy, government, and religion. Due to the unconventional interpretation of contentious topics, much controversy arose in response. Despite innumerable critics, Mandeville and his philosophy found many advocates willing to tendentiously champion his oeuvre.

Mandeville and his writings indubitably left a profound legacy and impact upon multiple fields. My research question addresses the scope and magnitude of the legacy and impact of the works of Mandeville upon the colonial intelligentsia. I will be discussing the reception and the implementation of Mandeville's ideas in nascent America. I endeavor to discover and relate the general colonial awareness and understanding of Mandeville. Analysis of the American reputation and the influence of Mandeville reveals the status and the discussion of Mandeville in the upper echelon of the traditional intellectual progenitors of American character.

The traditional intellectual history of the American Revolution traces the roles and thought of Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Jefferson, and others similar individuals. While these individuals and their associated philosophies greatly affected the late eighteenth-century jactation known as the American Revolution, other important individuals and philosophies existed which undoubtedly shaped the conception, birth, and maturation of the United States of America. The evolution of the conception of luxury, the mechanism of enlightened-self-interest, the economic and political system of capitalism, and the modern fiscal state stem from this aligned chronicle of intellectual history. The inspiration of Bernard Mandeville, David Hume, Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton, and others span the ages and the lands to reject mercantilism and establish an economic free market.

In my thesis, I endeavor to analyze the role and the importance of Mandeville. I will primarily concern myself with the repercussions and intellectual transformations stemming from the works of Mandeville. Specifically, my paper addresses the reception and the use of the works of Bernard Mandeville upon colonial intellectual elite, and how the intellectual understanding and rationalization of vice and luxury shaped nascent American policy and position.

Mandeville's moral theory and understanding rejects the optimistic notions of a naturally benevolent man engrained with virtue from the moment of birth by a divine Providence, and instead replaces this innocent assumption with a sophisticated cynicism reflecting the inherent egoism and greed of man. The explanation of public benefit arising from the squalor and chaos of private vice provides the foundation for a potentially morally good, yet secular, state. This philosophic shift from the sacred to the profane enabled subsequent thinkers and societies to focus upon the nature and interaction of man. By replacing the supernatural with the natural, secular economies and polities could claim legitimacy.

The works of Mandeville permeated the intellectual environment of colonies and early-America. The Founding Fathers were aware of Mandeville's intellectual legacy, and affected by his profound conclusions. Nonetheless, the shape and scope of this influence is debatable.

The primary works of Mandeville will provide the backbone of the intellectual history. The philosophic, social, political, economic, and religious ramifications will be supported by secondary literature. Additionally, review of early American newspapers, pamphlets, bookstores, et cetera will be considered in understanding the reach of Mandeville's prestige. Furthermore, the important early documents and early leader of the United States will be examined in pursuit of finding Mandevillian influence.

A focus and research into the oft-ignored Bernard Mandeville and his intellectual offerings will provide a new angle and understanding into the origins and importance of the American Revolution. The giants of Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Jefferson overshadow the role of Mandeville and others in forming American philosophy and political thought. Additionally, the bulk of scholarly literature relating to Mandeville concerns itself with the European impact. Scarce scholarship exists pertaining to the transatlantic effects of Mandeville. My thesis will supplement and augment the current literature.

The first task of my primary source analysis will be to provide analysis and offer explanation of the main texts of Mandeville. Specifically, I will follow focus on *The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves turn'd Honest* and *The Fable of the Bees: or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. These canonical texts provide the majority of Mandeville's views. *The Grumbling Hive* is the text of Mandeville's 1705 philosophic and satiric poem. This infamous piece of poetry presents Mandeville's early understanding of the nature of man and economics. Commingling morality and economics, *The Grumbling Hive* offers a worldview in which man is innately selfish and motivated by vice, and argues that society and public benefit is built upon individual, virtueless, and sinful actions.<sup>1</sup> Mandeville's 1714 moral and economic treatise, *The Fable of the Bees*, is composed of an updated poem, based on *The Grumbling Hive*, as well as analytic and explanatory prose. This work is the central, most germane piece of Mandeville's in terms of intellectual history. This work espouses the philosophy that public benefit develops from private vice. While not normative in nature (despite being descriptive, as opposed to prescriptive, Mandeville is often read as proposing or establishing a standard or norm of behavior), this text

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Mandeville. 1988. *The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves turn'd Honest*. The Online Library of Liberty, A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846/66863> (accessed October 7, 2008)

does possess implications impacting a myriad of elements of society- morality, religion, economics, human nature, et cetera.<sup>2</sup> Following exegesis and elucidation of Mandeville's key texts, I will review important colonial and Revolutionary texts seeking signs of influence. Mandeville's impact was present in critical American documents.

Additionally, I will examine the awareness and the reception of Mandeville in eighteenth-century American. By examining the holdings of bookstores and the private collections of organizations, an implicit knowledge of Mandeville's popularity emerges. The consciousness of colonial and Revolutionary America with respect to Mandeville is evident by means of the recorded stock of the booksellers and the organizations. A chronology of recognition or familiarity of Mandeville materializes from these independent accounts. Numerous cities housed multiple venders and private holders of Mandeville's writings.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Mandeville. 1988. *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. The Online Library of Liberty, A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Bell. "Just Published and Now Selling..." 1783, Series 1, no. 17830 (filmed), Early American Imprints, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Philadelphia, in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, (accessed October 7, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> "A Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Union-Library-Company of Philadelphia..." 1754. Series 1, no. 7295 (filmed), Early American Imprints, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Philadelphia, in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, (accessed October 7, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Cox & Berry, "A Catalogue of a Very Large Assortment of the Most Esteemed Books in Every Branch of Polite Literature, Arts and Sciences..." 1772. Series 1, no. 42336 (filmed), Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Boston, in Early American Imprints, (accessed October 7, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Rivington and Brown, "A Catalogue of Books, Sold by Rivington and Brown..." 1762, Series 1, no. 9259 (filmed), Early American Imprints, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Philadelphia, in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, (accessed October 7, 2008).

## II. Historiographical Discussion

The secondary scholarship adopts multiple approaches to framing and construing the role of Mandeville. The germane literature pertaining to the intellectual history of Colonial and Revolutionary America covers the spectrum in addressing the importance of Mandeville and his philosophies. Academics range from espousing the genius of Mandeville to deflating a hagiographic ideal image. Historian F. B. Kaye provides the preeminent presentation of Mandeville. Kaye's introduction and framing of Mandeville establish a discussion of Mandeville as a predecessor of and perhaps the impetus for Adam Smith, laissez-faire, and the capitalist tradition.<sup>7</sup> Historians, whether or not in agreement with Kaye, utilize this description as the standard upon which to compare, deviate, or bolster.

Devoting many years to the study of Mandeville, F. B. Kaye gained an intimate mastery of the contextual and character-based components that combined to form the background and reference for understanding the man, his works, and their impacts. Kaye developed great esteem and admiration for the philosopher. However, Kaye actively attempted to keep this sizable respect from permeating and perverting his presentation of Mandeville's works and ideas, claiming that "republication and time will of themselves, I believe, so establish him as to make editorial defence an anachronism."<sup>8</sup> While some reject the framing and implications Kaye proffered, few if any question Kaye's scholarly integrity. Even today's historians who seek to reinterpret the role of Mandeville and provide alternative intellectual histories utilize Kaye's

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<sup>7</sup> Rosenberg, Nathan. 1963. "Mandeville and Laissez-Faire." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 24, no. 2. University of Pennsylvania Press, JSTOR (accessed October 6, 2008), 183.

<sup>8</sup> Kaye quoted in: Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. The Online Library of Liberty, A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008).

edition as the definitive edition of Mandeville's masterpiece, *The Fable of the Bees*. Kaye's edition became the benchmark for addressing the work of Mandeville.

Kaye's legacy and interpretation of Bernard Mandeville are still quite popular amongst certain historians. M. M. Goldsmith, in his 1977 paper entitled "Mandeville and the Spirit of Capitalism," is interested in the idea of Mandeville as a harbinger of capitalism. His conclusion supports and furthers Kaye's bold claims. Goldsmith outlines a narrative of human desire and the pursuit of material happiness proceeding and contextualizing the epoch of mercantilism's transition to capitalism, and allowing for Mandeville's theories' essence to be progress and controversial, but not radically fanatical. In the early decades of the eighteenth-century, many authors wrote about contemporary commercial modernity, but Mandeville alone may be said to have fully accepted, espoused, and championed the ideas of the new commercial capitalism.<sup>9</sup> By means of exegetic readings of primary sources, Goldsmith argues that Mandeville's work recognized and encompassed the entire ambit of consequences and implications associated with commercial capitalism. Not merely economic entities, private enterprise and the free market bore moral and social ramifications, and Mandeville not so subtly enumerated the underlying ethical and societal tenets of a vice-laden, moneymaking environment.<sup>10</sup> Mandeville argued that vice was not merely extant in commerce capitalism, but the mechanism driving such a modern system. Indeed, Goldsmith notes, "In the *Female Tatler* as in the *Fable of the Bees*, Mandeville emphasized the impossibility of having a wealthy flourishing commercial society without having as well the vices which were its necessary conditions and concomitants."<sup>11</sup> Goldsmith notes the works of Mandeville's contemporaries lack this full devotion and zest. Mandeville's admission,

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<sup>9</sup> Goldsmith, M. M.. 1977. "Mandeville and the Spirit of Capitalism." *The Journal of British Studies* vol. 17, no. 1. The University of Chicago Press, JSTOR (accessed October 7, 2008), 71.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 76.

acceptance, and advocacy of economy and good governance vis-à-vis a redefined notion of human nature differentiated him from other profound or perspicacious philosophers of the time, such that “Mandeville, living in a society which was becoming capitalist, invented the ‘spirit of capitalism.’”<sup>12</sup> The work of Kaye and Goldsmith present Mandeville as a prescient or prophetic figure atop the pedestal of forward thinking and modernity.

Motivated to dismiss this hagiographic history, historian Nathan Rosenberg wrote *Mandeville and Laissez-Faire*. Rosenberg acknowledges the “well-established tradition in dealing with the development of economic thought in the XVIIIth century to make a brief obeisance to Bernard Mandeville as some sort of ‘precursor’ of Adam Smith, laissez-faire, and all that,”<sup>13</sup> and endeavors to dispel the myths and exaggerations pertaining to Mandeville. Rosenberg’s first argument is an appeal to authority, in which he quotes the esteemed Professor Jacob Viner. Rosenberg and Viner contend that Mandeville was not a proponent of laissez-faire and that establishing Mandeville as an intellectual forefather of Adam Smith is the result of novice historians and economists.<sup>14</sup> Rosenberg presents the Viner interpretation of Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees* as advocating state intervention (“the skilful Management of the clever Politician” regulates and harness private vice into public benefit).<sup>15</sup> In illustration of this argument, Rosenberg provides selections of Mandeville’s texts highlighting an alternative analysis. This process culminates in the conclusion that “Mandeville’s primary interest was not in interfering with the processes of the market place but in the assuring that such processes

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>13</sup> Rosenberg, “Mandeville and Laissez-Faire.” 183.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



worked out to socially-desirable ends.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, Rosenberg counters the traditional understanding and historical function of Mandeville and his theories.

