

**Johannes Hendrik Harder,**

*Observations on some tendencies of sentiment and ethics chiefly in minor poetry and essay in the eighteenth century until the execution of dr. W. Dodd in 1777.* Proefschrift Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1933.

Johannis Hendrik Harder, geboren 12 juli 1878 te Nieuwendam, woonde in Amsterdam en was leraar aan de HBS 5j. c. A (Eerste Openbare Handelsschool) aan het Raamplein te Amsterdam. Hij overleed op 23 april 1945 te Koog aan de Zaan. In zijn in het Engels geschreven proefschrift tracht Harder op basis van literatuur, en niet van filosofie, filantropie of sociologie, "to show what melancholy, sentimentalism and benevolence have in common and how, ultimately, they may foster humanitarian sentiment".

Harder besteedt in dit kader ook aandacht aan Bernard Mandeville, zoals hierna weergegeven.

22. *Bernard Mandeville* (Pp. 168-173)

The ablest of the attacks on deism was delivered by Bernard Mandeville whose literary greatness after a period of misrepresentation has again found due recognition in F.B. Kaye's *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits. By Bernard Mandeville*. Two vols. Oxford 1924. Mandeville's fame during his lifetime is apparent from numerous editions of his works in English, French, Dutch and German. Mandeville himself tells us in *A Vindication of the Book* [ed. Kaye, i, 409] that the

"first Impression of the Fable of the Bees which came out in 1714, was never carpt at, or publicly taken notice of; and all the Reason I can think on why this second edition (viz. 1723) should be so unmercifully treated ... is an Essay on Charity Schools."

The opposition to *The Grumbling Hive* (1705) - later extended to *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) was therefore not primarily due to its opposition to deistic view. Mandeville stated the grounds of his attacks on Shaftesbury in the opening lines of *A Search into the Nature of Society*, 1723; the generality of moralists and philosophers had maintained that there could be no virtue without self-denial "but a late Author, who is now much read by Men of Sense...imagines that Men...may be naturally virtuous," and that as man was made for society he ought to be born "with a kind Affection to the whole." In his *First Dialogue*, 1729, [ed. Kaye, ii, 43] he ironically refers to "the lovely System of Lord Shaftesbury" which is "diametrically opposite" to that of "the Fable of the Bees," and at the end of the *Sixth Dialogue* he states that the ideas Shaftesbury had formed of the goodness and excellence of our nature "were as romantick and chimerical as they are beautiful and amiable." In another place he says: "the opinions of the ancients" viz., that there can be no virtue without self-denial was the basis

of his attack on Lord Shaftesbury, who "was the first to maintain the contrary, "asserting that men were directed in their choice of virtue by nature. (*Third Dialogue*, ed. Kaye, ii, 108). In Mandeville's own words his book was designed for "the modern deist..." By a deist he understood:

"He who believes, in the common acceptation, that there is a God and that the world is rul'd by providence, but has no faith in anything reveal'd to us." (*Third Dialogue*, ed. Kaye, ii, 102, and footnote).

Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) [Harder (p. 163) noemt hem abusievelijk "John" Clarke als de auteur die "delivered the Boyle lectures in the years 1704 and 1705"] had tried to prove that the laws of right and wrong were not merely dictated by fashion; through him and his followers the phrase eternal and immutable" had become a sort of catchword. Mandeville faced this belief with the observation that, in fact, they are temporary and variable. Pitting his relativism against the absolutism of deists and orthodox he asserted in *A Search into the Nature of Society* (ed. Kaye, i. 367):

"It is in Morality as its is in Nature, there is nothing so perfectly Good in Creatures that it cannot be hurtful to anyone of the Society, not anything so entirely Evil, but it may prove beneficial to some part or other of the Creation: So that things are only Good and Evil in reference to something else, and according to the Light and Position they are placed in."

Women and children, i.e. "the weakest natures," Montaigne had said, were most subject to compassion. It is therefore interesting to hear Mandeville's doctrines applied to pity in *An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue* (ed. Kaye, i. 56).

"It is impossible to judge of Man's Performance, unless we are thoroughly acquainted with the Principle and Motive from which he acts. Pity, though it is the most gentle and the least mischievous of all our Passions, is yet as much a frailty of our Nature as Anger, Pride, or Fear. The weakest Minds have generally the greatest Share of it, for which Reason none are more Compassionate than Women and Children.... Of all our Weaknesses it is the most amiable, and bears the greatest resemblance to Virtue; nay, without a considerable Mixture of it the Society could hardly subsist. But as it is an Impulse of Nature that consults neither the public Interest nor our own Reason, it may produce Evil as well as Good.... and whoever acts from it as a Principle, what good soever he may bring to the Society, has nothing to boast of but that he has indulg'd a Passion that has happened to be beneficial to the Publick."

