Parental Affection and Self-Interest: Mandeville, Hutcheson, and the Question of Natural Benevolence

Author(s): Patricia Sheridan

Source: *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Oct., 2007), pp. 377-392
Published by: University of Illinois Press on behalf of North American Philosophical Publications
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27745105
Accessed: 28-04-2016 12:35 UTC

History of Philosophy Quarterly
Volume 24, Number 4, October 2007

PARENTAL AFFECTION AND SELF-INTEREST: MANDEVILLE, HUTCHESON, AND THE QUESTION OF NATURAL BENEVOLENCE

Patricia Sheridan

Mandeville's most famous work, *The Fable of the Bees*, was written in response to the third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose theory of natural benevolence famously held that humans have innate feelings of selfless regard for others. Mandeville set out to reveal that although acts of benevolence may have the appearance of selflessness, they are easily accounted for in purely self-interested terms. It is difficult to find a text in the period that does not have something to say in response to Mandeville's egoistic account of human morality, and many of Mandeville's critics attempted to prove that natural benevolence is well-founded in experience. But the task of establishing the matter was not, and perhaps *is* not, an easy one, and there is no shortage of thoughtful people who concede that Mandeville's egoistic account of human virtue may be all too correct.

Sir Leslie Stephen writes, for example, that "[Mandeville] ruthlessly destroys the fine coating of varnish which Shaftesbury has bestowed upon human nature, and shows us with a grin the hideous elements that are fermenting underneath. The grin is simply detestable; but we cannot quite deny the facts."[1] More recently, Richard I. Cook, in his book entitled *Bernard Mandeville*, remarks that, "[t]he satanic Mandeville portrayed by his enemies bears little resemblance to the genial explicator of awkward truths who emerges from the works themselves."[2] With his frequent appeal to the subconscious forces of our animal passions, Mandeville is able to construct an egoistic account of human motivation that is very difficult to disprove.

Nevertheless, Mandeville's account *feels* wrong. Many people think of themselves as being at least capable of selfless concern for others and

would like to think that acts of good will may be truly, and at bottom, altruistic. At the very least, it is safe to say that most people have felt a kind of love and affection for others that does not *seem* to involve self-interest. In order to address this concern, Mandeville needs to account for the numerous acts of *apparent* selflessness that we witness in our own lives and in the lives of others. This is not to say that Mandeville's theory needs to be wholly intuitive in order to be correct. However it does need to provide a plausible account of *apparently* selfless acts. In his response to Mandeville, Francis Hutcheson proposed the case of parental affection as a stumbling block for any egoistically grounded morality. In what follows, let us consider what Mandeville offers by way of an account of parental affection.[3]

Mandeville's Ethics

Mandeville's views are most famously spelled out in his works *The Fable of the Bees*, Volumes I (published originally in 1714) and II (appended to Volume I for a 1725 edition) and in *An Inquiry into the Origin of Honor* (1732). In these works, Mandeville offered a naturalistic account of human action, according to which humans are exclusively motivated by physical passions arising from sensations of pleasure and pain. Since human passions operate to maintain the life and well-being of the individual, they are necessarily hedonistic, self-serving, and, in the end, amoral. His work sparked a storm of outrage amongst his contemporaries, exemplified in the following reply to Mandeville from the eighteenth-century theologian and moralist William Law: "The province you have chosen for your self, is to deliver Man from the *Sagacity* of Moralists, the Encroachments of Virtue, and to re-place him in the Rights and Privileges of Brutality; to recall him from the giddy Heights of rational Dignity, and Angelick Likeness, to go to Grass, or wallow in the Mire."[4] Law's assessment is typical of the critical reaction Mandeville instigated.

Mandeville's picture defied the view, held by many of his contemporaries, that human society is the outgrowth of a natural human capacity for virtue and, in particular, altruism. This latter view is exemplified by the Earl of Shaftesbury, who wrote in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) "if generation be natural, if natural affection and the care and nurture of the offspring be natural, things standing as they do with man, and the creature being of that form and constitution he now is, it follows 'that society must be also natural to him' and 'that out of society and community he never did, nor ever can, subsist.'"[5] In a similar vein, Samuel Clarke asserts in his *Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God* that human beings naturally view themselves as social beings, "born to promote the publick good and

welfare of all his Fellow-creatures; and consequently obliged, as the necessary and only effectual means to that End, to embrace them All with universal Love and Benevolence."[6] Although their views differed in important ways, these two luminaries of the early eighteenth century shared the assumption that humans have an innate disposition for altruism that motivates them to enter society and act for the welfare of others. It is just this view of selfless motivation that Mandeville wishes to do without in his own account of human nature.

