

The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society (Ideas in Context)

By E. J. Hundert

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The apprehension of society as an aggregation of self-interested individuals is a dominant modern concern, but one first systematically articulated during the Enlightenment. This book approaches this problem from the perspective of the challenge offered to inherited traditions of morality and social understanding by Bernard Mandeville, whose infamous paradoxical maxim "private vices, public benefits" profoundly disturbed his contemporaries, while his The Fable of the Bees had a decisive influence on David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant. Professor Hundert examines the sources and strategies of Mandeville's science of human nature and the role of his ideas in shaping eighteenth century economic, social and moral theories.

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Review
"Hundert's account of Mandeville's ideas, sources, and influence on later thinkers is both comprehensive and detailed." American Historical Review

"This is a spirited history of great culture and learning that delights on every page....certainly his [Hundert's] meticulous retrieval of Mandeville's enduring notoriety is a fluent, provocative, and exciting tour de force." Canadian Philosophical Reviews

From the Back Cover
The apprehension of society as an aggregation of self-interested individuals, connected to one another only by bonds of envy, competition and exploitation, is a dominant modern concern, but one first systematically articulated during the European Enlightenment.

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