

THE UNEVENTFUL RECEPTION OF MANDEVILLE'S IDEAS IN THE EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY DUTCH REPUBLIC, OR THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE MISSING OUTRAGE

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The heated debates that Bernard Mandeville's work inspired in Britain, France, and Germany are well-documented. No such account is available for the public reception of his ideas in his country of birth, the Dutch Republic. This paper seeks to fill that void. Remarkably, his ideas did not cause much of a stir. Consequently, the paper explains the divergent pattern of response from the Dutch. It is argued that his ideas were either reverting to disputes that had already been settled or were out of touch with the general climate of opinion in the Netherlands.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bernard Mandeville was in many ways a central figure of the Enlightenment. While Mandeville's writings were judged as scandalous, if not worse, the impact of his ideas in the eighteenth century was enormous in forcing his contemporaries to face the disparity between traditional views and values and the new realities of commercial society. The Anglo-Dutch "philosopher" and satirist is rightly portrayed as a catalyst, "a torch to a pile of dry wood" (Reinert 2019, p. 185). His works, and the shocking 1723 edition of his *Fable of the Bees* in particular, triggered many into scrutinizing and recasting their beliefs. They raised controversies that made Mandeville the eighteenth-century thinker

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par excellence to be rebutted. Paul Sakmann's *Bernard de Mandeville und die Bienenfabel-Controverse* (1897) still provides the most extensive discussion of what "the author of the Fable of the Bees" brought about.

Thanks to Sakmann and others (e.g., Kaye 1922, and [1924] 1988, pp. cxiv–cxlvi; Grégoire 1947, pp. 194–218; Carrive 1980, ch. 2), the reception of Mandeville in Great Britain, France, and Germany is well-documented. As to Britain, no text on Bernard Mandeville fails to mention the public outrage upon publication of the 1723 edition of his *Fable of the Bees*. It is standard procedure to recall that the book was pronounced a public nuisance by a Grand Jury (Kaye [1924] 1988, p. cxvi). Newspapers, journals, books, and sermons all expressed their repugnance of the outrageous claims made by the author. William Law penned down his abhorrence in *Remarks on a Book Intituled, the Fable of the Bees* (1724). John Dennis came to the rescue of Christian religion in *Vice and Luxury, Publick Mischiefs* (1724). George Blewitt wrote *An Enquiry whether a General Practice of Virtue tends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage of a People?* (1725). Bishop Berkeley took Mandeville to task in *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher* (1732). Francis Hutcheson castigated Mandeville in three letters to the *Dublin Weekly Journal* in 1726. Adam Smith listed Mandeville's thought under the heading of "licentious systems." He noted that the book occasioned a general "alarm among those who are the friends of better principles" (Smith [1759] 1976, VII.ii.4), which sums up the British reception pretty accurately.

Public outcry was not confined to England. In France (Muceni 2015) Mandeville became known from the French translation of his *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church and National Happiness* (1720), and the reviews and summaries in learned journals after the 1723 edition of the *Fable*. Critics really started to stir after a French translation of the *Fable* appeared in 1740. As in England, controversy centered on the attack on religion and the Mandevillean claim of the usefulness (and even necessity) of vice and luxury to society and prosperity. Many feared such views would infect and threaten the health of society. The *Fable* intrigued and infuriated Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who qualified Mandeville as "the most excessive detractor of human virtues" (1964, p. 130), whose dangerous maxims had caused man to indulge his vanity and follow self-interest rather than virtue and duty. A public hangman committed the *Fable* to the flames, and in 1757 the Sorbonne disqualified Claude Helvétius's *De L'Esprit* as a Mandevillean work (Hundert 1994, pp. 58, 104). Jean-François Melon's apology for extravagance and luxury after Mandeville was met by a response from Rousseau, who restored the classical view linking corruption and luxury (Jennings 2007, p. 87).

Eighteenth-century Germany (Fabian 1976) never saw a translation of the first part of the *Fable of the Bees*. Mandeville's books that did occasion a German edition, the *Free Thoughts* and *Fable of the Bees, Part II*, had only a limited circulation. However, this is not to say that Mandeville's ideas were ignored. In fact, they met with serious resistance in various reviews and publications by prominent German scholars such as Hermann S. Reimarus and Friedrich H. Jacobi. The *Free Thoughts* were widely regarded as a "piece of Satanic writing" (Fabian 1976, p. 719) produced by a religious indifferentist. Judgments of the first and second part of the *Fable* ranged from dangerous to atheistic. *Part II* was published in 1761 under the curious title *Anti-Shaftesbury oder die Entlarvte Eitelkeit der Selbstliebe und Ruhmsucht*, thus suggesting that whereas Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury (who enjoyed considerable popularity in Germany) sought

to dress natural man with virtue, his opponent Mandeville endeavored to show his moral nakedness.

In the Dutch Republic, Mandeville's country of birth from which he emigrated to London in 1691, things were different from in Great Britain, France, and Germany. As was to be expected, Mandeville was not hailed there either. In that sense, the Dutch Republic formed no exception and accorded with the biblical truth that a prophet is not honored in his own country. However, what was practically absent in the Netherlands was the public outcry displayed in countries like Britain, France, and Germany. Everywhere Mandeville stirred up commotion, except in his country of birth, where the public reception was uneventful. It is this puzzling fact that is established in the next two sections of this article.¹ Section II discusses the reception of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, and continues in section III with his religious ideas as expressed in his *Free Thoughts*. If the public did not cry out, this fact itself cries out for an explanation. In this paper we argue that in the Dutch Republic Mandeville's ideas failed to inspire public debate because (1) they reverted to disputes that had already been settled, and (2) his views were out of sync with developments and the climate of opinion in the Dutch Republic. These explanations are dealt with in turn in sections IV and V. Section VI concludes.

II. THE RECEPTION OF *THE FABLE OF THE BEES*

Although Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* was first published in 1714, only the 1723 edition, which included an essay on charity schools, caused widespread indignation in Britain. In the Dutch Republic, the very first public reference to the *Fable* was to this same second edition. Central to the book is Mandeville's claim that counterfeited virtue—not the real thing because that was too demanding for man—was no more than disciplined self-love. The works of charity made the poor unfit for duty and bred discontent and instability. Public spirit was the result of skillful management by politicians tricking people into actions that served the public interest. And for good measure, too, because otherwise there would be neither prosperity nor felicity, a claim that the author summarized in his notorious formula “private vices, publick benefits.” The opening poem featuring a beehive served as an illustration of this Mandevilleian truth. He provoked with the charge of hypocrisy and challenged the Christian duty to act virtuously with claims of vices being rewarded by benefits. Equally disturbing was the claim that extravagance and self-indulgence would not harm society, and the justification of the emulative and acquisitive passions indulged in luxury spending by their desirable effects in terms of growth and employment.