Mandeville's view of human nature is nicely summed up in his *Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*:

> Man is so Selfish a Creature, that, whilst he is at Liberty, the greatest Part of his Time will always be bestow'd upon himself; and that whatever Fear or Reverence he might have for an invisible Cause, that Thought was often jostled out by others, more nearly relating to himself. It is obvious likewise, that he neither loves nor esteems any Thing so well as he does his own Individual; and that there is Nothing, which he has so constantly before his Eyes, as his own dear Self.[7]

Contrary to his contemporaries, who believed humans could be motivated by intrinsically selfless affections, Mandeville argued that humans are motivated by two basic passions: *self-love* and *self-liking*. Like all other animals humans are motivated to act by the strongest present desire, and, as a result, any present impulse can always be overridden by a stronger desire arising in them to do otherwise. The passion that is strongest in humans, and all other animals, is self-love, which Mandeville identifies as the desire for self-preservation and self-gratification. Mandeville's second central passion, that of *self-liking*, operates in a somewhat more subtle way. This passion, which is found only in 'higher' animals, is described as *the opinion the individual* has of itself. In the *Fable*,[8] Mandeville explains that self-liking is a passion aimed at self-preservation, but one that encourages the individual to seek, in addition, its own *promotion*: "[T]o encrease the Care in Creatures to preserve themselves, Nature has given them an Instinct, by which every Individual values itself above its real Worth" (*Fable* II, 130).[9] For Mandeville, humans are at least dimly aware of their natural propensity to over-value themselves, which accounts for their reliance on others to confirm them in their self-valuations. As a means of securing this social confirmation, self-liking motivates the individual to display her best qualities—her superior strengths and abilities. Elsewhere, Mandeville illustrates the role of self-liking with what he considers a particularly telling quote from Alexander the Great, esteemed by history as a selfless and heroic individual. After one of his great exploits, Alexander proclaimed "*Oh ye*, Athenians, *could you believe what Dangers I expose my self to, to be praised by you*!" (*Fable* I, 55). For Mandeville, this is a

particularly stark expression of the manner in which self-liking underlies apparent selflessness.

Alexander's example certainly provides Mandeville with good grounds for dealing with benevolence in egoistic terms, and it is not too difficult to imagine how virtuous exploits (at least the heroic variety) may be motivated by self-interested motives. But what of the quieter expressions of benevolence? Can they be reduced to self-interest by the same formula, or a by similar one? Mandeville thinks so. He considers the case of those who "when they did good to others, were so far from coveting Thanks and Applause, that they took all imaginable Care to be forever conceal'd from those on whom they bestow'd their Benefits" (*Fable* I, 56). Mandeville recognizes that people do manage to do good things for each other and sometimes even risk their lives for others, without making a public show of their benevolence. A likely motive for such acts, Mandeville suggests, is *pity*, which he also calls compassion, and which he describes as "a Fellow-feeling and Condolence for the Misfortunes and Calamities of others" (*Fable* I, 254). He grants that compassion is the most likely candidate for explaining this kind of benevolence, as it is the passion that "bears the greatest Resemblance to Virtue" (*Fable* I, 56). Nonetheless, since it *is* a passion, it is a physical desire—at bottom, self-serving, like all the rest. For Mandeville, acting out of compassion, amounts to the satisfaction of a natural urge. Moreover, he continues, the motivation to act out of compassion cannot be viewed as uncategorically virtuous, since "it may produce Evil as well as Good." He explains that compassion "has help'd to destroy the Honour of Virgins and corrupted the Integrity of Judges; 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 indulged a Passion that happened to be beneficial to the Publick" (*Fable* I, 56).

It is worth dwelling for a further moment on Mandeville's view of the moral neutrality of compassion, since his rather strong view of the matter has some bearing on what will be said later concerning his relationship to the ethics of care. Mandeville's point in treating compassionately motivated action as ultimately aiming at self-gratification is intended to suggest, among other things, that the moral force we are inclined to attribute to such actions is a kind of sham. This comes out very clearly in an example that Mandeville uses to illustrate the true dynamics of compassionate acts. Mandeville asks us to consider the case of a child who is about to be dropped into a fire. He explains that pity urges us to try to save the child. But, since pity is simply a passion, he writes, "[t]here is no merit in saving [the] innocent Babe. . . . The Action is neither good nor bad, and what Benefit soever the Infant received, we only obliged our selves; for to have seen it fall, and not strove to hinder it, would have

caused a Pain which Self-preservation compell'd us to prevent" (*Fable* I, 56). For this reason, our natural impulses carry no moral significance in themselves—they are natural urges, nothing more.

