

Bernard Mandeville Biography

Bernard Mandeville

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Bernard Mandeville Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

The English satirist and moral philosopher Bernard Mandeville (ca. 1670-1733) is famous as the author of *The Fable of the Bees*.

Bernard Mandeville was probably born in Rotterdam, Holland, the son of a prominent doctor. In 1685 he entered the University of Rotterdam and in 1689 went on to study medicine at the University of Leiden, where he received his medical degree in 1691. Afterward he went to England to "learn the language" and set up practice as a physician. However, he had very few patients and after a short time virtually gave up medicine to devote himself exclusively to his writings.

Mandeville's best-known work is *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714), originally published as a poem, "The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves Turned Honest" (1705). This was intended at first to be a political satire on the state of England in 1705, when the Tories accused the ministry of favoring the French war for their own personal gains. In the later version, however, enlarged to two volumes, Mandeville, in agreement with T. Hobbes, declares that men act essentially in terms of egoistical interests, in contrast to the easy optimism and idealism of Shaftesbury. The material concerns of individuals are the basic force behind all social progress, while what rulers and clergymen call virtues are simply fictions that those in power employ to maintain their control. Francis Hutcheson and Bishop Berkeley wrote treatises opposing Mandeville's views. Others, including Adam Smith, as some interpreters claim, were affected in a more positive way by Mandeville's ideas.

In some of his other works Mandeville shows an intelligent and open interest in controversial and, for the time, scandalous subjects, such as whoring and the execution of criminals. On some issues, however, Mandeville seems strangely callous. In "An Essay on Charity and Charity Schools" he objects to educating the poor because the acquisition of knowledge has the effect of increasing desires and thereby making it more difficult to meet the needs of the poor. Moreover, he seems to regard even wars as valuable to the economic development of a nation since by destroying houses and property laborers are provided an opportunity to replace the destroyed goods.

On the basis of his views Mandeville is usually placed in the moral-sense school. Some interpreters insist that he is the forerunner of the doctrine of utilitarianism.