

The Fable of the Bees

or

Private vices, public benefits

Bernard Mandeville

1732

Copyright © Jonathan Bennett 2017. All rights reserved

[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis Indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type. —The work consists mainly in

- a set of 20 ‘Remarks’ on bits of a 9-page poem; preceded by
- the poem itself, presented with letters of the form of **[A]** against the bits to which Remarks are addressed;
- a longish Essay on charity and charity schools, and another on the origin of society (the black-type subheadings in these are not in the original); and
- materials attacking the first edition of this work, followed by Mandeville’s defence.

In some Remarks and in the Essay, each CROSS-HEADING in small capitals marks the start of a new topic, but no indication is given of where the topic ends.

First launched: May 2018

Contents

Preface	1
The Poem	4
Introduction	13
An enquiry into the origin of moral virtue	14
Remarks A through L	19
Remark A	19
Remark B	20
Remark C	20
Remark D	25
Remark E	26
Remark F	26
Remark G	27
Remark H	30
Remark I	32
Remark K	33
Remark L	34
Remarks M through P	39
Remark M	39
Remark N	42
Remark O	46
Remark P	52
Remarks Q and R	55
Remark Q	55
Remark R	60

Remarks S, T, V, X and Y	69
Remark S	69
Remark T	69
Remark V	75
Remark X	77
Remark Y	78
An essay on charity and charity schools	81
Pity	81
Charity schools	86
Why there is so much crime	87
Why charity schools became fashionable	89
Why people are charmed by charity schools	91
What is intrinsically wrong with charity schools	93
How education should be organised	96
Against putting poor children out to trades	98
Charity schools and religion	100
The cheerfulness of the working poor	102
National public works	103
A search into the nature of society	106
Realism about beauty and goodness	106
Hypocrisy and the 'calm virtues'	108
Sociableness	110
The nature of society	112
Two comic scenes	115
Returning to the main theme of the book	117
The risks and benefits of shipping	119
Winding up	121
Vindication	124
The Presentment of the Grand Jury	124
The letter complained of	125
Mandeville's comments	129

Glossary

connive: Used here in its proper sense: if you ‘connive at’ my doing x, you pretend not to know that I am doing it, although really you ought to stop me. From a Latin verb meaning ‘wink’.

content: In Remark V and the related part of the Poem, this noun means ‘contentment’.

cross: a small coin; ‘without a cross’ means ‘without money’.

curious: Mandeville’s uses of this seem to involve one or more of three of the OED’s senses for it: ‘exquisite, excellent, fine’, ‘interesting, noteworthy’, ‘deserving or arousing curiosity; strange, queer’.

dipped: mortgaged

emulation: competitive copying

encomium: high praise

enthusiasm: This is sometimes replaced by ‘fanaticism’. Where it is allowed to stand, it still stands for something hotter than mere ‘enthusiasm’ is taken to be today.

felicity: happiness

industry: industriousness, willingness to work hard

Leviathan: As used on page 118 this has both its role as the name of a mythical sea-monster and its meaning (derived from Hobbes’s classic work) as ‘commonwealth’.

limner: painter; especially portrait-painter

mischief: harm

mortify: humiliate; similarly ‘mortification’

operose: labour-intensive

polite: polished, civilised

politician: Mandeville often uses this word to mean something like ‘person who makes it his business to modify and manipulate our behaviour’.

presentment: An action whereby a local Grand Jury ‘presents’ to the relevant judges its considered opinion that a certain person ought to be charged with a crime.

prodigal: excessively free-spending. The idea that a prodigal is someone who leaves home and then returns comes from misunderstanding the biblical title ‘the parable of the prodigal son’.

rapine: plunder; seizing property by force

sumptuary laws: Laws enforcing frugal and simple modes of living.

temporal: Temporal happiness is happiness in this life; in contrast with eternal happiness in the after-life.

vicious: morally bad; not as intense or focussed as the word is today; Similarly ‘vice’.

voluptuous: Given to sexual pleasure

vulgar: ‘the vulgar’ are people who not much educated and not much given to thinking.

Vindication

For the reader to be fully instructed in the merits of the cause between my adversaries and myself, before seeing my defence he should know the whole charge and all the accusations against me. [For 'presentment', see the glossary.]

