Mandeville and Hume

anatomists of civil society

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The Fable of the bees and the Treatise of human nature were written to define and dissect the essential components of a ‘civil society’. How have early readings of the Fable skewed our understanding of the work and its author? To what extent did Mandeville’s celebrated work influence that of Hume? In this pioneering book, Mikko Tolonen extends current research at the intersection of philosophy and book history by analysing the two parts of the Fable in relation to the development of the Treatise.

Focussing on the key themes of selfishness, pride, justice and politeness, Tolonen traces the evolution of Mandeville’s thinking on human nature and the origins of political society to explore the relationship between his Fable and Hume’s Treatise. Through a close examination of the publishing history of the Fable and F. B. Kaye’s seminal edition, Tolonen uncovers hitherto overlooked differences between Parts I and II to open up new approaches in Mandeville scholarship. As the question of social responsibility dominates the political agenda, the legacy of these key Enlightenment philosophers is as pertinent today as it was to our predecessors.

1. Introduction: Sociability and sceptical sentimentalism

2. Intellectual change in Bernard Mandeville

   i. Hobbism in The Fable of the bees

   ii. The critique of Hobbism in the 1720s
ii. Part II and the history of civil society

3. The publishing history of The Fable of the bees

i. Mandeville’s publishers and the question of copyright ownership

ii. Jacob Tonson the younger and The Fable of the bees

iii. Part II and Origin of honour

4. Social theory in A Treatise of human nature

i. Hutchesonian leanings and anatomy of morals

ii. Hume’s distance from The Fable of the bees and his attachment to Mandeville

iii. Self-love and justice

iv. Self-liking and politeness

v. Government and political sociability

5. Epilogue

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