In the Netherlands only echoes of criticisms in England and France were heard. According to Armand de La Chapelle, minister at the Walloon church in The Hague, the *Fable* was a book full of dangerous maxims that caused “great noise in England.” It was he who first introduced the book in the Netherlands, in a review in the *Bibliothèque*

¹ Hanou (2008) made a start with mapping the reception of Mandeville in the Netherlands, while Gai (2004) provides a useful overview of reviews of Mandeville's books and those of his opponents in eighteenth-century French-language journals. In this article, Mandeville's medical works will be ignored.

Angloise (1725, vol. 13, 1, pp. 98–125). This Amsterdam periodical, founded by Michel de La Roche (see below), at the time was directed by La Chapelle, who in all likelihood also authored the review in question. He told his readers that those who planned to refute the book should nevertheless know its contents. Instead of banning or talking only secretly about a dangerous book containing a “system of libertinage,” its aura of mystery could better be removed by openly showing the book’s weaknesses. Hence the lengthy summary that followed. The reviewer is particularly critical of the *Fable’s* “Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue,” which, according to La Chapelle, by denying a real distinction between virtue and vice—thus building on the ideas of Michel de Montaigne, Jacques Esprit, and Pierre Bayle—undermined the moral foundations of society. A “brilliant mind, and capable of becoming at some time the Bayle of Great Britain” (1725, vol. 13, 1, pp. 124–125), Mandeville unfortunately lapsed into badinage and superficiality. Apparently no one entertained any plans at refutation as none materialized.

A second review from the *Bibliothèque raisonnée* (1729, vol. 13, 2, pp. 402–445) has been classified as “perhaps the least hostile censure” to appear in a French-language periodical (Muceni 2015, p. 455). Written by an anonymous Huguenot based in Holland, it summarized at length not only the original fable with accompanying remarks and essays but also the six dialogues from *The Fable of the Bees, Part II*. As the reviewer sees it, Mandeville tried to overcome some accusations of the first book in the second but failed to do so. Particularly weak are those places in the second part of the *Fable* where he tried to reconcile reason and revelation. And yet, the reviewer’s conclusion is that the books are not unworthy of being read by people who can distinguish between truth and falsehood. “If there are false, hazardous, and dangerous thoughts in this work, there are also correct, ingenious, and perhaps new reflections,” reads his cautious final conclusion.

The reviewer of the third and final review from 1741, probably the Amsterdam Huguenot Henri Du Sauzet, would have subscribed only to the former, negative verdict. He argued in the *Bibliothèque Française* (1741, vol. 23, 2, pp. 315–319) that the book’s “dangerous principles” have deservedly led to a hostile reception in England and France. According to Du Sauzet, Mandeville deliberately abstained from a clear moral-philosophical system since paradoxes and sophisms fit a disorderly style better. “A friend of details, digressions, and rehashing,” he basically imitated Bayle but with less art and appeal. Again Mandeville is reproached for failing to use his intellectual powers and wit to the benefit of virtue, and to have satisfied himself with mocking virtue. Rather than that most scorn was reserved for his ideas, Du Sauzet emphasized that Mandeville’s performance was below par.²

The three periodicals just discussed, which had the function to signal and summarize new book publications at home and abroad, were quick to pay attention to Mandeville’s critics as well. The same holds true for other French-language journals like the Amsterdam *Journal des sçavans*, The Hague *Journal littéraire* and *Bibliothèque Britannique*, and Leyden *Journal historique de la république des lettres*. They presented their Franco-Dutch readers with commending reviews of, among others, George Blewitt, George Berkeley, William Warburton, and Francis Hutcheson. Thanks to these appraisals for Mandeville’s British opponents, between 1725 and 1755 a whole arsenal of counter-

² After the reviewer has noted that Bayle did a better job in the arrangements of his views, he comments, for instance, that “[I]es digressions de Mr. Mandeville sont ennuyeuses, ses plaisanteries sont froides, ses peintures des mœurs sont sans noblesse & sans finesse” (*Bibliothèque Française*, 1741, p. 319).

arguments against Mandeville was established (Stafford 1997). In the second half of the century, moreover, a steady stream of Dutch translations were published, which strengthened the general case against authors like Mandeville, who were seen to derogate virtue and Christianity. The most popular authors were the Dano-Norwegian philosopher Ludvig Holberg (author of a series of letters criticizing skeptics, deists, and atheists), Bishop Warburton (whose *Divine Legislation of Moses* defended traditional Christianity against deism), and the German Lutheran theologian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (who, as a church historian, dealt with many “enemies of Christianity”).

Relying on foreign sources to criticize Mandeville,³ there were no such contributions on Dutch soil. And if Mandeville’s name came up, it featured in lists of the usual suspects. At best, Mandeville was counted among skeptics like Michel de Montaigne and Pierre Charron or deists like Charles Blount, John Toland, Anthony Collins, Thomas Woolston, Thomas Morgan, Thomas Chubb, Viscount Henry St. John Bolingbroke, and Shaftesbury.⁴ Occasionally his name was mentioned in one and the same breath with such radicals as Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, Pierre Bayle, and Julian Offray de La Mettrie. Rather than having his ideas discussed, Mandeville was pronounced guilty by association.

Some were receptive to Mandeville’s own suggestion that the *Fable* was a specimen of irony. One of them was the anonymous publisher of *La fable des abeilles, ou les fripons devenus honnêtes*, the French translation of the *Fable* that appeared as late as 1740, probably in Amsterdam (Muceni 2015, pp. 452–454). The four-volume translation based on the sixth edition contains both the first part of the *Fable* and the second part with the dialogues. The most interesting part, from our perspective, is an “Advertissement des libraires” that sides with those people who received the *Fable* with appreciation. Mandeville’s sole purpose, we are told, was to “ridicule the vices and extravagances of men” (1740, 1, p. ii). He sought to humiliate man and to that end revealed the secret springs of his behavior. Rather than an apology for the corruption of man, it is a work of irony, as the British author himself testified in various places.