The Presentment of the Grand Jury

We the Grand Jury for the County of Middlesex have with the greatest sorrow and concern observed the many books and pamphlets that are almost every week published against the sacred articles of our holy religion, and all discipline and order in the church; and the manner in which this is carried on seems to us to have a direct tendency to propagate infidelity and consequently the corruption of all morals.

We are aware of the goodness of the Almighty that has preserved us from the plague that has afflicted our neighbouring nation, for which his majesty was pleased to command that thanks should be returned to heaven; but how provoking must it be to the Almighty that his mercies and deliverances to this nation and our thanksgiving that was publicly commanded for it should be accompanied by such flagrant impieties.

We know of nothing that can be of greater service to his majesty and the Protestant succession (which is happily established among us for the defence of the Christian religion) than the suppression of blasphemy and profaneness that has a direct tendency to subvert the very foundation of his majesty's government.

So restless have these zealots for infidelity been in their diabolical attempts against religion that

- (1) They have openly blasphemed and denied the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, trying by specious

pretences to revive the Arian heresy, which was never introduced into any nation without the vengeance of heaven pursuing it.

- (2) They affirm an absolute fate, and deny the providence and government of the Almighty in the world.
- (3) They have tried to subvert all order and discipline in the church, and by vile and unjust reflections on the clergy they strive to bring contempt on all religion; so that by the libertinism of their opinions they may encourage and draw others into the immoralities of their practice.
- (4) So that a general libertinism may more effectively be established, the universities are decried and all instructions of youth in the principles of the Christian religion are exploded with malice and falsity.
- (5) The more effectively to carry on these works of darkness, they have used elaborate tricks to run down religion and virtue as prejudicial to society and detrimental to the state; and to recommend luxury, avarice, pride, and all kinds of vices as being necessary to public welfare and not tending to the destruction of the constitution. Indeed, they have tried to debauch the nation by publishing far-fetched defences and forced praises of brothels.

These principles having a direct tendency to subvert all religion and civil government, our duty to the Almighty, our love to our country, and regard for our oaths, oblige us to present [see Glossary] E. Parker and T. Warner, publishers of the book entitled *The Fable of the Bees; or private vices public benefits*, second edition, 1723, and of *The British Journal*, nos. 26, 35, 36 and 39.

The letter complained of

Here is the letter I complain of.

My Lord,

It is welcome news to all the king's loyal subjects and true friends of the established government and succession in the illustrious house of Hanover that your Lordship is said to be contriving some effective means of securing us from the dangers that his majesty's government seems to be threatened with •by Catiline, •by the writer of a book entitled *The Fable of the Bees* etc., and •by others of that fraternity.¹ These people are undoubtedly useful friends to the Pretender,² and diligent for his sake in working to subvert and ruin our constitution under a specious pretence of defending it. Your Lordship's wise resolution to suppress such impious writings totally, and the direction already given for having them immediately presented by some of the grand juries, will convince the nation that no attempts against Christianity will be allowed here. And this conviction •will at once rid men's minds of the uneasiness that this wicked crew of writers has tried to raise in them; •will therefore be a firm bulwark for the Protestant religion; •will defeat the projects and hopes of the Pretender and best secure us against any change in the government. And no faithful Briton could be unconcerned if the people imagined *any* neglect by *any* person with a part in the government, or began to suspect that anything could be done that is not done in defending their religion from every appearance of danger. . . . The people of England will never give up their religion, or be very fond of any government that will not support it—as the wisdom of

this government has done—against such audacious attacks as are made upon it by the scribblers. As your Lordship knows, 'scribbler' is the right label for every author who, under whatever plausible appearance of good sense, tries to undermine his fellow-subjects' religion, and therefore their content and quiet, their peace and happiness, by subtle and artful and fallacious arguments and insinuations. May heaven avert those insufferable miseries that the church of Rome would bring upon us! Tyranny is the bane of human society; and there is no tyranny heavier than that of the triple crown worn by the popes. So this free and happy people has justly conceived an utter abhorrence and dread of popery, and of everything that looks like encouragement for it; but they also hate and fear the violence offered to Christianity itself by our British Catilines, who shelter their treacherous designs against it under the false colours of good will towards our blessed Protestant religion, while they all too plainly show that the title 'protestants' does not belong to them unless it can belong to those who are in effect protesters against all religion.