Despite the works of Viner and Rosenberg, Mandeville, due to the likes of Kaye and Goldsmith, is frequently associated with the then forthcoming economic revolution most eloquently elaborated by Adam Smith. Mandeville may also be connected with the intellectual history of the American Revolution. In his Ph.D. dissertation, Max Lavon Autrey directly recognized the influence Mandeville held in America, concluding “it is obvious that Lord Shaftesbury and Bernard Mandeville were two of the philosophers who helped to form basic theories in America and, therefore, to give substance to her ideational basis.”<sup>17</sup> This work boldly went where few had previously gone and linked Mandeville with a revolution occurring approximately half a century and three thousand miles away. This connection extended the traditional scope of Mandeville’s impact and established new avenues worthy of inquiry.

Continuing this connection between Mandeville and the framing of America, Annie Mitchell published a 2004 journal article arguing for the existence of “a liberal republican tradition, embracing Locke, Mandeville, Hume, and Smith and suggests that it was in this vein that they were read by the Founding Fathers.”<sup>18</sup> Mitchell includes the thought and works of Mandeville in the formative works of the Revolutionary intelligentsia. Mitchell explores the dichotomy established between juxtaposing the works of classical republicans, exemplified by Cato, and the modern liberals. While it is undisputed that the Founding Fathers read Cato, Mitchell argues that they read such works through a filter of liberalism, not “within the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>17</sup> Max Lavon Autrey, “The Shaftesbury-Mandeville Debate and Its Influence in America” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1965), page 20.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, Annie. 2004. “A ‘Liberal’ Republican ‘Cato’.” *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 48, no. 3. *America: History & Life*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 6, 2008), 588.

framework of either a classical republican or a neo-roman tradition.”<sup>19</sup> The works of many, including Mandeville, had so permeated and influenced the minds of America’s architects as to affect the interpretation of history and ideas.

Additionally, M. M. Goldsmith provides well-established context and interpretation. Goldsmith’s “Public Virtue and Private Vices: Bernard Mandeville and English Political Ideologies in the Early Eighteenth Century” places Mandeville’s thought within the framework of contemporary English political ideologies. Comparing and contrasting Mandeville to other thinkers of the time allows for one to recognize the contentious nature of his assumptions, proposals, and contentions. The disclosure of the close connection between religion, morality, and society in early eighteenth century England reveals a basis for the trouble and difficulty in adoption and propagation of Mandeville. Yet, for intellectuals of the time, Mandeville was not a snark. Mandeville did not arise out of nowhere and nothing. There exists a clearly identifiable intellectual history guiding thought until Mandeville’s contributions. Goldsmith brilliantly illuminates the background and setting of Mandeville’s political thought.<sup>20</sup>

My contribution and thesis’s significance emerges from continuation of the background and setting of Mandeville’s philosophy into America. This context and avenue is rarely examined. Autrey and Mitchell cursorily address the legacy of Mandeville. However, they do not fully confront and communicate the full extent of Mandeville’s contributions. My work will alleviate the current gap in the transatlantic and colonial intellectual history scholarship.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Goldsmith, M. M.. 1976. “Public Virtue and Private Vices: Bernard Mandeville and English Political Ideologies in the Early Eighteenth Century.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* vol. 9, no. 4. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Sponsor: American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies (ASECS), JSTOR (accessed October 7, 2008), 477-510.

### III. Overview of Primary Sources

My analysis of relevant primary sources will extend the intellectual and historical background necessary to completely understand Bernard Mandeville and his philosophies. My unique and original interpretation of primary sources will try to connect Mandeville with America.

A variety of primary sources will be woven into a fabric of context, revealing the eighteenth-century American readership of Mandeville. However, the reception of the satirist and philosopher will be analyzed utilizing other sources. Perhaps in part due to the satirical tone of Mandeville's works, he was often misunderstood. Nonetheless, a general negative connotation associated itself with his theories. A 1767 broadside records the dialogue between two colonial individuals. It provides evidence of the pervasive knowledge of Mandeville in mid-eighteenth-century America. The theory of Mandeville is juxtaposed with the word of the Bible, establishing a moral dichotomy.<sup>21</sup> Another source also reveals Mandeville's characterized absence of positive distinguishing features. This article provides a litany of proclamations making up the "Unbeliever's Creed." These tenets of atheism and skepticism are identified with and an association is claimed with the works of amongst others, Bernard Mandeville.<sup>22</sup> Mandeville and religion are perceived to form polemical opposition.

While not prominent or perhaps profound, a direct connection between Mandeville and a Founding Father did occur. In 1725, at an ale-house in Cheapside, a region in London, Bernard

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<sup>21</sup> "The Conversation of Two Persons Under a Window..." 1767. Series 1, no. 41531 (filmed), Archive of Americana, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Boston, in *Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800*, (accessed October 7, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> "MODERN INFIDELITY: THE UNBELIEVER'S CREED." 1801. The Connecticut Magazine; or, Gentleman's and Lady's Monthly Museum of Knowledge & Rational Entertainment (1801-1801), June 1, 350. <http://www.proquest.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/> (accessed October 8, 2008).

Mandeville and Benjamin Franklin were introduced. A primary source document mentions that while in London, Benjamin Franklin “procured an introduction to a club, at the head of which was Dr. Mandeville, well known for his *Fable of the Bees*.”<sup>23</sup> This introduction was extended after Franklin “wrote a small piece entitled a *Dissertation on liberty and necessity, pleasure and pain*,” which was “principally an attack on some parts of Woolaston’s Religion of nature.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, due to anti-clerical and anti-religious ideologies, Mandeville and Franklin encountered each other.

Bernard Mandeville and his theories were familiar and influential in the American colonies. The transatlantic dissemination and flow of ideas of Mandeville provides an interesting, and scantily addressed, vantage point of understanding nascent America.

#### **IV. Introduction to Mandeville’s Reception**

The American Revolution established a formal secession from the British Crown, vehemently identifying a political separation from European monarchical rule and imperialism. However, despite the state schism and the nascent nation’s adoption of an isolationist foreign policy, the intellectual relationship and communication with Europe remained active. The lengthy legacy and influence of European thought continued to culture and craft policy, positions, and perceptions in the dawning days of the United States of America. While the state officially adopted a trajectory of avoiding political entanglements, the nature of ideology did not allow for the American systems of ideas, especially economic or political theory, to achieve a clear cleavage; the American conceptions of wealth, consumption, governance, and rule were

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<sup>23</sup> “HISTORY of the Life and Character of BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, L. L. D. &c. &c. &c.” 1790. The Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine (1790-1792), June 1, 332.

<http://www.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/> (accessed October 8, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

inexorably tied to and commingled with the preceding and contemporary European intellectual history. Early in the eighteenth century, numerous thinkers recognized the mounting tensions caused by the interpretation of Britain's industrial rise and the resultant commerce in a traditional framework. These theorists presented new analytic schema for understanding the shifting financial system and rationalizing or justifying the societal adaptations. One such scholar, Bernard Mandeville, offered a radical and controversial hypothesis, presented most emphatically in his singular work *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefit*. This text indubitably affected the development of Western civilizations' perception of wealth and luxury, human nature and motivation, as well as society and government. Nonetheless, the scope, magnitude, and grandeur of Mandeville's influence upon early America remain constant fodder for historiographical debate.

The germane literature pertaining to the intellectual history of Colonial and Revolutionary America covers the spectrum in addressing the importance of Mandeville and his philosophies. Academics range from espousing the genius of Mandeville to deflating a hagiographic ideal image, while certain works omit any direct reference to Mandeville. Historian F. B. Kaye provides the preeminent presentation of Mandeville. Kaye's introduction and framing of Mandeville establish a discussion of Mandeville as a predecessor and perhaps the impetus of Adam Smith, laissez-faire, and the capitalist tradition.<sup>25</sup> Histories, either alternative or in agreement, utilize this description as the standard upon which to compare, deviate, or bolster.

Devoting many years to the study of Mandeville, F. B. Kaye gained an intimate mastery of the contextual, contentual, and character-based components and constituents combining and

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<sup>25</sup> Rosenberg, Nathan. 1963. "Mandeville and Laissez-Faire." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 24, no. 2. University of Pennsylvania Press, JSTOR (accessed October 6, 2008), 183.

commixing to form the background and reference for understanding the man, his works, and their impacts. Kaye developed great esteem and admiration for the philosopher. However, Kaye actively attempted to eliminate this sizable respect from permeating and perverting the presentation of Mandeville's works and ideas:

I have not passed these last years in Mandeville's company without an ever-deepening certainty of his literary greatness. But the reader will discover very little insistence on this fact in the present edition. An editor, I think, may well post upon his study walls Dr. Johnson's remark to Boswell: 'consider, Sir, how insignificant this will appear a twelvemonth hence'—changing the twelve months to a hundred years. In such perspective, argument for Mandeville's genius and complaint at his present neglect are futile, for republication and time will of themselves, I believe, so establish him as to make editorial defence an anachronism.<sup>26</sup>

While some reject the framing and implications Kaye proffered, few if any question Kaye's editorial integrity. Even today's historians who seek to reinterpret the role of Mandeville and provide alternative intellectual histories utilize Kaye's edition as the definitive edition of Mandeville's masterpiece, *The Fable of the Bees*. Kaye's edition became the benchmark for addressing the work of Mandeville.

Despite the prevalence of Kaye's edition, others have sought to provide introductions to the content of Mandeville's works. The Foundation for the Publication and Translation of Dutch Literature (NLPVF) developed to stimulate exposure and interest of Dutch works outside of the Dutch reading community. The NLPVF has provided a collection of Mandeville's works, with introductions to several key selections. The introductions provide context and framing for reading Mandeville. The introductions strive to be more exposition than interpretation.

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<sup>26</sup> Kaye quoted in: Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. The Online Library of Liberty, A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008).