A Dutch-language translation of the *Fable* saw the light only in the twentieth century. Justus van Effen, who earlier translated the *Free Thoughts*, apparently expected no good from it. Van Effen was a central figure in the early eighteenth-century republic of letters (Buijsters 1992; van Bunge 2007, and 2018, ch. 4). He was a versatile person, who served as a tutor in aristocratic circles and as secretary to Dutch ambassadors in England. He was also a translator and journalist. Van Effen rendered Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, and Mandeville in French, and launched several periodicals, including *Le Misantrophe* (1711–12) and *Hollandsche spectator* (1731–1735). Inspired by the English *Tatler* and *Spectator*, he sought to provide his readers with moral instruction and to

³ Thus in the *Journal littéraire* of 1733, mention is made of Mandeville’s *Letter to Dion* (1732) as a response to the charges made by Bishop Berkeley in his *Alciphron*. The same periodical reviewed the latter work in 1734 (vol. 24, 1, pp. 67–76), summarizing the various dialogues, including the second dialogue in which Berkeley attacks Mandeville for his claim that vices are necessary to the felicity and happiness of states.

⁴ The Dutch minister Annaeus IJpeij (1797, pp. 263ff) honored him with a place between the “coarse deists.” Designating the *Fable* as “a rhapsody of the greatest absurdities and most vengeful fundamentals,” he argued that by linking virtue to the decay of society, Mandeville attempted to destroy the ethic of both the Christian religion and natural religion. According to IJpeij, Mandeville’s appraisal of vice was fully consistent with his personal life of intemperance and drunkenness—even to the extent that it had become a saying in England that his life was as bad as what the *Fable* wanted for all mankind.

educate them in such Enlightenment values as tolerance, reasonableness, and sociability. An intermediary between French and English culture, van Effen in all this showed himself a lover of English literature (de Man 2003; Kloek and Mijhardt 2004, pp. 65–70) and eager to share English work of enlightened writers with Dutch and French readership.

Van Effen's modern biographer, Piet Buijsters (1992, p. 186–189), suggests that he must have heard of the *Fable* as early as 1715 in one of the London coffee houses when he visited the city during a diplomatic mission. But whereas Mandeville's writings on religion presented much he could endorse, the *Fable* contained ideas that touched a sour spot. Van Effen explicitly rejected Mandeville's view on the artificiality of virtue and held different views on luxury. In one of the contributions to his *Hollandsche spectator* (no. 36, February 1732), he launched an attack on the idea that a flourishing commerce exists by the grace of lies and deceit. Denoting his opponent as "a certain foreign" and "sensible writer," van Effen argues that, judged by Christianity's golden rule, in business it is allowed to deceive others only a little without fraud. Mandeville failed to distinguish between misrepresentation, on the one hand, and deceit and fraud, on the other.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, there was no real debate in the Netherlands on morality and moral philosophy to which the book could contribute. At Dutch universities, the subject was largely neglected and treated as an appendix to the study of natural law.⁵ Apart from the reviews and translations, no one felt the need to put that depraved author right. There was no one to challenge the author and beat him at his own game, no pamphlets, no sermons, no trials or book-burnings, no general alarm. In a word, uneventful.

III. THE RECEPTION OF *FREE THOUGHTS*

The ambiguous reception of Mandeville's *Fable* may also have been influenced by the fact that learned readers in the Dutch Republic already were acquainted with Mandeville as the author of *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church and National Happiness*. This lesser-known book by "B. M." on religion also enjoyed a deviant pattern in its reception in the Dutch Republic: the book did get attention and was received with qualified approval.

Mandeville's *Free Thoughts* was soon reviewed in four journals and appeared in two translations, one French and one Dutch. As such, it received much more attention in Mandeville's country of birth than in his new homeland. In Britain, it failed to attract public notice and generated but little response (Primer 2001, p. iii). Despite two reprints within three years, a writer called "A. B."—possibly a pseudonym of Mandeville, as Paul Anderson (1937) argued—in the *British Journal* (no. 28, 30 May 1724) decried the disinterest of his compatriots in "an excellent book, too little known. It is Dr. Mandeville's Free Thoughts on Religion, &c. To the reproach of our taste, it has

⁵ It was only in the second half of the century that a new interest in moral-philosophical questions arose, both in and outside academia. At stake were the foundations of morality, the nature of human happiness, and the legitimacy of self-love. In the debate over these issues, Mandeville's name was occasionally mentioned (e.g., by Abraham Perrenot, Hendrik Constantijn Cras, and Paulus van Hemert), albeit mainly in passing without wasting many words on him.

been twice translated into French, and yet is scarcely known in England. It was written for the interest of the establishment; and yet the friends of the establishment have, for want of reading it, not promoted it." How different this was in the Dutch context.

Mandeville's *Free Thoughts* presented his views on religion and issues of church-and-state (Goldsmith 1985, pp. 94ff; Primer 2001). The book's arrangement is clear from the full title: the first five chapters deal with religious questions, the next five with church politics, and the final two with political matters. As Mandeville explicitly acknowledges in the preface, much of what followed was derived from Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, the Huguenot who taught in Rotterdam during his teens. Mandeville's book is a plea for toleration (except for Catholics and other minorities who threaten Britain's peace and stability) and moderation. The author opposes all religious factions and criticizes the clergy of all ages, whether Protestant, Catholic, or pagan, for their lust for power and wealth. In his anti-clericalism, Mandeville does not attack Christianity as such and basically subscribes to the fundamental truths of the Gospel, which, according to him, require rigorous self-denial. He claims to be a member of the Church of England, and refers to it as "our church" (Mandeville 1720, passim). When it comes to questions of government, Mandeville's views are Whiggish. He argues for the state's authority in civil and military matters, and actually defends the legitimacy of the Hanoverian dynasty.