The people are naturally a little unwilling to part with their religion; for they tell you that there is a God, who governs the world, and that he is wont to bless or blast a kingdom in proportion to the degrees of religion or irreligion prevailing in it. . . . I wonder whether your Lordship can show, from any writer (even one as profane as the scribblers would like), that any one empire, kingdom, country or province did not dwindle and sink and fall into confusion when it once failed to provide intense support for religion.

¹ [In this letter, 'Catiline'—borrowed from a Roman Senator who in 63 BCE conspired to overthrow the Roman republic—refers to the author of letters in *The British Journal*, referred to in the scope of the Grand Jury's presentment, though they were signed 'Cato'. On page 128 Mandeville is referred to as an 'auxiliary' of Catiline = Cato.]

² [Meaning 'claimant to the throne'; this was James Francis Edward Stuart, who claimed to be the son of James II.]

The scribblers talk much of the Roman government, and liberty, and the spirit of the old Romans. But it is undeniable that their most plausible talk of these things is all pretence and face-pulling and an artifice to serve the purposes of irreligion and thus make the people uneasy and ruin the kingdom. If they really did esteem the main purposes and practices of the wise and prosperous Romans, and would faithfully recommend to their countrymen the Romans' sentiments and principles, they would remind us that old Rome was as remarkable for observing and promoting natural religion as new Rome has been for corrupting revealed religion. . . . Whenever the ancient Roman orators were doing their utmost to move and persuade the people, they reminded them of their religion, if that could be any way affected by the point in debate; not doubting that the people would decide in their favour if they could demonstrate that the safety of religion depended upon the success of their cause. And indeed neither the Romans nor any other nation ever allowed their established religion to be openly ridiculed, exploded or opposed; and I'm sure your Lordship would not want this thing that was never endured in the world before to be done with impunity among us. Did ever any man, since the blessed revelation of the Gospel, run riot upon Christianity as some men—and indeed a few women too—have recently done? Must the devil grow rampant at this rate, and get away with it? Why should he not content himself with carrying off people in the common way, the way of cursing and swearing, Sabbath-breaking and cheating, bribery and hypocrisy, drunkenness and whoring, and suchlike things, as he used to do? Never let him domineer in men's mouths and writings as he does now, with tremendous infidelity, blasphemy and profaneness, enough to frighten the King's subjects out of their wits. . . .

·ABOUT CHARITY SCHOOLS·

Arguments are strenuously urged against the education of poor children in the charity schools, though not one sound reason been offered against the provision made for that education. The things that have been objected against it are not in fact true. . . . How can Catiline look any man in the face after saying that this pretended charity has in effect destroyed all other charities that were previously given to the aged, sick and impotent—spending more confidence in this than most men's whole stock of confidence amounts to?

It seems pretty clear that if those who do not contribute to any charity school become more uncharitable to any other object than they were formerly, their lack of charity to the one is not due to their contribution to the other! As for those who *do* contribute to these schools: they are so far from becoming more sparing in their relief of other objects, that the poor widows, the aged and the impotent plainly receive more relief from them, in proportion to their numbers and abilities, than from any men under the same circumstances of fortune who concern themselves with charity schools only in condemning and decrying them. I will meet Catiline any day in the week and demonstrate the truth of what I say by an enumeration of particular persons, in as great a number as he pleases. But I do not expect him to meet me, because it is his business not to encourage demonstrations of the truth but to throw disguises on it; otherwise he could never have allowed himself, after representing the charity schools as intended to breed up children to reading and writing and sober behaviour, so as to be qualified to be servants, immediately to add the words 'a sort of idle and rioting vermin, by which the kingdom is already almost devoured, and are become everywhere a public nuisance' etc. *What?* Is it because of the charity schools that servants have become so idle, such rioting vermin, such a public

nuisance; that women servants become whores and men servants become robbers, house-breakers and sharpers? (as he says they commonly do.) Is this because of the charity schools? And if it is not, how can he allow himself the liberty of representing these schools as a means of increasing this load of mischief, which has indeed too plainly fallen upon the public? Imbibing principles of virtue has not usually been thought to be the chief cause of running into vice! If the early knowledge of truth and of our obligations to it were the surest means of departing from it, nobody would doubt that the knowledge of truth was instilled into Catiline very early and with great care. He insists that there is more collected at the church doors in a day to make these poor boys and girls appear in caps and livery-coats than is collected for all the poor in a year. O rare Catiline! You'll carry this point most swimmingly; for you have no witnesses against you except the collectors and overseers of the poor, and all other principal inhabitants of most of the parishes in England that have charity schools.