Controversy and unique arguments are avoided. The traditional esteem and praise of Mandeville, as well as Dutch pride, resonates throughout the introductions.<sup>27</sup>

Bernard Mandeville, contentious and debatable philosopher, unmistakably held sway upon subsequent generations of thinkers. A certain *j'ne sais quois* or “spirit” radiates from Mandeville and his works, which affected in particular, Hume and Smith, and in general, the general denizenship of western civilization. Capitalism and modern notions of material prosperity were emerging throughout the industrialized world, however, the eloquence and the frankness of Mandeville tightened and directed future discussion and development.

Providing more than mere biography, this thesis examines the story of an era’s intellectual environment. The figure of Bernard Mandeville allows for fruitful examination of the evolution of modernity. His philosophic writings on political economy and ethics challenged the status quo edicts of Britannia’s Church and the Court. This project predominantly utilizes primary sources to reveal the cerebral conflict and reify the debate. Despite official condemnation, Mandeville and his work received great readership and awareness, during his lifetime. Yet, the denunciations affected Mandeville’s reception. This muddled comprehension affected the transatlantic interpretation of Bernard Mandeville.

The foundation of the project’s unique research is numerous primary sources. This evidence provides insight into the thought of the contemporary legal, ecclesiastical, scholarly, and common peers of Mandeville. The ardent accusations of Britain’s elite influenced the reading of his satire. This misreading became pervasive, crossed the Atlantic, and permeated the unsophisticated ranks of North America. Analyzing multiple bookstore and private collection

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<sup>27</sup> NLPVF (The Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature), comp. *The Collected Works of Bernard Mandeville*. Translated by Liz Waters. NLPVF (The Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature). [www.nlpvf.nl/docs/Mandeville\\_Collected\\_screen.pdf](http://www.nlpvf.nl/docs/Mandeville_Collected_screen.pdf) (accessed October 17, 2008).

lists confirm the breadth of his readership, while newspaper articles and circulars unveil the usage of his name and his work. This lowly understanding is juxtaposed with the Founding Father's familiarity of Mandeville, vis-à-vis his mention in letters between Adams and Jefferson. While Franklin was the only Founding Father to meet Mandeville in person, Mandeville's presence is still scene in the Constitution and its debate, as well as the Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers quarrel. Secondary sources support, supplement, and augment the primary sources.

Despite his numerous contributions to transatlantic intellectual history, Mandeville's notoriety faded throughout the centuries. In part, this thesis attempts to return Mandeville to appropriate prominence. This study addresses the man and his times, and thus seeks to fill a significant gap in both historical and philosophic literature. This early figure of the Enlightenment deserves inquiry and remembrance.

## **V. Examination of Reception- Mandeville's Reception in England**

The opinions and the comprehensions of Mandeville have dramatically over time. The reception of Mandeville's writings is marked by considerable variation throughout the ages. Bernard Mandeville, vis-à-vis his writings, presented the world with revolutionary polemics, albeit not entirely radical. His theories challenged the status quo, established perceptions concerning human nature, the role of luxury, and the origins of morality. Mandeville emerged more as a result of philosophical evolution, and less as an extreme snark. His ideas were not entirely inconsistent or disagreeable with the era in which he wrote. The content of *The Fable of the Bees* was provocative; yet, nonetheless, his terse tone and biting rhetoric was, to many of his contemporaries, truly abrasive, bordering on abusive. Additionally, the pervasive satiric



character of his dialectical lyrics is oft missed, leading to misinterpretation and subsequently harsher censure. Mandeville proffered a minority opinion on the origins of human nature, and he constructed his philosophy upon this unpopular axiom (humans are motivated by self-interest, as opposed to benevolence, virtue, rationality, et cetera). From the preliminary publications, there have been detractors, dissenters, and disbelievers; however, especially in the centuries following the author's eighteenth-century passing, the texts enjoyed champions, campaigners, and crusaders. The controversial nature of Bernard Mandeville's writing is irrefutable. Mandeville's fiery pen sparked a great blaze in the intelligentsia, igniting heated debate.

Mandeville's immediate irritation of the Church and the Court was a quite serious consideration. In addition to the obvious legal ramifications, the consequences of reputation and integrity convinced Mandeville to straightforwardly respond to his critics, and he responded with a vindication in his own hand. This documented public quarrel provides significant elucidation into the intended and the actual reception of Mandeville's main writings. Firstly, there are the charges set forth against him on behalf of the public by the Grand Jury of Middlesex. Secondly, there is Mandeville's vindication in opposition to the presentment. This dialogue highlights the tenuous reception of Mandeville in the ranks of the established British elite, and his confidence in communicating directly to his readership.

Bernard Mandeville, in 1705, published a philosophic and satiric poem entitled, *The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves turn'd Honest*, representing his early understanding of human nature and economics. Commingling morality and economics, *The Grumbling Hive* offers a worldview in which humans innately selfish and motivated by vice, and argues that society and public benefit is built upon individual action founded upon the interest of the self. In 1714, Mandeville improved and extended the theory behind *The Grumbling Hive* with his magnum

opus *The Fable of the Bees*. Composed of an updated poem, based on *The Grumbling Hive*, as well as analytic and explanatory prose *The Fable of the Bees* is the central, most germane piece of Mandeville's in terms of intellectual history. This work espouses the philosophy that public benefit develops from private vice- an egoistic interpretation of civilization. Mandeville's ethical, political, and economic theories developed from the foundation of the recognition or assumption of self-interest as the primary motivation of human behavior.

Written with a sarcastic and sardonic tone, Mandeville's rapier wit offended and wounds the sense and sensibility of prominent members of society. In addition to the exaggerated, shocking presentation, the content of the *Fable* brought distress to the established elite of Britain. Believing Mandeville's writing to represent a virulent threat upon society, the Grand Jury of Middlesex wrote a presentment against the text and the author, and charged the author of *The Fable of the Bees* with five acts of criminality.<sup>28</sup> Bernard Mandeville, in his 1732 edition of *The Fable of the Bees*, addressed the critiques and condemnations of his ideological opposition. Following his revised text, Mandeville published the Grand Jury's Presentment. After allowing the reader to know his charges, he offers a vindication of his theory. This primary source of scathing accusations provides insight into the early reception of Mandeville's ideas.

The Grand Jury of Middlesex felt compelled, as good Christians and good citizens of the Crown, to check the conceivably caustic, corruptive content of Mandeville's publication. The

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<sup>28</sup> Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. The Online Library of Liberty, A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008), 205:

*First*, Openly blasphemed and denied the Doctrine of the Ever Blessed Trinity endeavouring by specious Pretences to revive the *Arian Heresy*, which was never introduced into any Nation, but the Vengeance of Heaven pursued it. / *Secondly*, They affirm an absolute *Fate*, and deny the *Providence* and Government of the Almighty in the World. / *Thirdly*, They have endeavoured to subvert all Order and Discipline in the Church, and by vile and unjust Reflexions on the *Clergy*, they strive to bring Contempt on all Religion; That by the Libertinism of their Opinions they may encourage and draw others into the Immoralities of their Practice. / *Fourthly*, That a General Libertinism may the more effectually be established, the *Universities* are decried, and all *Instructions of Youth* in the Principles of the Christian Religion are exploded with the greatest Malice and Falsity. / *Fifthly*, the more effectually to carry on these Works of Darkness, studied Artifices and invented Colors have been made use of to run down Religion and Virtue as *prejudicial* to Society, and detrimental to the State; and to recommend Luxury, Avarice, Pride, and all kind of Vices, as being necessary to *Publick Welfare* and not tending to the *Destruction* of the Constitution: Nay, the very *Stews* themselves have had strained Apologies and forced Encomiums made in their Favour and produced in Print, with Design, we conceive, to debauch the Nation.

short Presentment was written following the 1723 edition of *The Fable of the Bees*. Shortly before the 1723 edition, a plague lasting from 1720 to 1722 wreaked great havoc upon the peoples of Marseilles. According to the ecumenical elite of pious Middlesex, the peoples of Britannia were mercifully and benevolently saved due to their superior moral character. The Presentment opens with acknowledgement of God's grace in sparing them of the plague's devastation. Then, the Grand Jury reprimands Mandeville and his writings for not casting thanksgiving upon the Almighty, but rather, the moral and economic treatise's coarse character and satirical spirit publicly presented "flagrant Impieties" against "the Sacred Articles of our *Holy Religion*, and all Discipline and Order in the *Church*."<sup>29</sup> This blatant and blasphemous affront to decency and Christianity motivated the Grand Jury for the County of Middlesex to bring formal complaint against the author and the publisher of *The Fable of the Bees* (at the time of the Presentment, Mandeville's authorship was unknown as early editions were published anonymously). The self-appointed paladins of Protestantism positioned themselves and civilization against Mandeville's virulent rhetoric, contending, "We know of nothing that can be of greater Service to his Majesty and the Protestant Succession ... than the Suppression of Blasphemy and Profaneness, which has a direct Tendency to subvert the very Foundation on which his Majesty's Government is fixed."<sup>30</sup> The Court charged *The Fable* with five offenses.

The Grand Jury for the County of Middlesex disapproved of and sought to prevent the dissemination of the ideas found in *The Fable of the Bees*. Their presentment read as obloquy, contemptuously indicting the text of fostering blasphemy, heresy, anti-autonomous determinism, civil chaos, youthful immorality, ethical and societal decadence, and the undermining of spirit of law in general. This legal litany illuminates the reception of the righteous and the religious

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

against the *Fable of the Bees* revealing, from the start, a juxtaposition of Mandeville and morality arose. This common (and oversimplified) understanding of Mandeville would drift across the Atlantic.

The initial reaction to the controversial work of Mandeville was largely negative and emanating top-down. Nonetheless, Mandeville continued to write for a larger audience. Additionally, Mandeville published the public critiques of his philosophy, for the purposes “That the Reader may be fully instructed in the Merits of the Cause between my Adversaries and myself, it is requisite that, before he sees my Defence, he should know the whole Charge, and have before him all the Accusations against me at large.”<sup>31</sup> This willingness to openly address the disapproval and criticism, and offer an intellectually exonerating defense shows awareness of his work’s interpretation, as well as confidence in his argument and argumentation. Also, this direct communication to the readership shows that Mandeville considered his audience worthy of response, and more receptive and favorable of his work than the Church and the Court.

The Presentment not only established the dichotomies of moral versus immoral and religious versus irreligious, but unintentionally led to the vast readership and awareness of the “Zealots for *Infidelity*... [and their] Diabolical Attempts against Religion.”<sup>32</sup> Following the Presentment, *The Fable of the Bees* gained much more notoriety. Not all of it took the form of condemnation. Between 1723 and 1732, Mandeville gained the sense of safety (or arrogance) to publish without the shield of anonymity. In the nine years between editions, it may be assumed that Mandeville’s ideas became perceived to be less radical, due his decision to publish under his real name. Over time, shifting public opinion began to view the Presentment as reactionary and ideologically neophobic. Via formally charging the ideas found in *The Fable of the Bees*, a

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

forum of discussion and discourse emerged in which Mandeville was able to defend himself and his works, as well as reach a wider, more receptive audience. The preliminary response and retaliation of Mandeville's writing, coupled with his choice to originally publish anonymously, suggest an welcome environment for Mandeville's ideas, perhaps in part due to an attempt to maintain religious authority and decorum.