Mandeville's conception of virtue made him declare that no action was virtuous, if it was inspired by selfish emotion and, as he considered all natural emotion fundamentally selfish, this implied the ascetic position that no action was virtuous, if done from natural impulse. Again and again Mandeville maintains that he defends Revelation against deists, particularly against Shaftesbury, who

"seems to have endeavour'd to sap the Foundation of all reveal'd Religion, with Design of establishing Heathen Virtue on the Ruins of Christianity" (Sixth Dialogue, ed. Kaye ii, 357).

The Church, however, was hostile to Mandeville. In his definition of virtue he had amalgamated both the views of the deists and the orthodox, and in testing all human actions by this standard he pronounced those acts alone virtuous

"by which Man, contrary to the impulse of nature, should endeavour to benefit others, or the Conquest of his own Passions out of a Rational Ambition of being good." (ed. Kaye, i, 48-9).

Mandeville could find no actions that came up to that standard; as Kaye says:

"The affairs of the world are not managed in obedience to such transcendent views of morality." (Kaye, Introduction, ed. Kaye, i, xlvi)

The second title of Mandeville's book *Private Vices, Publick Benefits* was usually misinterpreted and gave him many enemies. "The true Reason" he says "why I made use of the title... was to raise Attention" (ed. Kaye, i, 412). Its real meaning was that "Private Vices by dextrous management of a skilful Politician might be turned into Publick Benefits." (ed. Kaye, i, 369).

Mandeville evidently disliked Shaftesbury's rhetorical apostrophe of nature. (ed. Kaye, ii, 44). Though he refuses to call God's cruel and stops further argument about God's attributes as revealed by nature, by calling such things an "inexplicable mystery", (ed. Kaye, ii, 252) he has emphasized the "Industry of Nature in the Multiplicity of her Contrivances to kill" her creatures (ed. Kaye, ii, 249), and has observed that "Millions of her Creatures are ....doom'd to perish for want of Sustenance" (ed. Kaye, ii, 250). "There is nothing Good in all the Universe to the best designing Man," he writes in *A Search into the Nature of Society*, "if either through Mistake or Ignorance he commits the least Failing in the Use of it."

In his *Essay on Charity* he defends himself against the charge of inhumanity. "I have no design that is cruel, nor the least aim that savours of Inhumanity." The country should possess a sufficient number of

hospitals.

“Young children without parents, old age without support and all that is disabled from working ought to be taken care of with tenderness and alacrity”,

But beggary and laziness of the poor should be discouraged, and employment found for all who could work. He confirms the complaint of John Graunt (1620-1674), the statistician, (*Natural and Political Observations Made upon the Bills of Mortality*) in 1661, about the vast number of beggars “swarming up en down this city,” most of them healthy and strong and Mandeville repeats Graunt’s advice to find employment for them. Though Mandeville’s writings made him the centre of much hostility, many of his views were sensible enough and justified by the state of society at that time. His essays should be read to form a just opinion of his protests against sentimentality and exaggeration. But, evidently, he wrote against the drift of public opinion. Judging from his *Essay on Charity* the trading classes took the lead in the establishment of charity schools and the cry for general education, and the clergy followed. So great was their enthusiasm for these charities and “the finery of the Shew” that whoever dared to oppose them was “in danger of being stoned by the Rabble”. Modern opinion would certainly not agree with Mandeville’s opposition to a better education of the poor. However, when Mandeville argues that an educated man is not equivalent to a man of good morality, he defends an orthodox principle. Moreover, the indignation roused by Mandeville’s attack on the Charity Schools was not due to any desire of the age to make the labourer comfortable, lessen his work, or raise his wages.