The jest of it is, my Lord, that these scribblers still want to be regarded as good moral men. But when men make it their business to deceive their neighbours in important matters by distorting and disguising the truth, by misrepresentations, and false insinuations—if *those* men are not guilty of usurpation when they take upon them the character of good moral men, then •it is not immoral for any man to be false and deceitful in cases where the law cannot touch him for being so, and •morality bears no relation to truth and fair dealing. . . . Your Lordship, who accurately judges men as well as books, will easily imagine that there must be something excellent in charity schools, given that men like these are so warm in opposing them.

They tell you that these schools are hindrances to husbandry and to manufacture. As for husbandry: the children

are kept in the schools only until they have grown strong enough to perform the principal parts of it; and even while they are still in the schools they will never be hindered, at any time of the year, from working in the fields or being employed in such labour as they are capable of for the support of their parents and themselves. In this matter the parents in the various regions are proper judges of their situations and circumstances. . . .; and they will find for their children other employment than going to school, whenever they can get a penny by doing so. Similarly with manufactures: the trustees of the charity schools and the parents of the children bred in them would be thankful to those gentlemen who make the objection if they would help to remove it by subscribing to a fund for joining the employment of manufacture to the business of learning to read and write in the charity schools. This would be a noble work. It is already carried out by the supporters of some charity schools, and is aimed at and earnestly desired by all the rest; but Rome was not built in a day. . . . It is easy for designing and perverted minds to invent plausible, fallacious arguments, and to offer invective disguised as reasoning against the best things in the world. But no impartial man with a serious sense of goodness and a real love for his country can think that this proper and just view of the charity schools is open to any fair and weighty objection, or refuse to contribute his endeavours to improve and raise them to the perfection that is aimed at for them. In the meantime, let no man be so weak or so wicked as to deny that when poor children cannot meet with employment in any other honest way, rather than letting their tender age be spent in idleness or in learning the arts of lying and swearing and stealing, it is true charity to them and good service done to our country to employ them in learning the principles of religion and virtue until their age and strength will enable them to become servants in families,

or to be engaged in husbandry, or manufacture, or any kind of physical work; for these are the kinds of employments that the charity children are generally turned as soon as they become capable of them. Catiline claims that employments by shopkeepers or retailers of commodities—which he says ought to fall to the share of children at that social level—are mostly taken by the managers of the charity schools, who get in first. This is simply *false*. So are many of his affirmations, notably one that which I now mention. He is not ashamed to say outright that the principles of our common people are debauched in our charity schools, who are taught as soon as they can speak to blabber out high church nonsense, and so are trained to be traitors before they know what treason is. . . .

·AIMING AT MANDEVILLE·

These and things like them are urged with as much bitterness and as little truth in the book I have mentioned, *The Fable of the Bees; or private vices, public benefits*. Catiline explodes the fundamental articles of faith, impiously comparing the doctrine of the blessed Trinity to fee-fa-fum; this profligate author of the Fable is not only an auxiliary to Catiline in opposition to faith but has taken upon him to tear up the very foundations of moral virtue and establish vice in its place. The best physician in the world never worked harder to purge the natural body of bad qualities than this bumblebee has done to purge the body politic of good ones. He himself bears testimony to the truth of this charge against him, for near the end of his book he says:

‘After this I flatter myself to have demonstrated that neither the friendly qualities and kind affections that are natural to man, nor the real virtues he is capable of acquiring by reason and self-denial, are the foundation of society; but that what we call evil in this

world, moral as well as natural, is the grand principle that makes us sociable creatures, the solid basis, the life and support of all trades and employments without exception; that we must look *there* for the true origin of all arts and sciences, and that the moment evil ceases the society must be spoiled if not totally dissolved.’