While Mandeville would eventually be able to publish his work and his vindication to the grand jury Presentment using his own name, the transitional period was not without consternation or contestation. As evidenced, the Court took legal action against the author and his alleged subversive literature. However, the Church also felt injured by the perceived irreverent philosophy of Mandeville. The religious of London rose up and attempted to preach against the inflammatory rhetoric of the *Fable of the Bees*. On May 28, 1724, the Parish-Church of St. Sepulchre, at the anniversary meeting of the Children Educated in the Charity-Schools about the Cities of London and Westminster, received a sermon entitled, "The True Christian Method of Educating Children" by the Right Reverend Father in God, Thomas, Lord Bishop of Solor and Mann, a vehement and vociferous critic of Mandeville and his philosophy.<sup>33</sup> This pulpit protest against Mandeville focuses on the proper manner of moral education for the British youth, and society in general. Mandeville's writing on the nature of man, good governance, and morality were antithetical to the main mission of the Anglican Church. Bishop Thomas discusses the nature of man, and the innate predilection towards vice due to being born with sin. However,

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<sup>33</sup>Thomas Wilson. "The true Christian method of educating children: a sermon preached in the parish-church of St. Sepulchre, at the anniversary meeting of the children educated in the charity-schools about the cities of London and Westminster. On May 28, 1724. ... By ... Thomas, Lord Bishop of Sodom and Mann." The sixth edition. London, 1794. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. American University Bender Library. 14 Feb. 2009  
[http://find.galegroup.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW123010659&source=gale&userGroupName=wash11212&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE](http://find.galegroup.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW123010659&source=gale&userGroupName=wash11212&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE) 1.

a good, God-fearing citizen raised with proper moral education would fight the temptations and live a life pleasing to God. Unfortunately, Mandeville proposed a moral education countering this Christian ideology, and this, Bishop Thomas warns, allows for mankind to be “Slaves to the most unreasonable Passions.”<sup>34</sup> (This phrasing used in condemnation of Mandeville is quite similar and perhaps the intellectual source of the yet to be written maxim famously associated with Hume, and shows the intellectual bridgework and avenues available to travel for the scholar of the eighteenth-century enlightenment.) Mandeville paradoxically proposed that this human nature of viciousness provided the cornerstone of public good and society, not the necessity of god-fearing. This obviously offended the sensibilities of the Church and Bishop Thomas Wilson, and brought forth his sermon.

Bishop Thomas Wilson’s diatribe does not directly assault *The Fable of the Bees* or its author by name, nonetheless, from its content and from the body of secondary literature there exists no doubt that this sermon was directed against the alleged moral erosion originating from Mandeville’s work. The foremost Mandevillian scholar, F. B. Kaye, confirms Mandeville as the subject of Bishop Wilson’s fulmination, when he referenced Wilson in stating, “minister and bishop alike denounced it [*The Fable of the Bees*] from the pulpit.”<sup>35</sup> In referring to Mandeville’s writing, Thomas prefaces, “But I must first observe to you that this Text has been sometimes made use of to favour an Opinion, which, if true, would render all Education, with regard to another World, entirely useless.”<sup>36</sup> This strong introduction accuses Mandeville and his improper, profane philosophy of denying Heavenly reward and bearing atheistic overtures. In an all but direct confrontation with *The Fable*’s provocative subtitle (“Private Vices, Publick

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>35</sup> F. B. Kaye, “The Influence of Bernard Mandeville,” *Studies in Philosophy* 19, no. 1 (January 1922): 89, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4171820> (accessed September 11, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Wilson, Thomas. “The true Christian method...”, 3.

Benefits”), Thomas harangues, “On the other Hand [Decent Society versus Mandeville], VIRTUE IS ITS OWN REWARD: How Honourable is it to be *just to one’s world*, and true in one’s Dealings!—How *unworthy a rational Man* to live like a Beast!”<sup>37</sup> In Mandeville’s fable, man is compared to beast (Bees) and virtue is but an auxiliary façade of society grafted upon the infrastructure of private vice. Reading Scripture, according to Thomas, provides one the path to live virtuously and please God, whereas reading Mandeville and following his espoused philosophy would bear “the Fruits of which are—Negligence,—a bold venturing upon Temptations,—a wicked Life,—and a reprobate Mind.”<sup>38</sup> The *immoral education* of Mandeville proposed and justified selfish cultivate of luxury and vice. In response, Thomas counsels the opposite of Mandeville’s thought, “‘That a VIRTUOUS EDUCATION is really preferable to all the Wealth and other Advantages of the World without it.’”<sup>39</sup> Bishop Thomas portrays Mandeville as the modern-day reincarnate of Socrates—impious and a corrupter of the youth.

Bishop Thomas was not the only theologian critical of Mandeville’s writing. Several years after Bishop Thomas’s defense of Christian moral education in the face of Mandeville, another sermon would be delivered against Mandeville; however, the accused (Mandeville) directly responded to this later pulpit moralization. Samuel Chandler, an eighteenth century religious scholar and leader, “Preach’d for the Benefit of the Charity-School in Gravel-Lane, Southwark, Jan. 1727/8,” and included in the 1728 publication is “An Answer to an Essay on Charity-Schools, by the Author of the FABLE of the BEES.”<sup>40</sup> Throughout the latter portions of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Chandler. Doing good recommended from the example of Christ. A sermon preached ... in Gravel-Lane, Southwark, Jan. 1727/8. ... By Sam. Chandler. London, 1728. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. American University Bender Library. 14 Feb. 2009 <http://find.galegroup.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type>

this essay, Samuel Chandler shows knowledge of the *Fable of the Bees*, quoting and debating multiple excerpts. The introductory portion of the sermon is quite optimistic and adopts a benevolent tone similar to the voice found in Hutcheson and Shaftesbury. For example, Chandler quaintly notes, “Goodness is the most amiable perfection of God himself”<sup>41</sup> and “for God is love; and tho’ sometimes he *answers men by terrible things in righteousness*, for the vindication of his honour and government, and the preventing the entire dissolution of society by vice.”<sup>42</sup> This early part of the sermon grounds Chandler and establishes him in opposition to Mandeville, for Chandler contends that the unity of society comes from God’s love against the ills of vice, as opposed to Mandeville’s contention that these ills are truly the adhesive of public benefit. Approximately midway through the sermon, Chandler discusses the importance of literacy, “Reading therefore appears highly expedient to attain that knowledge which is necessary to render men useful and valuable members of society; to preserve them on the one hand from stupidity and ignorance, and on the other from superstition and bigotry [sic].”<sup>43</sup> Chandler recognizes the use of reading as a tool for moral education and the development of virtue; however, he was fiercely aware of the available distractions in literature at the time. Shortly thereafter, Chandler introduces the *Fable of the Bees* and attempts to disprove Mandeville’s arguments against the nature of morality.

When introducing *The Fable of the Bees*, Chandler attempts to co-opt or appropriate certain portions. The first direct mention of Mandeville’s work is the following quotation, “P. 303. he represents it, ‘As the general cry, that children should be taught the principles of religion,

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<https://www.gale.com/go/multiplace?tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW122439653&source=gale&userGroupNa me=wash11212&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE> 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 20.



and to read the word of God, that they may have greater opportunity to improve in virtue and good morality, and to be more civilised than others.”<sup>44</sup> However, this text is out of context and contradictory to Mandeville’s central thesis. Chandler continues and addresses the incendiary theory that private vice could result in or lead to public benefit, “And if there be any difference in virtue and vice; if a regard to the Supreme Being be preferable to impiety, and a civilized behaviour, to a rude, insolent and abusive one, the nation is to be commended for their united endeavours to promote the former, and by all possible endeavours to discourage and prevent the latter.”<sup>45</sup> Having but merely shored up the bastions of the status quo, Chandler attempts “To do this writer justice” and once again misquotes a section from the *Fable of the Bees* in which Mandeville appears favorable to the Church, Charity-Schools, and religion.<sup>46</sup> The misquote in question was written with a certain sarcastic panache, which Chandler draws out by means of additional, more blunt quotations. Chandler initially quoted a mocking and contemptuous line of Mandeville that called for mandatory attendance of Church services, but from the more straightforward sections of *The Fable of the Bees*, Chandler finds and then summarizes the main argument “ ‘as to religion, the most knowing and polite part of a nation have every where the least of it; and that we shall find innocence and honesty no where more general than amongst the most illiterate, the poor filly country people.’ P. 304,”<sup>47</sup> “Or in other words, that religion and virtue are an argument of ignorance and folly; and that wherever there is politeness and true knowledge, religion, virtue and innocence are entirely disregarded.”<sup>48</sup> This set up of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Mandeville's assault upon religion, virtue, and innocence launches Chandler into an eloquent tirade:

If this was the intended meaning of the objection, it deserves no answer; since a regard to virtue and piety is as reasonable as that men should answer the design of their being, pursue their true interest, and contribute their best endeavours to promote the good of societies; and till it can be demonstrated, that there is no God, that the pleasures of sense and time are preferable to those of reason and eternity, that men ought to prefer their private interest to the publick, and that the honour of societies can be preserved by impiety and an universal corruption of manners; wise men will cast contempt on the politeness that is an enemy to true religion, and impute the honesty and virtue of the country people, not to their want of understanding the most useful principles, but to an happy ignorance or detestation of the arts and methods of vice.

This speech once again merely calls for the status quo, and requires proof of the improvable as the standard for change. Chandler does not defeat Mandeville's assault, but simply parries the rapier wit with a slashing side quest of (dis)proving the existence of God. However, Mandeville and his philosophy is eliminative, and necessarily radical, atheistic; discussion of God is dismissed in favor of a worldly system built upon observations of the nature of man. Mandeville espoused that public benefit arises from privately held vices. Socrates also held that there was no such thing as a purely selfless good deed. The remainder of the sermon deals with the discussion of the nature of Charity-Schools, for Mandeville claimed that while a public benefit, they were motivated by private vices of selfishness, ulterior goals of propagating civilization and religion, and so on. Naturally, Chandler takes exception and dutifully does his best to counter the previously written attacks set forth by Bernard Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees*. This publication concludes with a pithy and cynical remark by the author of *The Fable of the Bees* on the "state of the Charity-School in Gravel Lane, Southwark, as it now stands, the first day of January 1727/8" which slyly and subtly lambastes Chandler's arguments.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 41.