“His views rested on the current economic attitude; such complaint as was made against his brutality may be taken as due really to his having omitted the flavouring of sentiment and beliefs; they were scandalised at his downrightness of statement, which here as elsewhere was able to make a current creed obnoxious by the mere act of stating it with complete candour.” (Kaye, Introduction, lxxii)

His remarks about the increase in the numbers of criminals - which he attributes to the cruelty of the laws - are worth reading; few wanted a thief to be hanged for a petty theft. In his *Enquiry into the Causes of the Frequent Executions at Tyburn*, 1725, he advocates prison reform and solitary confinement. Punishments, he asserts, among other things, lose their deterrent effect if intoxicating liquors are served to condemned criminals. His *Fourth Dialogue* contains a panegyric on the intellectual ability of women. “There is no labour of the brain, which they are not capable of performing.”

His condemnation of the killing of animals for food (*Remark P*, ed. Kaye, I,

173-181) was founded on the cruelty involved (*Remark P*, ed. Kaye, i, 178). His protest is, no doubt, due to Pythagorean influence, though he says that he does not want to urge anything "of what Pythagoras and many other Wise Men have said concerning this barbarity of eating flesh". (*Remark P*, ed. Kaye, i, p. 175) The eleven pages of his *Remark P* end with a story of a man pleading for his life with a lion, just as Pope's essay (*Against Babarity to Animals*) in the *Guardian* (No. 61, May 21, 1713) a year before had ended with one of the *Persian Fables of Pilpay*. With regard to the chase Mandeville remarks that it is "only Man, mischievous Man, that can make Death a Sport." (*Remark P*, ed. Kaye, i, 178). From his vivid description of the killing of a young bullock (*Remark P*, ed. Kaye, i, 180-1). We must believe that such horrible scenes deeply affected him.

#### 24. *Good nature and benevolence* (Pp. 181-182)

In 1710 Steel connected "good nature to an excess" with Pythagorean doctrines and in doing so he brought animals within the pale of benevolence. (...) Addison's essay of Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> [1711] aims at alleviating the misery of human life by "mutual offices of compassion, benevolence and humanity". (...) Moore's essay *Of the different behaviour of Men at death*, in *The World*, May 23, 1754, declares contributing towards the happiness of others to be the end of the creation of man.

To such praise of benevolence in the early part of the eighteenth century Mandeville seems to ascribe the sentimental interest in various charities, particularly in the establishment of schools. In the *Origin of Moral Virtue*, 1714, he ridicules Steele's artful way of flattering humanity to induce them to be good (ed. Kaye, i, 53). When he expressed his dislike of the "popular oration" (ed. Kaye, i, 269) in favour of charity schools he probably thought of Addison's essay in *The Guardian* No. 105. The practical results in 1710 of the delight of Addison and others in "the show" may be read in *The Fable of the Bees*. (...) It deserves notice here that Mandeville directed his attacks on Steele's "ingenious Sophistry, extravagant Praises, fulsome Flatteries, and abominable Lies" (*An Enquiry*, 1714, ed. Kaye, i, p. 52-3) before he thought of Shaftesbury (in *A Search into the Nature of Society*, 1723). For Steele had said in *The Tatler* 87: "There is nothing which I contemplate with greater pleasure than the dignity of human nature;" and in the epilogue to his *Lying Lover*, 1703, he recommends this play because it "makes us ...more approve ourselves." (Kaye's footnote, in ed. Kaye, i, p. 52-3).

#### 25. *Social interest due to pity or benevolent motives* (Pp. 187-8)

(...) The treatment of the social sentiment evidently undergoes the influence of the subjects uppermost in the minds of the authors in a certain period. Seduction and theories of education occupied the thoughts of essayists and poets in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Melancholy poetry and prose interested in solitude, was condemned as anti-social; "From

Men's preferring Company to Solitude", Mandeville had said (*First Dialogue*, 1729, ed. Kaye, ii, 51), Shaftesbury had proved "the Love and natural Affection we have for our Species". The display of interest in the good of society, where this is due to Shaftesbury's writings, was not accidental. The members of society had to be conscious of the social implications of their conduct if they were to be called virtuous (Kaye's footnote, ed. Kaye, ii, p. 45). Shaftesbury had written:

"And in this case alone it is we call any creature worthy or virtuous, when it can have the notion of a public interest, and can attain the speculation or science of what is morally good or ill, admirable or blamable, right or wrong". (Kaye's footnote, ed. Kaye, ii, p. 45).

Though Mandeville wrote in a spirit of ridicule, he succeeded all the same in making it clear that the labouring classes could not be excluded from a claim to virtue in the ordinary course of their work in society (ed. Kaye, ii, p. 51-2). Shaftesbury never meddled "with anything so low and pityful." (ed. Kaye, ii, p. 47).