It is worth noting here that for Mandeville moral actions are defined by the denial of one's immediate natural passions, in the interests of social good. In the *Fable*, he describes moral virtue as "every Performance, by which Man, contrary to the impulse of Nature, should endeavour the Benefit of others, or the Conquest of his own Passions out of a Rational Ambition of being good" (*Fable* I, 48). Mandeville does not deny that there are such things as morally virtuous acts in this sense, for he grants that immediate impulses can be suppressed on the basis of considerations of the broader social good. What Mandeville does deny is that examples of such suppression are accountable to selfless motives. As the examples above suggest, Mandeville maintains that actions taken for the social good are ultimately motivated by concerns of self-interest, even when such actions involve the suppression of an immediate passion. Self-denial of this modest sort lies at the heart of moral *conduct* for Mandeville, but since all conduct is ultimately motivated by self-interest or self-love, there can be no such thing as a selfless *motive*. For Mandeville, it is a simple illusion to view morality as expressing selflessness in any deep sense.

It is safe to say that most parents today would claim that their feelings of love for their children are *genuinely* selfless, and we shall see that Hutcheson's answer to Mandeville seeks to do justice to this intuition. However, Mandeville is not without resources for accounting for parental affection. He grants that women in particular show a remarkable affection for their children: "What Labors and Hazards have not Women undergone to maintain and save their Children, what Force and Fortitude beyond their Sex have they not shown in their Behalf!" (*Fable* I, 76). Yet, for Mandeville, since the love a parent feels for a child is a passion, "and all Passions center in Self-Love," the affection of mother for child is actually just another *form* of self-love (*Fable* I, 75). For Mandeville, one sign of the self-centeredness of parental affection consists in the fact that it can actually be *defeated* by other self-interested passions. For Mandeville, a parent's affection continues only if it is not dislodged by a stronger passion—one that better serves one's self-love. As he puts the point, "[a mother's affection] may be subdued by any Superior Passion, to soothe that same Self-Love, which if nothing had interven'd, would have bid her fondle her Offspring" (*Fable* I, 75).

Another sign that the satisfaction of parental affection is a form of *self*-satisfaction consists in the "observation" that a parent's affection is responsive to the child's development—the idea being that affection increases in proportion to the child's becoming an increasingly *inter-*

esting object to the parent. For Mandeville, "[w]omen have no Natural Love to what they bear" and "what they feel before [the birth] is the result of Reason, Education, and the Thoughts of Duty" rather than the result of any spontaneous affection (*Fable* I, 76). Mandeville explains that the mother's love arises only *after* the child's birth. The mother's affection grows as the child grows in emotional responsiveness. Indeed, it grows "to a prodigious height, when by signs [the child] begins to express his Sorrows and Joys, makes his Wants known, and discovers his Love to novelty and the multiplicity of his Desires" (*Fable* I, 76). In other words the parent's affection is determined by the responsiveness and maturity of the child. Mandeville's point is not that this fails to be genuine affection. The point is that the affection in question is not *selfless*. For Mandeville, there can be no felt affection for a child that is not bound up with the interests of the parent. And, indeed, the love a parent feels for a child may literally come and go as it competes with other self-regarding feelings.

Mandeville illustrates his point concerning the capriciousness of parental affection through the example of the 'wild-man' father and his son. His point is to explain how parental affection would operate in the absence of social rules. Mandeville argues that the wild-man's son would be managed 'miserably' compared to the ways socialized parents raise their children, but would be cared for nonetheless. Natural affection will demand that the father "love, and cherish his Child [and] it would make him provide Food and other Necessaries" (*Fable* II, 201). However, if the son "provokes [the father] by Stubbornness, or doing otherwise than he would have him, this Love is suspended" (*Fable* II, 202). So the love the father feels is actually put on hold in moments of frustration, where other more pressing passions make their demands. Further, if the son actually brings the father to feel anger "it is ten to one, but he'll knock him down" (*Fable* II, 202). In these moments, the father is no longer moved by affection and is therefore, it seems, no longer motivated to care for and cherish his son. He cares for his son when affection is the predominating passion, and doesn't when other passions take over. Happily for the son, as Mandeville's example goes, the father's love returns as soon as he is moved by pity for his wounded son: "[the father's] Anger will cease, and natural Affection returning, he'll fondle [his son] again, and be sorry for what he has done" (*Fable* II, 202). Thus, parental affection literally comes and goes as the passions move us in various ways.