While an inferred societal change occurred between 1723 and 1732, which allowed for Mandeville to publish using his name in later editions did occur, the charges from the Court and the Church did indelibly mark his work. Despite the vindication that followed the Presentment and his snide response to Sermons, the association of Mandeville with immorality stuck. Nonetheless, Mandeville continued to publicly respond to his critics and to share these responses with his readership. This shows, that despite the label of legal and religious outlaw, people continued to read Mandeville's work and look for his rationalizations and exonerations. Yet, the Court and Church's negative connotation of Mandeville can be found in eighteenth-century America. The charges of impiety and corruption of moral education brought both infamy and fame to Mandeville.

## **VI. Examination of Reception- Mandeville's Reception in Popular America**

The scandal concerning Bernard Mandeville and his writings had its epicenter in London, but the intellectual convulsion sent shockwaves throughout the world. To some, "not even Voltaire could have said so much for wickedness."<sup>50</sup> The challenge of conventional concepts of government and theology extended to Continental Europe. In fact, "In France, the *Fable* was actually ordered burned by the common hangman."<sup>51</sup> The European hegemons, Britain and France, were not the only countries to be acquainted with the works of Mandeville. While a relatively unknown historical figure today, "It would, in fact, be difficult to overrate the degree and extent of Mandeville's eighteenth-century fame...in 1750...the *Fable* was current in Ireland. In France, in 1765, we find Diderot complaining that the tenets of the book had become so

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<sup>50</sup> Kaye, F. B. "The Influence of Bernard Mandeville." *Studies in Philosophy* 19, no. 1 (January 1922): 83-108. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4171820> (accessed September 11, 2008), 89.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid..

familiar as to be a conversational nuisance.”<sup>52</sup> In the eighteenth century, the discussion of Mandeville throughout Europe was commonplace, bordering on trite. This notoriety extended beyond Europe, across the Atlantic, and was prevalent in the American continent, as well. As late, indeed, as 1787, and “in America at that, the author [Royall Tyler] of our first American comedy—a play meant for popular consumption—refers to Mandeville as if the latter’s theories were as well known to the audience as the latest proclamation of General Washington.”<sup>53</sup> Mandeville was an international phenomenon. His works were widely printed, disseminated, and read (or at least known) throughout eighteenth-century Western Civilization.

Multiple secondary sources recount the familiarity of the Founding Fathers and other notables with the author of the *Fable of the Bees*. While this connection is elucidating, the common reception and understanding often is missed. Kaye’s use of Tyler’s play implicitly indicates the ordinary familiarity with Mandeville. Additionally, various primary sources supplement this notion, and reveal a complexity and hierarchy in the American understanding of Mandeville.

The records of various bookstores and private collections reveal the availability of Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees* to the American people. Robert Bell’s catalogue for a bookstore in Philadelphia contains the work of Mandeville. This publication lists the books published and sold in a Philadelphian bookstore in 1783. The advertised list of works was directed towards “persons of all denominations” marking the acceptance of Mandeville by 1783 in late-eighteenth-century Pennsylvania.<sup>54</sup> This phrasing may indicate the burgeoning religious

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid..

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>54</sup> Bell, Robert. “Just Published and Now Selling, at Bell's Book-Store, in Third-Street, Price One Quarter of a Dollar. A Catalogue of a Large Collection of New and Old Books, in Arts, Sciences, and Entertainment, for Persons of All Denominations, with the Selling Price Printed to Each

pluralism of Pennsylvania, or it may be an appeal to broaden the salability of Mandeville to those of all denominations. Additionally, the catalogue of books belonging to the Union-Library-Company of Philadelphia contained Mandeville's writing.<sup>55</sup> This record shows the presence of Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* as being publicly available. The residents of Philadelphia in the mid-eighteenth-century had access to the works of Mandeville. This marks a change in its holdings, for "the Library Company of Philadelphia contained no copy of *The Fable of the Bees* at the time of the Philadelphia Convention."<sup>56</sup> Mandeville's "categorical denial that virtue and public spiritedness were compatible with a commercial society based on self-interest and his dismissal of the concept of a virtuous society as a 'romantik fancy' ensured that for the rest of the eighteenth century his work, like that of Hobbes a half-century earlier, would be primarily

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Book; Now on Sale, at said Bell's Book-Store, Near St. Paul's Church, in Third-Street." 1783, Series 1, no. 17830 (filmed), Early American Imprints, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Philadelphia, in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p\\_product=EVAN&p\\_theme=eai&p\\_nbid=V55S58WNMTIyMzQxNzU2My40MjQ5NDI6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzIuMTM3&p\\_action=doc&p\\_queryname=page2&f\\_qdnum=7&f\\_qrnum=42&f\\_qname=5&f\\_qnext=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F3018D1D97D5078%4019465&f\\_qprev=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F2FD4208F497B90%4016869&p\\_docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F30153D64420F08@17830-0FA31877C6CF4558@1](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EVAN&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=V55S58WNMTIyMzQxNzU2My40MjQ5NDI6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzIuMTM3&p_action=doc&p_queryname=page2&f_qdnum=7&f_qrnum=42&f_qname=5&f_qnext=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F3018D1D97D5078%4019465&f_qprev=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F2FD4208F497B90%4016869&p_docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F30153D64420F08@17830-0FA31877C6CF4558@1) (accessed October 7, 2008)

<sup>55</sup> "A Catalogue of Books Belonging to the Union-Library-Company of Philadelphia. To Which is Prefixed, the Articles of the Company, With the Names of the Present Members, and Rules Observed by the Clerk in Letting Out Books, &c." 1754. Series 1, no. 7295 (filmed), Early American Imprints, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Philadelphia, in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p\\_action=doc&p\\_theme=eai&p\\_product=EVAN&p\\_docref=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F3014042BDD7E00%407295-102B52D5D888E240%4048&p\\_text\\_page-0=0F3014042BDD7E00&p\\_field\\_page-0=document\\_id&p\\_text\\_page-1=mandeville&p\\_field\\_page-1=LeadNoBody&p\\_queryname=page9&f\\_qname=8&f\\_qrnum=31&f\\_qdnum=1&f\\_qprev=&f\\_qnext=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F2FD2FE70B5D940%408094](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_action=doc&p_theme=eai&p_product=EVAN&p_docref=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F3014042BDD7E00%407295-102B52D5D888E240%4048&p_text_page-0=0F3014042BDD7E00&p_field_page-0=document_id&p_text_page-1=mandeville&p_field_page-1=LeadNoBody&p_queryname=page9&f_qname=8&f_qrnum=31&f_qdnum=1&f_qprev=&f_qnext=v2%3A0F2B1FCB879B099B%40EVAN-0F2FD2FE70B5D940%408094) (accessed October 7, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> Jack P. Green, *The Intellectual Heritage of the Constitutional Era* (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1986), 28.

known as a target for its critics.”<sup>57</sup> Yet nonetheless, in merely a few decades, and despite numerous critics Mandeville’s writings were available for sale to all those with even simple means. For instance, a Philadelphia importer of books from London held Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees*.<sup>58</sup> This catalogue indicates the availability and access of Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees* in Philadelphia in the middle of the eighteenth-century, as well as revealing the transatlantic transmission and consumption. Philadelphia, while a prominent printing and historic city, was not the only location to contain the publication and sale of Mandeville. Multiple urban areas provided access to his works. Even prior to the Revolutionary War, in the city of Boston, Mandeville available for purchase and distribution.<sup>59</sup> There were numerous avenues for acquiring *The Fable of the Bees* and becoming acquainted with its author throughout America.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid..

<sup>58</sup> Irvington and Brown, “A Catalogue of Books, Sold by Rivington and Brown, Booksellers and Stationers from London, at their Stores, Over Against the Golden Key, in Hanover-Square, New-York: and Over Against the London Coffee-House, in Philadelphia. At Both Which Places will be Found, a Constant Supply of Books ...,” 1762, Series 1, no. 9259 (filmed), Early American Imprints, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Philadelphia, in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p\\_product=EVAN&p\\_theme=eai&p\\_nbid=A4BG4DJCMTIyMzQxNzU2My40MjQ5NDI6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzluMTM3&p\\_action=doc&p\\_queryname=8&p\\_docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F3015DE458909B8@9259-103172189670FEC0@87](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EVAN&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=A4BG4DJCMTIyMzQxNzU2My40MjQ5NDI6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzluMTM3&p_action=doc&p_queryname=8&p_docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F3015DE458909B8@9259-103172189670FEC0@87) (accessed October 7, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Cox & Berry, “A Catalogue of a Very Large Assortment of the Most Esteemed Books in Every Branch of Polite Literature, Arts and Sciences. ... Which are to be Sold by Cox & Berry at their Store in King-Street, Boston. N.B. All New Books of Merit, Magazines and Reviews, Imported by Every Opportunity from London.” 1772. Series 1, no. 42336 (filmed), Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Boston, in Early American Imprints, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p\\_product=EVAN&p\\_theme=eai&p\\_nbid=B60Y62IXMTIyMzQ0MDUwNi41MTg1MTM6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzluMTM3&p\\_action=doc&p\\_queryname=8&p\\_docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F2F81D4F26D4570@42336-101BCA82537961D0@11](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EVAN&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=B60Y62IXMTIyMzQ0MDUwNi41MTg1MTM6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzluMTM3&p_action=doc&p_queryname=8&p_docref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F2F81D4F26D4570@42336-101BCA82537961D0@11) (accessed October 7, 2008).

In general, the base view of Mandeville paralleled the initial Court and Church critiques found in London. The association of Mandeville with immorality and impiety litters the primary literature. For example, a 1767 broadside records the dialogue between two colonial individuals. It provides evidence of the pervasive knowledge of Mandeville in mid-eighteenth-century America. The theory of Mandeville is juxtaposed with the word of the Bible, establishing a moral dichotomy. In this circular, the one individual remarks to the other, “I only mention these things that you may have some idea of the man; who studies the writings of Bernard Mandeville more than he does his bible.”<sup>60</sup> Studying the writing of Bernard Mandeville is presented as at odds with studying the Bible. The use of Mandeville’s name is analogous to an adjective of impiety, in this source and in most ordinary references of the day.

Circa the eighteenth century, the United States of America contained peoples of numerous faiths. While the country did not have established religious, a predominating portion practiced Protestantism. It was permissible to hold alternate religious views, but rarely was atheism explicitly welcomed. When such a designation was still strongly derogatory, *The Connecticut Magazine; or, Gentleman’s and Lady’s Monthly Museum of Knowledge & Rational Entertainment* printed an article entitled, “MODERN INFIDELITY: THE UNBELIEVER’S CREED” which preached scientific deism approaching atheism. The work is self-professedly harmless *jeu d’esprit*, yet this lighthearted display of wit and cleverness does reveal a common interpretation of Mandeville. This satire indicates a similar view, which this work exaggerates.