Now, my Lord, you see the grand design, the main drift of Catiline and his confederates; now the scene opens and the secret springs appear; now the fraternity venture to speak out, and surely no band of men ever dared to speak in this way before. Now you see the true cause of all their enmity towards the poor charity schools; it is levelled against religion—*religion*, my Lord—which the schools are instituted to promote and this confederacy is resolved to destroy; for the schools are certainly one of the greatest instruments of religion and virtue, one of the firmest bulwarks against Popery, one of the best recommendations of this people to the divine favour, and therefore one of the greatest blessings to our country of anything that has been started since our happy Reformation and deliverance from the idolatry and tyranny of Rome. . . .

Now your Lordship also sees the true cause of the satire that is continually launched against the clergy by Catiline and his confederates. Why should Mr. Hall’s conviction and execution be any more an objection against the clergy than Mr. Layer’s against the gentlemen of the legal profession? Because that profession does not immediately relate to religion; and therefore Catiline will allow that if any member of that profession should be a traitor or otherwise vicious, all the others may be as loyal and virtuous as any other subjects in the king’s dominions; but because matters of religion are the professed concern and the employment of the clergy, therefore (Catiline’s logic makes this out as clear as day)

if any of them are disaffected towards the government all the rest are so too; and if any of them are chargeable with vice, then clearly all or most of the rest are as vicious as the devil can make them. . . . Our clergy can vindicate themselves whenever such a vindication is called for, being as faithful and virtuous and learned a body of men as any in Europe; but they suspend the publication of arguments in defence of themselves because **(a)** they neither expect nor want the approval of impious and abandoned men, and **(b)** they are sure that all persons with common sense clearly see that the arrows shot against the clergy are intended to destroy the divine institution of the government offices and to extirpate the religion that the sacred offices were appointed to preserve and promote. This was always supposed and suspected by every honest and impartial man; but now those who previously gave occasion to such suspicions have demonstrated that the suspicions were right; for they have now openly declared that •faith in the principal articles of religion is not only needless but ridiculous, that •the welfare of human society must sink and perish under the encouragement of virtue, and that •immorality is the only firm foundation on which the happiness of mankind can be built and subsist. The publication of tenets such as these—an open proposal to extirpate the Christian faith and all virtue, and to fix moral evil for the basis of the government—is so stunning, so shocking, so frightful, so flagrant an enormity that if it were credited to us as a national guilt, the divine vengeance must inevitably come down on us. And how far this enormity *would* become a national guilt if it went unpunished can easily be guessed. No doubt your Lordship's good judgment in so plain and important a case has made you, like a wise and faithful patriot, resolve to use your utmost endeavours in your high station to defend religion from the bold attacks made upon it.

As soon as I have seen a copy of the bill for the better security of his Majesty and his happy government, through the better security of religion in Great Britain, your Lordship's just scheme of politics, your love of your country and your great services to it will again be acknowledged by
my Lord,
your most faithful humble servant,
Theophilus Philo-Britannus.

Mandeville's comments

These violent accusations and the great clamour everywhere raised against the book by governors, masters, and other champions of charity schools, together with the advice of friends and my reflection on what I owed to myself, drew from me the following answer. Forgive the repetition of some passages, one of which you may have met with twice already. To make my defence stand alone for the public, I was obliged to repeat what had been quoted in the letter, because my defence would unavoidably fall into the hands of many who had never seen either *The Fable of the Bees* or the defamatory letter written against it. My defence was published in the *London Journal* of August 10, 1723. Here it is.

Whereas in the evening post of Thursday, July 11 a presentment was inserted by the Grand Jury of Middlesex against the publisher of a book entitled *The Fable of the Bees; or private vices, public benefits*, and a passionate and abusive letter has been published against the same book and its author in the *London Journal* of Saturday, July 27, I think I am obliged to vindicate that book against the black aspersions that have been undeservedly cast upon it, being conscious that I have not had the least ill design in composing it. The accusations against it having been made openly in the public papers, it would not be fair for the