But why, then, do we do better, or at least less miserably, in raising our children in a state of socialization? Do the passions not preserve their self-interested character in a social context? Mandeville is not caught off-guard by questions like these. Mandeville maintains that one

of the central motivating passions is "self-liking," which involves both a tendency to over-estimate one's own worth and to seek social confirmation for such valuations. The passion of "self-liking" is expressed in terms of two accompanying "affections," those of *pride* and *shame*. For Mandeville, what determines success or failure in the endeavor to gain social confirmation of one's self-regard consist is a conventional code of behavior—a public morality, we might say—but it is the passion of self-liking and the attendant affections of pride and shame that lead us to abide by the code's dictates. For instance, Mandeville maintains that it is a woman's fear of shame (and the consequent frustration of her self-liking) that ensures she will uphold the womanly virtues of modesty, delicacy and tenderness. For Mandeville, virtuous women are tender and delicate because "Tenderness and Delicacy are a Compliment to them" (*Fable* II, 124). In general, a woman's pride is gratified, and her shame averted, when she carries out her socially defined duties, since she thereby secures the positive social regard that her self-liking demands. Since the tender regard for her children is one of the foremost of these duties, it follows that a mother will be strongly induced to tenderness even when her natural affection fails. To this, it should be added that for Mandeville women are generally *better* equipped than men to sustain tender relations with their offspring since they are more susceptible to the passion of pity than men are—a contention for which Mandeville provides the following charming account: "The weakest Minds have generally the greatest Share of [pity], for which Reason none are more Compassionate than Women and Children" (*Fable* I, 56).

For Mandeville, then, the true fabric of parental affection is the same in both the wild and the socialized worlds. Parental affection is simply the effect of our attempts to gratify our passions. Mandeville takes this view to imply that there is ultimately nothing fundamentally moral about this, a point which he stresses in the most dramatic way possible in his treatment of cases of infanticide. According to Mandeville, we are mistaken in attributing personal moral failing to the infanticidal parent. According to Mandeville, the view that infanticide is morally blameworthy is "a mistake, which we commit for want of understanding Nature and the force of Passions" (*Fable* I, 75). He illustrates this point with the example of a woman who would kill her bastard child, yet love and cherish the legitimate child she has once she is happily married. She is not immoral in one case and moral in the other—she is simply driven by natural passions in both cases. The worst we can say about such a person is that she or he has broken the socially manufactured rules that guide us in the attempt to secure society's approval. The love a mother feels for a child is not in itself morally virtuous, or evil—motives are morally neutral for Mandeville. Nor can we count on parental love as a

means of promoting the good of society, for it is the very same passion of love that leads to overindulgence of children and the production of *spoiled* adults. As Mandeville puts it "All are prompted to [maternal affection] by a natural Drift and Inclination, without any Consideration of the Injury or Benefit the Society receives from it. There is no Merit in pleasing our selves, and the very Offspring is often irreparably ruin'd by the excessive Fondness of Parents. . . . [M]any it has brought to the Gallows" (*Fable* I, 76). In this way, Mandeville puts to rest what might seem to many to be the most conspicuous example selfless affection.[10]

Hutcheson's Response: The Case for Parental Affection as Selfless

One of Mandeville's most vocal critics was Francis Hutcheson, whose own moral sense theory presumed "strong Affections *to be the Springs of each virtuous Action*" (*Inquiry*, xiv).[11] Hutcheson waged a sustained attack on Mandeville's views in his *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). In this work, Hutcheson presents his case for the view that it is motive *as such* that accounts for the moral significance of our conduct. Hutcheson argues that the foundation of virtuous action is an instinct "*which influences us to the Love of others*" (Inquiry, 159). For Hutcheson, love is the expression of a selfless feeling of affection, and it provides the basis for virtuous conduct (for Hutcheson, virtue is action from benevolent motives). The strongest *evidence* for truly selfless benevolence is found not in public acts of heroism, nor in the affection people feel toward those who perform them, but in the mundane feelings of affection people have for family and friends. Hutcheson explores simple, ordinary instances of *apparently* selfless affection, since he believes that cases of this kind provide the strongest evidence against Mandeville's egoistic theory. In contrast to Mandeville, Hutcheson maintains that the selflessness of human affection is obvious in the familial case, and that, once this is granted, we have a clear view of its operation in the wider sphere of morality. In the *Inquiry* he writes that "*disinterested affection* may appear strange to Men impressed with Notions of *Self-Love*, as the *sole* spring of human action, from the Pulpit, the Schools, the Systems, and Conversations regulated by them, but let us consider it in its strongest and simplest Kinds; and when we see the Possibility of it in these Instances we may easily discover its *universal Extent*" (*Inquiry*, 160).