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<sup>60</sup> “The Conversation of Two Persons Under a Window on Monday Evening the 23d of March.” 1767. Series 1, no. 41531 (filmed), Archive of Americana, American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, Inc., Boston, in *Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800*, [http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p\\_product=EVAN&p\\_theme=eai&p\\_nbid=V55S58WNMTIyMzQxNzU2My40MjQ5NDI6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzluMTM3&p\\_action=doc&p\\_docnum=2&p\\_queryname=5&p\\_doref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F2F823362A723B8@41531-@1](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EVAN&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=V55S58WNMTIyMzQxNzU2My40MjQ5NDI6MT0xMzoxOTguOTEuMzluMTM3&p_action=doc&p_docnum=2&p_queryname=5&p_doref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EVAN-0F2F823362A723B8@41531-@1) (accessed October 7, 2008)

The opening salvo is against decent, religious society and reads, “I believe that there is no God, but that matter is God, and God is matter, and that it is no matter whether there is any God or no.”<sup>61</sup> This scientific deism was held by Mandeville publically and many privately, and is here presented to wide, presumably sympathetic or at least tolerant, audience. This article provides a litany of proclamations making up the “Unbeliever’s Creed.” These tenets of doubt and skepticism appear believe in the works of amongst others, Bernard Mandeville. While certain similarities between Mandeville’s work and this diatribe could be uncovered by means of forensic history, revealing the tacit connections, the author kindly provides cleared stated evidence showing the influence of Mandeville. The author rejects theology and embraces contemporarily radical philosophy, “I believe not in Moses... I believe in...Mandeville.”<sup>62</sup> These documents illustrate the basic understanding of Mandeville, and highlight the juxtaposition between the Bible and the *Fables*, as held by the common people of America.

The two aforementioned sources provide a positive and a negative view of Mandeville, but both view Mandeville as contrary to and conflicting with decency. The common interpretation of Mandeville was not monolithic. Some revered and respected the scandalized author. An 1801 portfolio entitled, “AN AUTHOR’S EVENINGS: FROM THE SHOP OF MESSRS. COLON AND SPONDEE” calls attention to the originality and authenticity of Mandeville in the circles of American thought. In this article, the author accuses Benjamin Franklin of being an unoriginal plunderer of theories. Multiple authors are mentioned as sources

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<sup>61</sup> “MODERN INFIDELITY: THE UNBELIEVER’S CREED.” 1801. The Connecticut Magazine; or, Gentleman’s and Lady’s Monthly Museum of Knowledge & Rational Entertainment (1801-1801), June 1, 350. <http://www.proquest.com/proxyau.wrlc.org/> (accessed October 8, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid..



of Franklin's alleged intellectual theft, including Mandeville.<sup>63</sup> While this allegation is rather exaggerated and the intellectual merit of Benjamin Franklin is nearly without reproach amongst the history community, these accusations show a desire to discredit the then current American intelligentsia and credit the ideological European predecessors. This reflects a cultural and social move to appreciate the early Enlightenment figures.

The early common American reception and appropriation of Bernard Mandeville shows an extension of the British branding, in general. The discussion and citation of Mandeville appears more anecdotal, as opposed to scholarly. The critiques are either whimsical and witty or misinformed and emotional historical allegations. The general population of early American possessed a certain level of familiarity with the name or the character of Mandeville, yet the philosophical and political contributions seem to be largely simplified or overlooked. For the most part, the common American received the transatlantic interpretation of Mandeville, yet could not offer anything more than parody or tripe. The ordinary American was engaged in the transatlantic transmission of the caricature of Mandeville, yet were not nearly as involved with his ideas as were the elite echelon of early America.

## **VII. Examination of Reception- Mandeville's Reception in Elite America**

In general, the elite members of American politics during the eighteenth century were very learned, very read individuals. Amongst these elite, political theory was taken seriously. They read Enlightenment figures, Liberals, Tories, *Philosophes*, as well as the Greek and Latin

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<sup>63</sup> AN AUTHOR'S EVENINGS: FROM THE SHOP OF MESSRS. COLON AND SPONDEE." 1801. The Port - Folio (1801-1827), February 14, 53.  
<http://www.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/> (accessed October 8, 2008).

classics.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the level of intellectual understanding in these upper echelons are more authentic and less influenced by the initial English Court and Church reactions. While familiar with this controversy, a genteel, liberal education allowed for more independence of thought, even if it ultimately aligned itself with the original presentments. Mandeville, his philosophy, and the scandal it caused did not routinely affect the common America, but for the Founding Fathers, all their political decisions were based on or against established political theoreticians, including Bernard Mandeville.

Benjamin Franklin, America's Renaissance-man, practiced journalism, science, philosophy, and politics. Prior to his illustrious accomplishments, in 1724, at the age of eighteen, Franklin went to London. While Franklin was in London apprenticing in the printing trade, he was introduced to and became friends with Bernard Mandeville. In his autobiography, Franklin recalls the introduction to Mandeville

He [Lyons- a surgeon, author, and mutual friend of Franklin and Mandeville] took great notice of me, called on me often to converse on those subjects [the (in)fallibility of human judgment, and human nature in general], carried me to the Horns, a pale-alehouse in ---- Lane, Cheapside, and introduced me to Dr. Mandeville, author of the "Fable of the Bees," who had a club there, of which he was the soul, being a most facetious, entertaining companion.<sup>65</sup>

This meeting between these two great minds came about following Franklin's publication "Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity," in which "Franklin finally reached the deduction that one could not distinguish between virtue and vice—a concept very closely paralleling Mandeville's paradox. Then, he asked, 'How can any Action be meritorious of Praise or Dispraise, reward or Punishment, when the natural Principle of Self-Love is the only and the

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<sup>64</sup> Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 238.

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Franklin: His Life by Himself* (Boston: Ginn & Company Publishers, 1899), 60.

irresistible Motive of it.”<sup>66</sup> Thus, it is evident that prior to Franklin meeting Mandeville they both shared similar views. Nonetheless, the friendship with Dr. Mandeville matured young Franklin’s views and influenced his thought. Franklin was not deterred by Mandeville’s reputation, and having “met Mandeville and being very concerned with his new adventures in thought, the receptive Franklin returned home and, through lectures and publications, was instrumental in bringing about a reexamination of basic institutions and guiding concepts by Americans who were still hesitant about engaging in worldly philosophical and theological disputes.”<sup>67</sup> Additionally, upon in 1727, one year after his return, Franklin established the Junto Club (“according to him, it was “the best school of philosophy, morals, and politics that then existed in the province”).<sup>68</sup> Mandeville’s club influenced and inspired the formulation of this American intellectual institution counterpart.<sup>69</sup> Franklin was the only Founding Father to have been directly influenced by Mandeville, but he was merely one of many amongst the members of America’s elite rank to be indirectly affected, vis-à-vis *The Fable of the Bees*.

Mandeville, or at least his intellectual legacy, resided in fancier locales than the pale-alehouse of Cheapside, London. The second President of the United States of America, John Adams, was an adherent of the *Fable of the Bees*, and metaphorically provided lodging for Mandeville’s ideas. John Adams, one of the most controversial men ever to hold the office of the President of the United States, was a follower of Mandeville. As Autrey argues, “There can be no doubt that Adams not only alluded to Mandeville’s Fable of the Bees, but that he had read it himself and absorbed many of its teachings. He records his knowledge of the man and his

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<sup>66</sup> Max Lavon Autrey, “The Shaftesbury-Mandeville Debate and Its Influence in America” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1965), 244.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid..

<sup>69</sup> Ibid..

works in his Diary; he uses him often in his marginalia; and he clearly reflects the influence that Mandeville had on his thought.”<sup>70</sup> For example, upon reading a sermon by a Dr. South, Adams wrote in his *Diary* that Dr. South’s principles were essentially those laid down by Mandeville in the *Fable*.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, Adams’ personal library contained numerous volumes, many containing marginal notations in his own pen- often referencing Mandeville.<sup>72</sup> Adams and Mandeville shared similar views on government, and “To a great extent, Mandevillian influence was reflected in the framing of the United States governmental system, and no one man was more instrumental in bringing this about than was John Adams.”<sup>73</sup> In the previous declaration, Autrey may have borrowed Mandeville’s spirit of exaggeration; nonetheless, there are several key Mandevillian elements found in the American governmental system.

The concept of the system of checks-and-balances is most notably attributed to Montesquieu; however, Adams favor of Mandeville affected his reasoning as to its necessity. Adams agreed with Mandeville concerning the nature of man: people are primarily driven by self-interest. In an “Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue,” Mandeville notes, “After that I shew that those very Vices of every particular Person by skilful Management, were made subservient to the Grandeur and worldly Happiness of the whole.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, Adams could not trust a pure democracy, for he did not feel that people were innately virtuous or benevolent. Thus, “This [Mandevillian] skepticism concerning man, his motivations, abilities, and action, is partially responsible for the United States’ modified form of democracy, especially for the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 286-287.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 290-291, 301.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>74</sup> Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*. The Online Library of Liberty. A Project of Liberty Fund Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008), 79.

explicit statements of responsibilities and rights and the definite check-an-balance system as manifested in the bicameral legislature and the three separate branches of the federal government.”<sup>75</sup> Both Adams and Mandeville agreed that government was necessary as a means of controlling the passions of the human animal and making possible any semblance of civilized life. Adams did not keep his admiration of Mandeville to himself, and there are several recorded communications between he and other prominent figures concerning Mandeville.

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson shared a well-known companionship. Throughout the years of their friendship, the two corresponded by means of a prolific number of letters. In an 1816 letter from Adams to Jefferson, when attempting to answer Jefferson’s question concerning his views on morality and religion wrote, “If I had Strength, I would give you my Opinion of it in a *Fable of the Bees*.”<sup>76</sup> This shows Adams sympathies to Mandeville, as well as admiring his work. Adams was quite the competent writer, yet doubted his strength to write an opinion comparable to the *Fable of the Bees*. In the responding Letter, Jefferson wrote to Adams and uncharacteristically gave credit to the *Fable of the Bees*. Jefferson penned, “It is something good, I am sure, from the name connected with it [another work Adams recommend for Jefferson to read], and if you would add to it your *Fable of the Bees*, we should recieve [sic] valuable instruction as to the Uranologia both of the father and son; more valuable than the Chinese will from our bible-societies.”<sup>77</sup> At the time of these correspondences, the American Bible Society was attempting to proselytize to the world. Both Adams and Jefferson were deists (“The Ten

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<sup>75</sup> Max Lavon Autrey, “The Shaftesbury-Mandeville Debate and Its Influence in America” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1965), 313.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Abigail Adams, and John Adams, *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*, ed. Lester J. Cappon (1959; rear., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 494.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 496.