defence of it to appear in a more private manner. What I have to say on my behalf I shall address to all men of sense and sincerity, asking them for no favour except their patience and attention. Setting aside what in that letter relates to others, and everything that is extraneous and irrelevant, I shall begin with the passage that is quoted from the book: 'After this, I flatter myself to have demonstrated. . . .' etc. [see page 128]. These words I admit are in the book, and being both innocent and true they are likely to remain there in all future printings. But I also freely admit that if I had written aiming to be understood by the feeblest intellects, I would not have chosen the subject there treated of; or if I had, I would have amplified and explained every sentence, talked and distinguished magisterially, and never appeared without the reading-help pointer in my hand. For example: to make the quoted passage intelligible, I would have spent a page or two on the meaning of the word 'evil'; after that I would have taught them that every defect, every want, was an evil; that on the multiplicity of those wants depended all those mutual services that the individual members of a society pay to each other; and that consequently the greater variety of wants there was, the larger the number of individuals who might find their private interest in labouring for the good of others, and united together compose one body. Is there a trade or handicraft that doesn't provide us with something we wanted? Before this want was met, it was certainly an evil, which that trade or handicraft was to remedy and without which it could never have been thought of. Is there an art or science that was not invented to mend some defect? Had the defect not existed, there could have been no occasion for the art or science to remove it. At page 122 I say:

The excellence of human thought and contrivance has never been more conspicuous than in the variety of tools and instruments of workmen and artificers, and

the multiplicity of engines, that were all invented to assist man's weakness, to correct his many imperfections, to gratify his laziness, or obviate his impatience.'

Several other pages develop this theme; but what relation has all this to religion or infidelity, any more than it has to navigation or the peace in the north?

The many hands that are employed to meet our real natural wants, such as hunger, thirst and nakedness, are inconsiderable compared with the vast numbers who are innocently gratifying the depravity of our corrupt nature; I mean industrious folk who get a livelihood by their honest labour, to which vain and voluptuous people are indebted for all their tools and implements of ease and luxury. The short-sighted vulgar can seldom see further than one link in the chain of causes, but those who can enlarge their view, and will take the time to gaze at the view along the chain, may in a hundred places see good spring up from evil as naturally as chickens do from eggs.

Words are to be found at page 27 in Remark G on the seeming paradox that in the grumbling hive 'the worst of all the multitude / did something for the common good'. That Remark provides many examples of how unsearchable providence daily orders the comforts of the laborious, and even the deliverances of the oppressed, to come forth secretly not only from the vices of the luxurious but also from the crimes of the wicked and most abandoned.

Men of candour and capacity see at first sight that in the censured passage there is no meaning—hidden or openly expressed—that is not wholly contained in these words: **man is a needy creature in innumerable ways, yet all trades and employments arise from those very needs and from nothing else.**

It is ridiculous for men to try to read books above their sphere. *The Fable of the Bees* was aimed at people of

knowledge and education, to entertain them when they have an idle hour to spare for it. It is a book of severe and exalted morality that contains a strict test of virtue—an infallible touchstone to distinguish the real from the counterfeit—and shows many actions to be faulty that are palmed off on the world as good ones; it describes the nature and symptoms of human passions, detects their force and disguises; and it traces self-love into its darkest recesses. I might safely add that the whole thing is more disorderly and unmethodical than any other system of ethics; but it contains nothing sour or pedantic; the style is admittedly very uneven, sometimes very high and rhetorical, sometimes very low and even trivial; but such as it is, I am satisfied that it has diverted persons of great probity and virtue and unquestionable good sense; and I am in no fear that it will ever cease to do so while it is read by such people. Whoever has seen the violent charge against this book will pardon me for saying more in commendation of it than a man would say of his own work if he were not labouring under the same necessity.

The praises of brothels complained of in the presentment are nowhere in the book. This accusation must be based on a political dissertation concerning the best method to guard and preserve women of honour and virtue from the insults of dissolute men whose passions are often ungovernable. This problem creates a dilemma between two evils, which cannot both be avoided; so I have treated the topic with the utmost caution, beginning thus [page 31]:

‘I am far from encouraging vice, and would think it a wonderful thing for a state if the sin of uncleanness could be utterly banished from it. But I am afraid it is impossible.’

I give my reasons why I think it so; and speaking in passing of the music-houses in Amsterdam, I give a short account of them than which nothing can be more harmless. I appeal to

all impartial judges whether what I have said of them is not ten times more apt to give men—*any* men—a disgust and aversion against them than to raise any criminal desire.