Shortly after its publication, the *Free Thoughts* were reviewed in two French-language journals. One of them, The Hague's *Memoires litteraires de la Grande Bretagne* (vol. 4, 1722, pp. 205–237), was somewhat positive. Actually, Mandeville could not have wished for a better outlet. Its editor, Huguenot Michel de La Roche, likewise moved from Holland to London and entered the Anglican Church, identifying himself with the Latitudinarians. A friend and translator of Bayle, he served the cause of religious tolerance combining Arminian, Latitudinarian, and deistic views (Janssens-Knorsch 2003). The actual review follows the eighteenth-century custom of providing a lengthy summary with abstracts, opening with the general observation that the book is "full of bold strokes." More critical was the review in the *Memoires historiques et critiques* (vol. 2, 1722, pp. 45–54). It was printed in Amsterdam by another Huguenot, Jean Frédéric Bernard, and Antoine-Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière was responsible for the book reviews. The latter's Catholic background is clear from his critique of Mandeville's partiality. However eloquent and vivid his writing style, the author "relies too much on prejudices that deceive him." Apart from confusing religion, the church, and the Pope, he is said to exhibit a boldness inappropriate for a Christian author.

The two competing Dutch review journals that existed at the time paid attention to Mandeville's book as well. Gerard Onder de Linde's *Maendelyke uittreksels, of Boekzael der geleerde werelt* (Monthly extracts, or book room of the learned world) devoted no less than seventy-one pages to it, spread over three issues (1723, vol. 16, pp. 688–714; vol. 17, pp. 71–96; vol. 17, pp. 152–172). Unlike La Martinière, it praises the author for his impartiality and the way he reveals people's true motives in religious and theological matters. Mandeville is presented as a member of the Episcopal Anglican Church who is willing to humbly subject himself to God's infinite wisdom. His plea for tolerance receives particular attention. The journal's competitor, *Republyk der geleerden* (Republic of the learned), reviewed the Dutch (1724, vol. 2, pp. 324–343) and French translation (1738, vol. 5, pp. 214–232) of the book. Both reviews remark that the title arouses suspicion as if it is the work of a freethinker, i.e., someone who argues

independently of religious authority or tradition and hence is not to be trusted. Whereas the first is mostly a summary, the second review stresses Mandeville's free and sharp style. It concludes that the author treats most theological matters rather superficially and shows himself more of a politician than a theologian. Mandeville is right to address the mistakes of the clergy, but his exposition would be more effective "if it were presented godlier and more modestly, and a clearer distinction was made between the good and the bad" (*Republyk der geleerden* 1738, vol. 5, pp. 232).

The French translation, *Pensées libres sur la religion, l'église, et le bonheur de la nation*, first appeared in 1722 with Isaac Vaillant and Nicholas Prevost in The Hague and in a new, corrected edition in 1723. The German translation that appeared three years later was probably based on one of these French editions. In 1729 and 1738, two more impressions of the *Pensées libres* were produced by the Huguenot bookseller François L'Honoré in Amsterdam. It was on the title page of the latter that the translator's name, van Effen, was first disclosed. The Dutch translation, which seems to have escaped Mandeville's attention, was published in 1723 under the, again literal, title *Onpartydige gedachten over de godsdienst, de kerk, en des volks geluk*. The translator of this book, printed with the Janssoons van Waesberge family in Amsterdam, is unknown to the present day. Unfortunately, both the French and Dutch editions lack a dedicatory letter, foreword, or any additional annotations. This makes it hard to establish what exactly motivated these publishers and translators to make available Mandeville's *Free Thoughts* to a Continental readership.

Although van Effen did not share all of Mandeville's views as expressed in *Free Thoughts*, he must have valued its dependence on Bayle. His French journals from the 1710s and 1720s show that van Effen was particularly enthusiastic about Bayle's defense of religious toleration. Even for an author charged with atheism, his views on toleration were perfectly consistent with the Protestant tradition (van Bunge 2018, pp. 63–65). On only two occasions, in two episodes of his *Hollandsche spectator*, van Effen directly commented on Mandeville. One of them (no. 47, 7 April 1732) is devoted to Mandeville's views on religion—incidentally, without mentioning his name. Worried by the rise of irreligion and atheism, van Effen laments the situation in a "certain rich and wealthy country," i.e. England, where religion is out of fashion and blasphemy is commonplace. This has disastrous consequences, since religion is the very foundation of morality. The Mandevillean idea that people's religious feelings have no divine origin but are the "effect of cunning politics," meant to fuse them in a political body and make them work for the common good, therefore is a dangerous one, according to van Effen. If there were no God or Eternal Lawgiver, the distinction between virtue and vice would indeed be an artificial one. However, the fact that virtue sustains society and vice undermines it proves that the two are essentially distinct.⁶ In Germany, where even a pamphlet against the book came out, Mandeville's *Free Thoughts* faced severe criticism. In the Dutch Republic, by contrast, it did not give rise to a public debate whatsoever. In texts from the 1720s and 1730s, only a few references to this "judicious little work" can

⁶ Van Effen objects to the view "that religion is a bridle, in the hands of the wise, to lead and direct the foolish people according to their will" (1732, p. 134). While Mandeville offers Christianity and honor as separate systems of control, van Effen considers the system of honor to be as a surrogate system and argues that the decay of society caused by ungodliness may be only temporarily delayed by "honour, the shadow of real merit" (1732, p. 136).

be found. From the late 1730s and 1740s, the *Free Thoughts* fell into disrepute. Now the book's free thoughts were judged all too free, and its author was reckoned among the modern deists. In his biography of van Effen, with whom he collaborated on the *Hollandsche spectator*, Pieter Verwer argued that while he could not judge on the impartiality of the book, Mandeville's thoughts were "free thoughts for sure, although the author has properly masked them. As to his sentiments, it is known where this doctor belongs to, and how far his freethinking extends" (Verwer 1756, p. lvi). At the end of the century, Dutch minister Annaeus IJpeij in his church history concluded that Mandeville intended the *Free Thoughts* to be less offensive than his *Fable* but failed to make it so. By casting doubt on some doctrines of the Gospel, Mandeville anyhow manifested himself as "enemy of Christianity" (IJpeij 1797, p. 269). The change in the book's valuation may be explained by the fact that initially the *Free Thoughts* was not recognized as a product of the author of the *Fable of the Bees*. Only in 1733, the *Bibliothèque Britannique* on the occasion of his death revealed Mandeville's authorship.

Mandeville's views on religion were no major event, even though they received attention and were considered to contain valuable parts. They were ill-fated as soon as he was identified as the author of the *Fable*, but his views as such did not inspire much controversy in his native country, where the religious controversies that he discussed primarily belonged to the past. As J. Leslie Price (2008, p. 300) remarks, "in general the eighteenth century saw the triumph of rational religion with only very faint echoes of the religious disputes which had threatened to tear the Republic apart in the previous century." This reason for the lack of outrage in the Dutch Republic will prove a *leitmotiv* in the deviant pattern in the reception of Mandeville's views. The reception of Mandeville's views were thus uneventful and came nowhere near the public outcry they met in other European countries. Why this deviance from the usual pattern?