One of the central arguments that Hutcheson formulates in responding to Mandeville involves a comparison of cases of parental affection with cases of mutual concern that involve what Hutcheson calls "the conjunction of interests." Hutcheson asks us to consider the case of a

business partnership as a typical case of conjoined interests. Each of the parties in such a partnership genuinely *does* have an interest in the fortunes of the others, and their doing so is very naturally accounted for in terms of the relationship between those fortunes and their own interests. As an example, Hutcheson asks us to consider the case of a business concern wherein one partner is overseeing operations abroad while the others at home take an active interest in his affairs—they are happy when he gains, and pained when he loses. For Hutcheson, these responses are clearly an effect of the way the interests of the home partners are conjoined with those of the partner abroad. The home partners care about the fortunes of the partner abroad only because the satisfaction of their interests is bound up with the satisfaction of his. For Hutcheson, the notion of the conjunction of interests serves as a basis for characterizing egoistic accounts of moral concern. In effect, if moral concern for others is reducible to motives of self-interest, it can only be because moral relationships involve the kind of conjunction of interests characteristic of business partnerships.

For Hutcheson, any such account of morality fails to appreciate the fundamental characteristic of moral concern, and the crucial difference is "tender, personal Regard" (*Inquiry*, 160). Is the "conjunction of interests," he asks, "the *same* Kind of Affection with *that* of Parents to their Children?" (*Inquiry*, 160). Hutcheson answers in the negative: the kind of affection found in familial relationships is founded on something deeper. The happiness arising in a parent from the well-being of their own child is not the result of enjoying the same pleasure as the child. Nor is the child's success or happiness an obvious gain for the parent, *unless the parent already has a desire for their happiness*. There is often no pleasure for the parent arising from what brings the child pleasure, *or even* from observing the child taking pleasure in something. Parents do derive a kind of pleasure from these things, but it is a pleasure arising from the parent's antecedent desire for the child's happiness and well-being. It is the parent's desire for the child's happiness that is satisfied in these cases, and not any desire for the parent's own happiness. So, while there *is* a 'conjunct of interest,' it is not the crucial motivating factor in cases of parental affection. Hutcheson writes, "[t]his Desire then is antecedent to the Conjunction of Interest, and the Cause of it, not the Effect: it then must be *disinterested*" (*Inquiry*, 161).

Hutcheson cites the overwhelming evidence of mothers' claims to feel affection for their children from the very moment they are born. In fact, he argues, there are cases in which that affection persists despite the fact that the child is not of a disposition to garner affection in the ways Mandeville suggests they do: Some children never really develop as mature beings with speech, or independent desires, and yet

they are beloved by their parents. Certainly, Hutcheson grants, moral maturity in children can serve to increase parental love, but it cannot possibly be counted as the source of parental affection in the face of such overwhelming empirical evidence to the contrary. Parental affection persists even if the child is very difficult and does not mature in the ways Mandeville suggests. Hutcheson writes, "the *Affection* of *Parents* . . . cannot be entirely founded on *Merit* and *Acquaintance*; not only because it is antecedent to all Acquaintance, which might occasion *Esteem*; but because it operates where Acquaintance would produce *Hatred*, even toward *Children* apprehended to be *vitious*" (*Inquiry*, 219). Added to this, if affection really arose from acquaintance and merit, then it should be the children from whom the affection is strongest since it is they who stand in the greater position of gratitude; it is they, Hutcheson writes, "on whom all the Obligations are laid by a thousand good Offices" (*Inquiry*, 219). But as Hutcheson points out this "is quite contrary to Observation" (*Inquiry,* 220).