I am sorry the Grand Jury should think that I published this with a design to debauch the nation, without considering **(i)** that there is not a sentence or syllable that can either offend the chastest ear or sully the imagination of the most vicious; or **(ii)** that the matter complained of is obviously addressed to magistrates and politicians, or at least the more serious and thinking part of mankind; whereas writing that was to produce a general corruption of sexual manners would have to consist in easily purchased obscenities that were in every way adapted to the tastes and capacities of •the heedless multitude and •inexperienced youth of both sexes. That the performance so outrageously exclaimed against was never calculated for either of •these classes of people is self-evident from every circumstance. The prose at the beginning is altogether philosophical, and hardly intelligible to anyone not used to matters of speculation; and the running title is so far from being attractive or inviting, that without having read the book itself nobody knows what to make of it. Also, the price is five shillings. This all makes it clear that if the book contains any dangerous tenets, I have not been very solicitous to scatter them among the people. I have not said a word to please or engage them, and the greatest compliment I have made them has been *Apage vulgus!* [= ‘Away with the vulgar!’]. On page 72 I say:

‘But as nothing would more clearly demonstrate the falsity of my notions than that the generality of the people should fall in with them, so I don’t expect the approval of the multitude. I do not write for the many, but for the few who can think abstractly and have their minds elevated above the vulgar.’

I have been careful about this, and have always preserved

such a tender regard for the public that when I have advanced any uncommon opinions I have used all imaginable precautions that they might not be hurtful to weak minds who might casually dip into the book. When on page 71 I said:

‘I confess to thinking that no society can become such a rich and mighty kingdom, or stay that way for long, without the vices of man,’

I had premised, what was true, that I had ‘never said or thought that man could not be virtuous in a rich and mighty kingdom as well as in the most pitiful commonwealth’; a caution that a man less scrupulous than myself might have thought superfluous, when he had already explained himself on that head in the very same paragraph, which begins thus:

‘I lay down as a first principle that in all societies, great or small, it is the duty of every member of it to be good; that virtue ought to be encouraged, vice discountenanced, the laws obeyed, and the transgressors punished.’

There is not a line in the book that contradicts this doctrine, and I defy my enemies to disprove what I have advanced on page 72 that ‘if I have shown the way to worldly greatness, I have always without hesitation preferred the road that leads to virtue.’ No man ever took more pains not to be misconstrued than I have. On that same page I say:

‘When I say that societies cannot be raised to wealth, power, and the top of earthly glory without vices, I don’t think that by so saying I am telling men to be vicious, any more than I am telling them to be quarrelsome or covetous when I say that the profession of the law could not be maintained in such numbers and splendor if there was not an abundance of too selfish and litigious people.’

I had already given a similar caution towards the end of

the Preface, because of the palpable evil inseparable from London’s felicity. Searching into the real causes of things does not show an ill design, and has no tendency to do harm. A man may write on poisons and be an excellent physician. On page 122 I say:

‘No man needs to guard himself against blessings, but calamities require hands to avert them. . . . The extremities of heat and cold, the inconstancy and badness of seasons, the violence and uncertainty of winds, the vast power and treachery of water, the rage and untractableness of fire, and the stubbornness and sterility of the earth challenge us to work out ways of avoiding the harms they can produce or turning their various forces to our own advantage in a thousand different ways.’

While a man is enquiring into the occupation of vast multitudes, I cannot see why he may not say all this and much more, without being accused of depreciating and speaking slightly of the gifts and generosity of heaven; when at the same time he demonstrates that without rain and sunshine this globe would not be habitable to creatures like ourselves. It is an out-of-the-way subject, and I would never quarrel with anyone who said that it might as well have been omitted; but I always thought it would please men of any tolerable taste, and not be easily lost.