IV. A FIRST EXPLANATION: HARKING BACK TO DISPUTES MORE OR LESS SETTLED

People were enraged by the paradoxes Mandeville presented his readers, which left them seeming to be a bunch of hypocrites. These paradoxes were built on disparities between Christian beliefs and values, on the one hand, and societal aspirations (and what it required to realize them), on the other. The tension between the two was real enough and painful, and required a process of reconciliation. The Dutch Republic, at the time of Mandeville's writings, already had had its process of reconciliation. After a century of heated dispute, most people had accepted the need for tolerance and diversity in religious affairs, and also the gap between wealth and virtue had already been addressed extensively. To put it bluntly, there was not enough tension left between Christian values and societal aspirations in Dutch society to start a fire. It was the lack of this ingredient that separated the Dutch response from the alarmist response elsewhere. Set in the Dutch context, Mandeville's views reached back rather than forward.

To begin with his religious ideas, Mandeville's *Free Thoughts* about toleration and moderation, the Gospel's obscurity, and the relationship between church and state were anything but new. This was true not only because most of them were borrowed from the Dutch-based Bayle, but also because similar ideas had been voiced long before

in the Dutch Christian humanist tradition of Desiderius Erasmus and Dirck Volkertsz Coornhert. In the seventeenth century, the case for religious toleration, reasonableness, and critical biblical scholarship was defended by Jacobus Arminius, Simon Episcopius, Hugo Grotius, and other members of the Remonstrant or “Arminian” current within the Dutch Reformed Church (see van der Wall 2003; Stanglin 2016) in which also Mandeville was raised. Eventually, after decades of bitter theological and political conflict, the Remonstrant minority was not only tolerated in itself, it also began to exert a serious influence among members of the republic of letters. This normalization of Christian humanist and Remonstrant views at the expense of stricter Calvinism explains why the *Free Thoughts* were not rejected outright. “On religion,” one minister wrote, “here and there he makes some pretty healthy remarks” (Hoffmann 1775, p. 72).

Another illustration that the fire had died out in religious matters was the lack of response upon publication of an *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* one year before Mandeville’s death. Continuing the dialogues of the *Fable of the Bees, Part II*, he discusses religious issues in a manner we today would call “sociology of religion,” emphasizing the moral, social, political, and economic functions of religion and its contribution to the wealth and greatness of society. From this perspective, he argues in four dialogues the superiority of the system of honor as compared with Christian virtue to regulate social intercourse. Picturing human nature in dark colors, Mandeville leaves no doubt that in general man is incapable of true virtue, weak as he is to deny himself the run of his passions. Originating in self-liking, which makes man susceptible to the opinions and sentiments of others and makes pride and shame the prime movers in human nature, honor works so much better than Christian virtue because there is no need for self-denial and its rewards are real and tangible. Although (Christian) virtue and honor are both systems of morality that have an evolutionary history, the invention of the second he regards “a greater achievement by far” (Mandeville 1732, p. 42). The mechanism by which humans learn to control their passions is run on pride and self-indulgence, at which mankind is so much better than self-denial. Moreover, a society founded upon Christian virtue—however improbable—is incompatible with a prosperous, powerful, and warlike society (so much for the usefulness of Christianity in war). Although diametrically opposed to Christian virtue in personal relationships, the system of honor is beneficial for society and worldly affairs.

The *Enquiry* generated very little response in the Dutch Republic. A review in two parts appeared in the same *Bibliothèque Britannique* (1733, vol. 1, 1, pp. 1–36; vol. 2, 1, pp. 1–16) that announced Mandeville’s death and summed up his writings. Rather than evaluating the book, it offers an extensive summary of the arguments. The first part of the review ends with the proviso that “all we have said must be put on the author’s account; we have only translated and abbreviated it” (vol. 1, 1, p. 36). Apart from some comparisons with the views of Bayle, the reviewer leaves it at the remark that in the preface of the work the author makes confessions that might be surprising from the author of the *Fable of the Bees*: “He recognized, first of all, that it is better to conduct oneself according to the light of reason, than to abandon oneself to one’s passions; and that virtue is preferable to vice, not only in relation to the peace and general happiness of society, but also in relation to the temporal felicity of individuals, which it procures” (1733, vol. 1, 1, p. 2). The reviewer thus suggests that he revised his earlier view that private vices are public benefits.

However, the sting was taken out of the debate not only because Dutch society during the seventeenth century had learned to live in conditions of religious toleration and diversity. Economic conditions in the Dutch Republic also contrasted sharply with England. Paul Slack (2009) has argued that England experienced a period of material progress in the seventeenth century, but due to prolonged conditions of war and being engaged in severe international economic competition trying to catch up with the Dutch, it took until the end of the seventeenth century before England's position as most advanced nation was secure and it began to face the challenge of affluence in its awkward relationship with traditional ideas of religion and morality. The Dutch Republic had faced this challenge earlier on.

In *The Embarrassment of Riches* (1988), Simon Schama sketches the ambivalent attitude of the Dutch towards growing riches in the seventeenth century. On the one hand, it is a story of a conglomerate of rebellious provinces of Philip II's Spanish empire situated at an advantageous geographical location, which united and acquired within decades an enviable position of wealth and power and became the center of learning and culture. On the other hand, there are the warnings from the pulpit about the lures of money: God's judgment awaits. The golden calf and consequent wrath of God were popular themes in sermons. Zeeland minister Godfried Udemans in his *Geestelyck roer van't coopmans schip* (Spiritual rudder of the merchant ship, 1640) emphasized the need to have priorities right: "Honour before gold." Not that people needed to turn their back on the world in Franciscan poverty. John Calvin himself had called for moderation rather than abstinence but to stay well clear from "unbridled desire." Schama speaks of a "practical compromise" to which worldly and religious leaders resorted in order to prevent getting caught in unbridgeable value systems. "In this working compromise, the regents acknowledged the need for some sort of antipecuniary ethic to restrain capitalism from anarchy and abuse, and the church recognized that, however perilous for a godly Republic, Dutch wealth was a fact of life and could be made to work for righteous ends" (Schama 1988, p. 338). The embarrassment of riches had produced a compromise and the eighteenth century had nothing of the open nerve in the Dutch Republic that the paradox of virtue and wealth still proved to be in England and France.