Commandments and The Sermon and the Mount contain my Religion”<sup>78</sup>) or deists, and as such they scornfully disapprove of the Jesuit missionaries. Additionally, Jefferson indicates that books of ideology, political economy, and ethics, including Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*, provide greater insight of theological astronomy and understanding than the Jesuit emissary missions to Asia with payloads full of their translations of the Vulgate. Once again, Mandeville is juxtaposed to the Bible, yet in this case, the former is applauded, and by the third President of the United States nonetheless. In addition to sharing his views of Mandeville with Jefferson, Adams and Royall Tyler also exchanged positive praise of the *Fable of the Bees* and its author.

During an outing, Adams encountered Royall Tyler, America’s first playwright of any notoriety. The two engaged in conversation, and the topic of Mandeville quickly captured the two’s attention. Tyler instructed Adams that “The Author of the Fable of the Bees understood Human Nature and Mankind, better than any Man that ever lived” and that “Every Man in public Life ought to read that Book.”<sup>79</sup> Adams, already an advocate of Mandeville, agreed with Tyler and the two talked of Mandeville and his reception. Tyler lends Adams a copy of a sermon preached by Dr. Robert South at Westminster Abbey on April 30, 1770, a sermon on the “Wisdom of this World,”<sup>80</sup> upon finding out that Adams had not read it. Tyler called it Mandevillian and Machiavellian, and in his diary, Adams would concur. However, the marginalia, diary entries, and other sources reveals that Adams’ understanding of Mandeville was much more mature and sophisticated than Tyler’s.

Tyler was quite read, yet his admiration and use of Mandeville and his ideas were grounded on a common, but questionable, interpretation. Tyler wrote a play, *The Contrast*, in

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 494. Adams on religion.

<sup>79</sup> Max Lavon Autrey, “The Shaftesbury-Mandeville Debate and Its Influence in America” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1965), 286, 375.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 375-376.

which his direct comments on Mandeville are shallow and reflect very little knowledge. This may have been due to his desire to write an “all-American” play, and thus show the common perception, instead of a more enlightened view he may have privately held. The view Tyler presents in *The Contrast*:

is an uniformed one indeed and reflects no awareness of his [Mandeville’s] satire or his [Mandeville’s] real purpose. However, these comments certainly reflect the usual knowledge and concept that people in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had of Bernard Mandeville—a vague misapprehension of a figure representing evil, foibles, vice. Even in Mandeville’s own time, too many people had this false concept—due to a lack of knowledge, exposure, or ability to realize his true ideas. Neither his contemporaries nor his later critics (in England or America) understood that he did present religious views not inconsistent with many common concepts, well conceived economic views, and basically sound theory of government. Because he tried to make his concept of the nature of man consistent with these other views, he had to be somewhat radical, and had to overstate for effectiveness. In other words, he tried to reconcile theory (concerning the nature of man) to practice (as demonstrated in religion, economics, and government).<sup>81</sup>

It is almost inconceivable that such a person as Tyler, a brighter light in early American letters, could not recognize what Mandeville had done. Therefore, the play’s basic presentation of Mandeville must reflect Tyler’s understanding of the common views on Mandeville. For, Tyler waxed encomium of Mandeville to John Adams, thus revealing his true intellectual standing, while his theatre piece played upon the conceptions prevalent at the time.

Despite the admiration of Mandeville expressed by Tyler, Alexander Hamilton may have been the strongest and most consistent advocate of Mandeville. Mandeville and Hamilton shared fundamental ideas and common beliefs on the structure of society. For example, with painful candor, Hamilton, along with James Madison and John Jay, explained in the *Federalist Papers* that man is vicious, vindictive, and usually irrational. For example, an oft-quoted section of Federalist Paper no. 10 (probably written by Madison, but elucidative of Hamilton’s views)

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 391-392.

reflects the skepticism of human motivation and impulses, “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.... It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.”<sup>82</sup> Hamilton stated that government, in order to be successful, must use as its foundation man’s avarice and ambition. This is basically Mandeville’s paradox. Hamilton did not fully believe in the validity of the paradox, but he said that government must be founded on it. In other words, Hamilton felt that man was quite subject to flattery, and this weakness reflected itself in his government.

In his pre-Revolutionary pamphlet, “The Farmer Refuted,” Hamilton stated that it was his belief that, in order to set up any governmental system and to construct a system of checks and controls, one must begin with the basic assumption that all men are knaves and only concerned with private interest. As he explained it:

Political writers...have established it as a maxim, that, in contriving any system of government, and fixing the several checks and controls of the constitution, every man ought to be supposed a knave; and to have no other end, in all his actions, but private interest. By this instinct we must govern him; and, by means of it, make him co-operate to public good, notwithstanding his insatiable avarice and ambition. Without this, we shall in vain boast of the advantages of any constitution.<sup>83</sup>

This language and argument is quite reminiscent of Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*. Mandeville and Hamilton considered humans to be driven by self-interest, and thus they were knaves needing manipulation by a government class in order to ensure public benefit. Mandeville and

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<sup>82</sup> Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam Dell, 1982), 316.

<sup>83</sup> Max Lavon Autrey, “The Shaftesbury-Mandeville Debate and Its Influence in America” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 1965), 329.



Hamilton shared many views, and if Hamilton had not suffered a premature departure from politics (and life) there may have been a stronger Mandevillian tone or feel in American government and character.

While Adams and Hamilton respected and incorporated Mandevillian thought, and Tyler considered Mandeville to be one of the most poignant, precise, and pointed authors on human nature, other members of nascent America's upper echelon did not share this view. Most notably, Thomas Jefferson, despite occasionally showing respect for Mandeville, not surprisingly did not agree with Mandeville. Jefferson's agrarian understanding of economics differed with Mandeville's laissez-faire commerce economy. Additionally, in a crude generalization, Jefferson viewed mankind to be essentially virtuous, capable of autonomous self-rule, whereas Mandeville considered man to be a clever beast requiring leaders to flatter and manipulate for the purpose of public benefit. While Jefferson's ideology was all but fundamentally antithetical to Mandeville's, "there is no explicit statement of any knowledge he might have had [study] of Mandeville. However, Jefferson, one of the most intellectual and encyclopedic of all eighteenth-century Americans, must have been quite familiar with Mandeville's writings."<sup>84</sup> Thus, America's second President was quite Mandevillian, whereas the third was quite definitely not.

Joseph Priestly, a leading American scientist (associated with the discovery of oxygen) and political theorist, shared contrasting idea of Mandeville. While a close association of John Adams, he set for himself, among other tasks, the task of refuting Mandeville. His efforts in science garnered him more notoriety.<sup>85</sup> The most successful critique of Mandeville's work came from George Berkeley. While an Irishman by birth, he was living in Newport, Rhode Island at the time he wrote his famous attack on the *Fable of the Bees*. Berkeley assaulted Mandeville

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 391.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 442.

with unusually high argumentation and literary presentation, compared to the bulk of condemnations directed at Mandeville; “Because Berkeley turned Mandeville’s own weapons (satire and ridicule) against him, he irritated Mandeville as did no other attacker. ... Berkeley labels Mandeville ‘theologically an atheist, politically a revolutionary, and socially a leveler.’ Mandeville felt he had been unfairly treated and badly misrepresented; as a result, he wrote his *Letter to Dion*, his last publication.”<sup>86</sup> The *Letter to Dion* would be Mandeville’s final attempt at vindication prior to his death. This work is indubitably directed at Berkeley. Not only did Mandeville use the *Letter to Dion* to confront Berkeley, but also he used it to defend his views. In his own words:

to rescue the Publick from a vulgar Error, which Thousands of knowing and well-meaning People, and your self, I see, among the Rest, have been led into by a common Repot, concerning the *Fable of the Bees*, as if it was a wicked book, wrote for the Encouragement of Vice, and to debauch the Nation. I beg of you not to imagine, that I intend to blame you, or any other candid Man like your self, for having rashly given Credit to such a Report without further Examination.<sup>87</sup>

This last publication of Mandeville’s life certainly countered Berkeley, but his ultimate aim of vindication may have failed.

A transatlantic interpretation of Bernard Mandeville affected the leading intellectuals of early America. Both appropriations and critiques of the author of the *Fable of the Bees* involved an engagement of the text and its legacy. Mandeville’s description of mankind was simultaneously both appealing and repulsive. The Framers of the Constitution wrestled with envisioning a society not inherently founded upon virtue. Mandeville presented a possible avenue of enquiry, but his presentation and philosophy were ultimately too abrasive or radical to

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>87</sup> Bernard Mandeville, *A LETTER TO DION: Occasion’s by His Book Call’d Alciphron, Or The Minute Philosopher* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1954)

be fully accepted. Nonetheless, the profundity of Mandeville's theories does subtly manifest itself in various early political writings and discussions.

### **VIII. Examination of Mandeville's American Appropriation Via Tacit Evidence**

The appropriation of Mandeville appears throughout early America in more subtle and important locations than in public broadsides, conversation between elites, or plays. The early political writings and structures of American government reveal a tacit presence of the legacy of Mandeville. These implicit reifications disclose intellectual allocation of numerous sources, including the author of the *Fable of the Bees*. For instance, the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 prompted intense debate amongst the Framers of America, both overtly and covertly. The Convention itself contained vehement, vociferous discourse, as well as establishing the conditions necessary for prompting the publications of the *Federalist Papers* and *Anti-Federalist Papers*. These intellectual outlets greatly shaped America and American opinion. Additionally, these cornerstone works of political Americana possess evidence of the appropriation of Mandeville.

The Philadelphia Convention of 1787 commenced to address the inadequacies of the Article of Confederation. Additionally, the fifty-five delegates discussed the fundamental intellectual infrastructure of the nascent nation. The Constitutional Convention did not settle on the principles of governance unanimously or without contention. Numerous debates and disagreements emerged concerning various aspects of government and ideology. Secondary sources assert that the delegates of the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 often divided into factions or camps in response to questions concerning the structure and the nature of the forthcoming government based on the ideologies of Bolingbroke and Montesquieu or Hume and

Mandeville.<sup>88</sup> In his Pulitzer Prize finalist single volume on the intellectual origins of the Constitution, Forrest McDonald noticed this philosophic division occurring throughout the Convention, and notes that on 26 July 1787, “a debate reverberated with Mandeville/Hume versus Bolingbroke/Montesquieu undertone and overtone.”<sup>89</sup> The Founding Fathers, the architects of American government, were learned gentlemen familiar with Mandeville and his work, some shared sympathies others hosting disapproval.