I could never conquer my vanity as well as I could wish; and I am too proud to commit crimes; and as for the book’s main scope, its intent, the view it was written with, I call your attention to what I wrote on page 2 of the Preface:

‘If you ask me why I have done all this—*Cui bono?*—and what good these notions will produce, I answer “None at all, except the reader’s entertainment”. But if I was asked what naturally ought to be expected from them, I would answer that those who continually find

fault with others would, by reading them, be taught to look at home, examine their own consciences, and be ashamed of always railing at what they are more or less guilty of themselves; and that those who are so fond of the ease and comforts and benefits that are the consequence of a great and flourishing nation would learn to submit more patiently to the inconveniences, that no government on earth can remedy, when they see the impossibility of enjoying any great share of the first without partaking likewise of the latter.'

The first impression of the *Fable of the Bees*, which came out in 1714, was never carped at or publicly taken notice of; and the only reason I can think of why this second edition should be so unmercifully treated, though it has many precautions that the former lacked, is an essay on *Charity and charity schools*, which is added to what was printed before. I confess that it is my view that all hard and dirty work ought in a well-governed nation to be the lot and portion of the poor, and that to divert their children from useful labour until they are 14 or 15 years old is a wrong method to qualify them for it when they are grown up. I have given several reasons for my opinion in that essay, to which I refer all impartial men of understanding, assuring them that they will not find in it any such monstrous impiety as is reported. What an advocate I have been for libertinism and immorality, and what an enemy to all instructions of youth in the Christian faith, may be collected from the pains I have taken on education for several pages together: and afterwards again, page 100, where speaking of the instructions the children of the poor might receive at church (from which I say I would not have the meanest of a parish that is able to walk to it be absent on Sundays), I have these words:

'It is the Sabbath, the most useful day in seven, that is set apart for divine service and religious exercise

as well as for resting from bodily labour, and all magistrates have a duty to take particular care of that day. The poor more especially (and their children) should be made to go to church on that day, both in the morning and in the afternoon; because they have no time to go on any other day. By precept and example they ought to be encouraged and accustomed to it from their very infancy; the wilful neglect of it ought to be regarded as scandalous; and if outright compulsion to church attendance might seem too harsh and perhaps impracticable, at least all diversions ought strictly to be prohibited, and the poor hindered from every amusement abroad that might draw them away from it.'

If the arguments I have offered are not convincing, let them be refuted. I will acknowledge it as a favour in anyone who convinces me of my error, without ill language, by showing me where I have been mistaken; but it seems that when men are touched in a sensible part, their shortest way of confuting an adversary is calumny.

Vast sums are gathered for these charity schools, and I understand human nature too well to imagine that the sharers of the money would hear them spoken against with any patience. So I foresaw the usage I was to receive, and having repeated the common cant that is made on behalf of charity schools, I told my readers on page 86:

'This is the general cry, and he who speaks the least word against it is an uncharitable, hard-hearted and inhuman wretch, if not a wicked, profane, and atheistic one.'

So I was not greatly surprised when in that extraordinary letter to Lord C. I saw myself called a 'profligate author', the publication of my tenets described as an open and avowed proposal to extirpate the Christian faith and all virtue, and

my work declared to be so stunning, so shocking, so frightful, so flagrant an enormity that it cried for the vengeance of heaven. This is no more than what I have always expected from the enemies to truth and fair dealing, and I shall make no reply to the angry author of that letter, who tries to expose me to the public fury. I pity him, and have charity enough to believe that he has been imposed on by trusting to fame and the hearsay of others; for no man in his wits can imagine that he could write as he does if he had read a quarter of my book.

I am sorry if the words 'private vices, public benefits' have ever given offence to any well-meaning man. The mystery of them is soon unfolded when once they are rightly understood; but their innocence will not be questioned by any man of sincerity who has read the last paragraph of the book, where I take my leave of the reader and conclude by repeating the seeming paradox, the substance of which is advanced on

the title page, that by the dextrous management of a skilful politician private vices may be turned into public benefits. These are the last words of the book, printed in the same large type as the rest.

But I set aside all I have said in my vindication. If in the whole book called *The Fable of the Bees* and presented by the Grand Jury of Middlesex to the judges of the King's Bench there is to be found the least tittle of blasphemy or profaneness, or anything tending to immorality or the corruption of manners, I desire that it may be published; and if this is done without invective, personal reflections, or setting the mob on me, I will not only recant but likewise beg the offended public's pardon in the most solemn manner; and (if the hangman might be thought too good for the office) burn the book myself at any reasonable time and place my adversaries shall be pleased to appoint.

THE END