Neither would *An Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools*, with which the *Fable* was extended and which caused so much noise in Britain, have raised any dust in the Netherlands. In this essay Mandeville argued that often charity is inspired by motives of pride and vanity and thereby does not qualify as virtuous. Moreover, charity is often counterproductive in encouraging idleness, discontent, and vice. Thus he attacked the reform movement and its charity schools, questioning the underlying humanitarian motives as well as its benefits to the poor and society at large.⁷ This raised no dust in the Netherlands because charity (and charity schools) were taken as neither counterproductive nor a showing-off.

First, Mandeville objected to charity schools on the ground that they messed up the sensible policy of keeping the poor contented, industrious, and supplied with necessities. Schooling was to breed discontent, idleness, want for comforts; it was far better to keep them poor and ignorant. Compared with other countries at that time, however, labor in

⁷ Mandeville emphasized the movement's hypocritical nature. These charity schools set out to teach the children of the poor sound habits of religion and morality, and to install a sense of obedience and duty, which would reconcile them with their fate of poverty.

the Dutch Republic was highly urbanized, with a relatively high level of education and standard of living (de Vries and van der Woude 1995). And although unemployment and poverty increased in the eighteenth century, the Dutch Republic had moved beyond the idea of keeping laborers poor and ignorant. Indeed, far from being counterproductive, charity schools were seen as an useful instrument to combat poverty rather than that it was feared that education would upset societal relations (van der Giezen 1947).

Second, England had a national system of poor relief, financed through obligatory taxes (“poor rates”), while Holland had a system of varied arrangements of local assistance based on voluntary donations. Dutch welfare in the Republic was at least of equal measure as in England, even though decentralized and reliant on benevolence (Heerma van Voss and van Leeuwen 2012; van Nederveen Meerkerk 2012; van Nederveen Meerkerk and Teeuwen 2014). The Dutch system of donations was organized through collections (during church services, in towns, and door-to-door collections), in which church and town authorities worked together to extract donations, emphasizing one’s Christian charity and the care for the less fortunate in sermons as well as the call for civic duty by secular authorities. All strata of the local community participated in the system of care through donations, which was surprisingly stable. Several reasons are offered in the literature: the level of wealth in the Republic, the broad segment of the middle classes, the visibility of local poverty institutions, the organization through local religious communities (Teeuwen 2014). The system of charity was a personal, practical system to which all ranks and strata contributed, in which Christian duty and the need to deal with socio-economic realities concurred. Accusations of showing off feelings of superiority by being generous simply were unfounded.

If the charity essay provoked Mandeville’s contemporaries by the antagonism between Christian morality and social and economic reality, this tension was even more pronounced in *A Modest Defence of Publick Stews* (1724), written under the pseudonym of “Phil-Porney.” Extending a few sentences on this subject in the *Fable* (remark H), the book presents a proposal for government-regulated brothels. It rebukes the repressive efforts of (religious) moralists and lawgivers alike to force back prostitution, an entirely futile enterprise in Mandeville’s estimation, given human nature being what it is. In typical Mandevillean fashion, the proposal is offered as a way to protect the virtue and chastity of honest women by containing and controlling prostitution. The essay is well-argued, pragmatic, and utilitarian, trying to minimize the evils of prostitution by reducing “private whoring” (seduction, rape, adultery, street prostitution, and its inconveniences) as well as by providing for a safe, cheap, and convenient alternative in public stews. However degrading prostitution may be from the point of view of individual morality, against objections of the immorality of his scheme, Mandeville counters that by offering such services government only takes its task of promoting the welfare of society seriously. The *Modest Defence* was translated as *Venus la Populaire, ou apologie des maisons de joye* (Venus the popular, or apology of houses of joy, 1727). This French version, purported to be issued in London but actually published at The Hague (Kaye 1921, p. 452), hardly left any traces.

Underlying Mandeville’s proposal for remedying this persistent problem is the claim that commercial society, with its new conditions of wealth and welfare, had come with a new set of rules of governance that contrasted with traditional Christian morality. It came with a new calculation and management of risk, one that not only reckoned with moral risks but that also included economic, social, and health risks (Nacol 2015). Treating

prostitution as a moral risk alone, and emphasizing repression as the answer, invites crime and public disorder. Why not opt for means that reduce the evil consequences of behavior that can never be driven out and increase welfare? Although in the Dutch Republic prostitution was equally condemned, this underlying message of new risk management had been received and accommodated in the seventeenth century.

The debate that Mandeville ignited on the compatibility of Christian morality and the aspirations of wealth and power had raged in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century and no one cared much for a replay.

V. A SECOND EXPLANATION: VIEWS OUT OF STEP WITH THE DUTCH—THE LUXURY DEBATE

The lack of interest in such a replay can be linked to another explanation of why Mandeville's views fell to barren land: they were out of sync with developments in the Dutch Republic. The Golden Age of the Dutch had passed and the growth of prosperity and power of the Dutch Republic had lost momentum. In the eighteenth century the declining state of society and the economy defined the climate of opinion, as becomes clear from the luxury debate.

Luxury was the focal point in various eighteenth-century debates, at crossroads of economic as well as moral, political, and social issues of a society in transformation (Berg and Eger 2003). The destructive effects of luxury consumption had been an issue ever since antiquity. Three basic claims were made against luxury consumption (Sekora 1977; Berry 1994): luxury triggers vice (avarice, prodigality, envy, etc.); engenders the loss of civic virtue; and leads to loss of physical prowess. Luxury was thus associated with ruin to the individual as well as to the community as it tends to weaken the ties of society and the individual potential of each member of society. It is this set of beliefs that started to give way in the eighteenth century as luxury, linked to trade and commerce, proved to have beneficial effects. With the rise of the idea of trade and commerce as a positive-sum game, not only trade but also luxury were given new meaning. Such attempts triggered fierce responses because the exaltation of luxury clashed with the Christian and republican critiques of luxury, claiming that public benefits followed from private morality, like thrift and austerity. The emulative and acquisitive passions were disruptive of society and hence in need of moderation and restraint to bring out virtue and frugality, necessary to realize benefits.