The issue of virtue was a central topic of debate during the Philadelphia Convention and the era in general. Not surprisingly, considering their circumstances, the 1780s were years when American politicians took political theory seriously. They read John Locke and David Hume, John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith and Bernard Mandeville, Machiavelli and Montesquieu, Liberals like John Trenchard and tories like Bolingbroke, and French physiocrats like Quesnay. Moreover, they returned to their Greek and Latin classics, reading Aristotle and Tacitus, Herodotus and Cicero. The upshot of their study and of their political experiences was a consensus that republican government required a well-ordered civil society. The republican government was to be ideally constructed upon the virtue of a nation’s citizenry. The political elite of early America took virtue seriously. James Madison, a particularly influential intellectual figure, spoke of virtue openly and through guise in the *Federalist Papers*. Publius [Madison] did not treat virtue as a chimera; he did not speak of it as though self-interest were the only reality. He certainly did not employ the cynical tones of a Bernard Mandeville, that classic case of the derivation of public good out of pure and unwitting private vice. Madison strove to achieve a strong, stable republic, yet he was fearful of basing government upon the elusive ideal

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<sup>88</sup> Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 200, 238, 241.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

of republican virtue. This paradox or dilemma of confronting and making compatible idyllic views of government with cynical or realist analyses of the governed.

This philosophical and practical problem vexed the Framers of the Constitution.

Concerning the Framer's dilemma, historian McDonald wrote:

On the one horn, almost all believed that men were motivated by their baser 'passions'—drives for self-gratification—most shared Mandeville's and Smith's analysis of the self-interested sources of prosperity ... On the other horn, they were thoroughly committed to the republican experiment and to the seemingly inescapable part of the commitment, that the actuating principle of republics was virtue in the citizenry.<sup>90</sup>

The perception of the common man did not strike the Framers as being compatible with the political theories. Madison developed an understanding that republican government does not virtuous citizens in order to operate or thrive. This notion of good governance without the presence of virtue is reminiscent of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. This allegory of a beehive tells of public benefit arising from self-interested passions and the resultant behavior. This Mandevillian scenario held that "No Bees had better Government, / More Fickleness, or less Content: / They were not Slaves to Tyranny."<sup>91</sup> This good governance existed despite the bees hoarding vice. Mandeville observes of the bees, "These were call'd Knaves, but bar the Name, / The grave Industrious were the same: / All Trades and Places knew some Cheat, / No Calling was without Deceit... THUS every Part was full of Vice, / Yet the whole Mass a Paradise."<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, being foolish idealists, the hive's inhabitants pray for virtue to come and liberate them from their passions and their self-interested vices. When, by Jove, the bees become virtuous, the prosperity of the hive collapses and vanishes. Thus, Mandeville, in his poem comes

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>91</sup> Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. The Online Library of Liberty, A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008), 66.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 67, 69.

to the conclusion, “Bare Virtue can’t make Nations live.”<sup>93</sup> This conclusion aligns with observation of human nature, as opposed to strict, rigorist adherence to political theory.

Madison, with much greater eloquence and couth, comes to similar conclusions; “Put simply, Madison like Mandeville imagines that self-interested pursuits, even vices, in a countervailing system can lead to the virtuous civil society necessary for republican government.”<sup>94</sup> Madison may have defended this position by means of semantic sophistry, as did Adam Smith. In order to avoid the moral qualms presented by Mandeville’s philosophy, “Adam Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations* (1776), argues that markets do inculcate certain ‘virtues.’ Indeed, the so-called ‘vices’ of Mandeville’s bees are in fact the ‘virtues’ of political economy.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, via Smith’s cooption of Mandeville’s defense of virtue-less good governance, Madison and others were able to engage in political discussions of republicanism without a need for a virtuous populace. The passing of several generations since the initial publication of the *Fable of the Bees* allowed for civil debate of a society without innate virtue, without invocations of heresy. *The Federalist Papers* continues this discussion of virtue, human nature, and government.

The project of rectifying human nature with republican virtue permeates the pages of *The Federalist Papers*. In “The Federalist No. 51,” Madison, using the name Publius, articulately comments upon the quandary and peculiarity of government, “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.... If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>94</sup> Stephen Schneck, “Three Models of Civil Society in the Framing of the U.S. Republic: 1781-1789,” in *Civil Society and Social Reconstruction*, ed. George F. McLean, Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change, I (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1997), 16: 93.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid..

govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.”<sup>96</sup> Yet, Madison recognized, as had Mandeville, that men were not angels. Indeed, in “The Federalist No. 55,” Madison, on human nature notes, “there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust... there is not sufficient virtue among men for self-government.”<sup>97</sup> These shocking, exaggerated proclamations of human nature are presented such that they may be overcome. In “The Federalist No 57,” Madison offers a solution to deal with the management of an un-virtuous populace, “The aim of every political Constitution is or ought to be first to obtain for rulers, men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue the common good of the society; and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous, whilst they continue to hold their public trust.”<sup>98</sup> Both Madison and Mandeville thought that mankind contained the capacity for depravity, and that the solution was to obtain good rulers to guide the masses to behave in a manner benefiting the public. Mandeville noted that, “no Species of Animals is, without the Curb of Government, less capable of agreeing long together in Multitudes [sic] than that of Man.”<sup>99</sup> Yet, government for Mandeville, as for Madison, could manipulate the governed and keep them “virtuous.” In various publications, Mandeville suggested that, “Private Vices by the dextrous [sic] Management of a skilful Politician may be turned into Publick Benefits.”<sup>100</sup> In another phrasing, Mandeville states, “After that I shew that those very Vices of every particular Person

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<sup>96</sup> Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2003), 316.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>99</sup> Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*. The Online Library of Liberty. A Project of Liberty Fund Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008), 77.

<sup>100</sup> Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *A Search into the Nature of Society*. The Online Library of Liberty. A Project of Liberty Fund Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008), 201.

by skilful Management, were made subservient to the Grandeur and worldly Happiness of the whole.”<sup>101</sup> Mandeville and Madison acknowledge that man is not primarily motivated by virtue and must be lead or dexterously managed for prosperity or public benefit.

The Constitutional Convention questioned the vision of the right type of prosperity and good governance. The federalists ultimately succeeded and formed a variant form of republicanism. Nonetheless, a large and vocal populace disagreed with these notions of government and mankind. Some of the first, and most critical, political commentaries come in the form of *The Anti-Federalist Papers*. These publications combated the federalists in the arena of public discourse. *The Anti-Federalist Papers*, like *The Federalist Papers*, also addresses the issue of virtue. *The Anti-Federalist Papers*, in several of the *Cato Letters*, shows an understanding of virtue incompatible with Mandeville, and offers an implicit reject of the *Fable of the Bees*. In *Cato Letter V*, the view of society and virtue is expressed as follows, “the progress of a commercial society begets luxury, the parent of inequality, the foe to virtue, and the enemy to restraint; and that ambition and voluptuousness, aided by flattery, will teach magistrates where limits are not explicitly fixed to have separate and distinct interests from the people.”<sup>102</sup> These starkly anti-Mandevillian tenets show that America, *in toto*, did not provide fertile ground for a philosophy based on a categorical denial of virtue and public spiritedness to take root.

The aforementioned discussion reveals the previously hidden presence of Mandeville within the elite circles and early political publications of America. These tacit arguments of

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<sup>101</sup> Mandeville, Bernard. 1988. *An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*. The Online Library of Liberty. A Project of Liberty Fund Inc.. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/846> (accessed October 7, 2008), 79.

<sup>102</sup> Ralph Ketcham, ed., *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates: The Clashes and the Compromises that Gave Birth to Our Form of Government* (New York: New American Library, 2003), 318.



familiarity, and at times appropriation, show the lingering impact of Bernard Mandeville. The mentioned political activity may be interpreted as the hypostatization of numerous political theories and social philosophies, including Mandeville and his contribution to intellectual history.

## VII. Conclusion

In his own time, Mandeville was an international sensation. He was famous and infamous. Allusions to his works appeared in all levels of society and in all media. Nonetheless, the exaggerated language and the satirical style kept many from achieving anything but a sophomoric understanding of his work. Additionally, numerous detractors sought to shape Mandeville's reception, and they may have been more successful than the *Fable's* author. Mandeville was not fully appreciated in America in the eighteenth century or any time there after, but this does not detract from the insights for which he was responsible, the movements which he instigated, and the invaluable tests for religion, politics, and economics, and general philosophy which he offered. While authors, playwrights, politicians, and even a president accepted and adopted Mandeville, no one seemed to fully accept Mandeville's theories *in toto*. His questioning of the origins of human morality and society, his advocacy of laissez-faire economics, and his scientific or Newtonian-Deism markedly shaped America, with little recognition. The transatlantic interpretation of Bernard Mandeville influenced America.

The radical rejection of virtue and public spiritedness irreconcilably pitted Mandeville against the American experiment of republicanism. The optimistic project of the Framers confronted the dilemma of forming a republic without assuming republican virtue of the general populace. While they could have utilized the philosophy of Mandeville to overcome this paradoxical dilemma, the international scandal, abrasive presentation, and fundamentally un-

American cynical faith in mankind kept Mandeville from fully becoming a viable ideological foundation. Instead, more liberal fixes were adopted. For instance, while Madison and Mandeville came to similar conclusions concerning good governance, they supported their claims with essentially different justifications and rationales. Additionally, John Adams, perhaps the greatest adherent and appropriator of Mandeville of the time period, could not fully accept the moral ramifications of Mandeville's political commentary. Despite offering an appealing intellectual oeuvre, Mandeville ultimately was unpalatable amongst America, in general.

Nonetheless, Mandeville and his work did find root in various aspects of America. Having survived the initial British brandings by the Church and the Court, the *Fable of the Bees* crossed the Atlantic and found readership. The American reception is undeniable, but the level of appropriation is arguable. Tacit evidence reveals the presence of Mandeville throughout various early American political debates and publications. The specter of Mandeville forced the Framers to question the origins of good governance, the duties of government, the role of virtue, and human nature. Perhaps the greatest function of Mandeville in nascent America was to act as a catalyst to asking pertinent and fundamental questions. While Mandeville's philosophy was not openly welcomed, regaled, and praised, the spirit and appropriations of Mandeville are discernibly visible in the transatlantic theatre throughout the eighteenth century to the knowledge historian.

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  - In this article, the author accuses Benjamin Franklin of being an unoriginal plunderer of theories. Multiple authors are mentioned as sources of Franklin's alleged intellectual theft, including Mandeville.
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