Jan de Vries (2003) distinguishes between old luxury—the ostentation, waste, and pomp that allowed the wealthy elite to show off and signal their rank and status at the expense of the ruled—and new luxury—the spread of reproducible products and comforts in commercial and urban societies, becoming available to many people as consumption acquired a new cultural meaning by which people communicate and signal sociability. Mandeville's defense of luxury, showcase of the maxim "private vices, public benefits," was a landmark in the transition from old to new luxury. Unfortunately, as Mandeville challenged his readers, it is not true that prosperity and power are built on thrift and austerity. It is the private pursuit of superfluity inspired by vices like greed, pride, and envy rather than virtue that generates stability, wealth, and greatness. Thus Mandeville presented luxury as a model of development, emphasizing that commercial

society implied a new constellation of luxury, passions, and vices in creating stability and prosperity, in comparison with earlier forms of society (Verburg 2015).

Mandeville's contribution pushed the debate forward. Given that luxury was a fact of life in commercial society, it was no option to ban luxury. And thus the search was on to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. Istvan Hont captures this development by distinguishing between two different luxury debates: the debate between "ancients" and "moderns" about the corrupting influence of luxury and a second debate between "moderns" that turned on the issue of how to make economic prosperity "politically and morally benign" (Hont 2006, p. 380). These were no longer two contrasting polar views but rather trying to formulate the conditions under which luxury spending is beneficial and when it is harmful to society and individual alike. In the course of the eighteenth century, the argument developed that luxury was a prime motivator to economic activity and innocent if kept within limits of position and passions. With the development of the claim that luxury promoted productivity and economic growth, provided income and employment, and supported national efforts to acquire and maintain a position of wealth and power, the emphasis shifted from moral to economic arguments. Christopher Berry (1994, p. 101) thus shows how, first, luxury is extricated from its predominantly moralistic overtones, shifting discourse next towards the political "understanding of well-being in terms of economic prosperity." Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger comment on the same development while adding the role played by Mandeville, when they wrote that "[a]fter Mandeville, luxury was increasingly seen in terms of economic advantage" (2003, p. 10). Drawing attention to Mandeville's role in the evolution of the debate on luxury, however, at the same time points towards the anomalous luxury debate in the Dutch Republic.

In the seventeenth century, Holland became the logistical, distributional, and financial center of the world. It was the dominant economy in Europe and, for other European countries, the example to follow and target to beat. The Republic's thriving economy generated an abundance of goods as well as rising income and consumer expenditures for an increasing number of people. As a consequence, it was increasingly difficult to draw a clear line that guaranteed that opportunities for getting and spending did not get in the way of salvation. In sermons, ministers warned that people might get too comfortable and happy in the here and now and forget that ultimately it was the state of the soul in the hereafter that mattered.

De Vries (2003) has identified two strands of thought on luxury in seventeenth-century Dutch society: the Christian critique—thrift, austerity, and charity as signs of devotion and virtuous living and the corrupting influence of riches—and the republican critique of wasteful ostentation that characterized monarchies and loss of public spirit. These two strands failed to develop into a theory of the new luxury. The eighteenth-century debate instead took a couple of steps backward by returning to the classical themes of corruption and decline. This turnaround followed when, from the 1670s onwards, England and France rivaled the Dutch Republic. Gradually the Republic lost momentum and its comparative advantages and, in the eighteenth century, it lagged behind. All the classical arguments against luxury sprang back to life to explain this unfortunate turn of events.

Thus the second stage of the luxury debate in the Netherlands was set in the context of decline and the wish for the return of economic felicity (Nijenhuis 1992b). In the *Hollandsche spectator*, van Effen argued that moral corruption had led to the decay

of Dutch power and riches. The Dutch had started to imitate French culture, renouncing the successful ways and practices of their forefathers, and thereby had bartered away their economic might. Linking virtue up with the bourgeois values of yore, he claimed the return of success if these moral values would be restored in their former glory. Van Effen praised the virtues of decency, thrift, and austerity, while Mandeville did his best to put them away as idle and dreaming virtues (Mandeville [1724] 1988, 1, p. 105). Van Effen thus took a position opposite to Mandeville's in deploying the traditional (moralistic) view that understands public benefits to result from virtue (Hunt 1995).

Also from the pulpit, people were called upon to put on the hair shirt. As evidenced by freedom and prosperity, God had blessed the Dutch Republic in the Golden Age profusely but now had withdrawn His blessings as the people had taken to indolence, ostentation, and idleness. Many of these vices had been imported from abroad, and the only way to turn the tide was by returning to the austerity and diligence of their forebears. The ruling class in particular had failed, wallowing as they did in the socially acceptable French culture and giving themselves over to a life of licentious leisure.

This causal relationship between virtue and economic prosperity sketches the basic view on the causes of decline throughout much of the eighteenth century. To suggest that a vice like luxury formed a more reliable source of wealth, as Mandeville did, was to turn the moral world upside down. Such a teaching had been refuted as early as Juvenal's verse *saevior armis / luxuria*: "luxury is crueler than arms" (van Nuys Klinkenberg 1784, p. 29). Given these moral causes, the primary remedy to put a stop to economic decline and cultural decay was moral rearmament, ending corruption. This also was the anti-Mandevillian message Dutch periodicals conveyed (Sturkenboom 1998, pp. 201ff).⁸ Revitalizing the classic notion of luxury and its destructive effects, the debate emphasized moral causes and had no part in the development of a new discourse on luxury in which economic arguments became more prominent. Only in the second part of the eighteenth century did Isaac de Pinto come up with similar arguments to distinguish between innocent and vicious luxury (Nijenhuis 1992a), as were put forward in Britain and France. In his oration on luxury (1771, pp. 11n, 50n; cf. 1773, pp. 15n, 55n, 66n), Meinardi Tijdeman wasted only a few footnotes on them. Quoting Mandeville extensively in his *Brieven over de weelde* (Letters on luxury; as highly detrimental to virtue and happiness, and pernicious for civil society, [1789] 1791, 2, pp. 23–25, 220–224; cf. 1, pp. 9–10), Cornelis van Engelen also takes no pains to prove him wrong. If views clashed, why was there no outcry? Two arguments may be offered.

First, conditions in the eighteenth century seemed to prove Mandeville wrong. In the seventeenth century the Netherlands had become "a society in which the potential to purchase luxuries extended well beyond a small, traditional elite. A substantial tranche of society was now in a position to exercise choice—to enter the market and spend money to fashion a consumer culture" (de Vries 2003, p. 50). With an increasing number of people endowed with discretionary income, an urban culture developed that allowed a new kind of luxury. Mandeville praised the blessings of luxury, pointing out that luxury was necessary to ensure adequate employment to the laboring poor. Yet, in the face of extravagance and luxury, the Dutch Republic experienced a period of unemployment.

⁸ Explicit mentions of Mandeville can be found in, for example, *De philanthrope* (no. 253, 5 August 1761); *De denker* (no. 21, 23 May 1763, and cf. no. 25, 20 June 1763); and *De patriot* (no. 20, 7 November 1747).

De Vries argued that economic decline was most apparent in the growth of structural unemployment as the labor-intensive parts of industry and fisheries paced down. As Jan R. Zuidema (1992, p. 30) concluded in his sketch of the economic transformation: “Unemployment became endemic in the towns and remained so until after 1850.” This development showed its ugly face in the rise of pauperism (de Vries 1968, p. 170; de Vries and van der Woude 1995, pp. 782ff). Rising unemployment seemed to defy Mandeville’s analysis and cancelled the claim of the necessity of luxury to provide employment and income to the laboring poor.

Second, the rejection of the claim that luxury does provide employment, income, and wealth raised questions about the larger thesis of the necessity of vice to benefits like wealth and power. With no benefits to show for vice, it seemed much more likely that virtues were required to generate benefits. Again the climate of opinion took a route opposite to Mandeville’s assertions. The leading concern was the question as to why the Republic, now surpassed by England and France, had lost its place and found itself on the road to decay. The prevailing answer harkened back to the idea of indulgence in destructive luxury. A strong work ethic and frugality had been replaced by indolence and prodigality, and a spirit of slackness had settled on the Republic, causing decline. Such was the prevalent view in the anonymous *Korte schets van ‘s lands welwezen* (Short sketch of the country’s welfare, 1714), the *Verhandeling over den koophandel in de Republicq der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Discourse of commerce in the Republic of the United Netherlands, 1751). The same message was propagated in the spectatorial journals and the essays that sought to answer the prize contest put out by the Dutch Society of Sciences in Haarlem on the principles, growth, and decline of Dutch trade and commerce by Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel, Adriaan Rogge, and Cornelis Zillesen (1771) as well as Elie Luzac’s *Hollands Rijkdom* (Holland’s wealth, 1780).⁹

Given the frame of mind that emphasized moral causes of economic and cultural decline, adhering to the causal relationship between virtue and prosperity, the Dutch Republic did not follow the trend of the demoralization of luxury, as Berry has called it (1994). It is more proper to speak of the “remoralization” of luxury, i.e., returning to a language of morality and virtue to discuss luxury rather than a language made up of economic arguments. No wonder Mandeville’s views did not strike a chord. Having found domicile in England, Mandeville benefitted from the seventeenth-century debate on luxury in the Netherlands to push the debate forward in Britain. Whereas Mandeville in England triggered the luxury debate into a discussion of the role and function of new luxury in a commercial society, emphasizing its positive economic consequences, the debate in the Dutch Republic turned backwards. Although the role and meaning of luxury had changed, the debate continued to be set in terms of the old discourse, “the only vocabulary available” (de Vries 2003, p. 51). To point out the hypocrisy involved, Mandeville’s paradox was built on this distinction between old luxury and new luxury. Speaking about new luxury, Mandeville touched upon issues that already had been widely accepted in the Dutch Republic. When such a theory of new luxury was

⁹ After WW II, historians have set the record straight. In the revised view, economic causes take center stage, emphasizing the impact of structural changes in economic circumstances and economic order. It was not that the Dutch were beaten at their own game but that structural changes in all economic sectors gradually destroyed the economic advantages the Republic had had in the Golden Age over other countries (de Vries 1959; de Vries and van der Woude 1995).

developed, it was in eighteenth-century Britain. Experiencing times of economic and political decline, the Dutch Republic took a backward-looking attitude and stuck to the old discourse on luxury.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Republic's Golden Age was followed by a period of decline and stagnation. After the death of William III in 1702, an elite of regents took control of government. Culturally oriented towards France, they were happy to live on the fortunes made and the glory of past times with no ambitions for change or caring much for their civil responsibilities, while economic conditions worsened, the gap between rich and poor widened, and the Republic's international position and power declined. So the Age of Enlightenment in the Republic coincided with the latter years of the Golden Age and centered on the theme of decline and restoration, focusing on reasonableness and restoring bourgeois virtues. Rather than seeking to antagonize institutions (like the absolute monarchy as in France or the state church in England), it was a time of reconciliation between reason and faith as the battles for freedom and toleration had been fought in the previous century. As Price remarked:

This was a conservative culture, certainly in comparison with some of the more dynamic aspects of the European Enlightenment, but this was partly because Dutch society had already achieved most, if not all, of the aims of the moderate Enlightenment. This was a country where the public sphere was already well developed, religious toleration was firmly established in practice if not in theory, and arbitrary government had been defeated more than a century earlier. (Price 2008, p. 300)

Consequently, Mandeville's views were received in a significantly different context, affecting the way his work was appreciated and judged. His views on religion, and virtue and vice, did not invite heated debate, as the fire in these disputes and controversies had already died out. Mandeville's views on luxury were out of touch with conditions and the climate of opinion in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Drawing from his knowledge of the positions taken and compromises reached in seventeenth-century Dutch debates, Mandeville inspired controversy as he expounded views at variance with commonly held convictions and beliefs (Cook 2002, 2008). The positive function of luxury Mandeville propagated, and which had been one such Dutch compromise, was equally at odds with the trend in Dutch thinking as luxury became part of the explanation of Dutch decline and stagnation.

The conclusion that for a Dutch audience Mandeville's views were too familiar, on the one hand, and too different, on the other, finally raises the question of how these two explanations relate. Rather than as mutually exclusive, they may be seen as complementary when we realize that Mandeville contributed to different debates at the same time. Though overlapping, theological questions and questions of church and state formed a different debate from the debate on luxury, which was economic—but increasingly moral-philosophical—in nature. This might explain why some of Mandeville's views sounded little that was new while others were untimely. Their reception in

the Dutch Republic was anyhow uneventful, without the outrage that marked his reception in Britain, France, and Germany.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests exist.

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