Assessing the disagreement between Mandeville and Hutcheson over parental affection is no easy matter. In part the disagreement turns on empirical fact, since at least part of Hutcheson's criticism consists in the claim that Mandeville's theory disagrees with facts concerning the conditions in which parental affection occurs. However, it is far from clear that the issues can be settled by appeal to empirical evidence. Considering the wealth of mechanisms that Mandeville invokes in accounting for the psychology and dynamics of parental affection, it is not hard to imagine how this or that tweak in the theory might serve to harmonize it with even the most inconvenient empirical phenomena. Perhaps this very theoretical resourcefulness amounts to a knock against Mandeville. Indeed, the epicyclical quality of Mandeville's reasoning was not lost on Hutcheson, who quite aptly asked "what is it that self-love cannot perform?"[12] On the other hand, Hutcheson is arguably too quick to judge the phenomenon of parental affection as a knock-down argument against Mandeville's view. If nothing else, Mandeville's theory shows us how indecisive even the most plausibly *selfless* cases of affection may be when seen through a suitably sophisticated theoretical lens.

Rather than attempt to adjudicate this fascinating and potentially intractable debate, we might now consider something in the way of *agreement* between the opposed parties. It is worth noting that Mandeville and Hutcheson are apparently agreed in thinking that the moral significance of motives of affection depends upon there being *selfless* motives. It is quite clearly this assumption that leads Mandeville to *deny* that motives of affection are morally significant (since, for Mandeville, motives of affection are *not* selfless, which is *why* they are morally neutral). It is equally clearly this assumption that leads Hutcheson to think that

motives of affection *are* morally significant, since the absence of selflessness would assimilate cases of parental affection to cases of conjoined interest in a way that would defeat Hutcheson's very point in making the distinction. My suspicion is that this shared view of the normative force of selflessness is ultimately untenable.

Relational Selfhood and Parental Affection

While ethics of care theorists articulate a variety of approaches to the role of 'care' in morality, they all share a fundamental belief in the moral significance of empathy and compassion. More specifically, ethicists of care reject the view that morality should be viewed as a vehicle for regulating conflicts between individual interests and argue in response that morality in some sense arises out of the feelings of concern and responsibility humans have for each other in *personal* relationships. Morality, on the ethics of care view, must be understood as fundamentally concerned with caring about other people. Rather than seeing this as a balancing act between our interests and the interests of others, an ethic of care sees morality as an expression of the basic human capacity for interpersonal concern. Virginia Held writes, "In seeing the problems of ethics as problems of reconciling the interest of the self with what would be right or best for 'everyone,' standard ethics has neglected the moral aspects of the concern and sympathy which people actually feel for particular others, and what moral experience in this intermediate realm suggests for an adequate morality."[13] The concern we feel for others is constitutive of our relationships with others, and it is from here that our moral maturity develops. Personal relationships do not seem to fit within the rules of reciprocity and justice that govern morally significant relationships on traditional accounts. But rather than assuming that these are relationships that fall outside the scope of moral theory, ethics of care theorists want to argue that these are precisely the kinds of relationships that form our moral attitudes.

Given this general view of the moral significance of care relationships, it is no great surprise that the single most common example of care relationships discussed in the care literature is the relationship between parent and child. In keeping with Hutcheson's intuitions, care ethicists see parental affection, and maternal affection in particular, as a paradigmatic case of a morally significant disposition towards others. Moreover, insofar as we may view caring for loved others as a motive for our conduct toward them, the ethics of care would seem to be in sympathy with the Hutchesonian view that motivation is morally significant. Where proponents of care ethics perhaps part company with Hutcheson is in the their view of the relationship between the morality of personal care relationships and morality as such. For Hutcheson, cases

of parental affection are, if you will, a microcosm of morality as a whole. On Hutcheson's view, parental affection is just the most conspicuous example of a brand of benevolence that naturally animates humanity as a whole. Therefore, moral conduct and moral motivation are not essentially bound up with the *personal* dimension of human relationships. Ethicists of care, by contrast, are very strongly inclined to assert that morally significant relationships involve a personal dimension. As Held suggests, relations of care are not a matter of "what is best for everyone," but concern actual feelings for "particular others." To this extent, care ethicists tend to see ethically significant relationships (and the motives that animate them) in terms of their proximity to such paradigmatically personal relations such as that between parent and child. However, this point notwithstanding, it is tolerably clear how Hutcheson's view of the moral significance of benevolent affections, and his portrait of their operation in parent-child relations, might be taken to involve an anticipation of care ethics.

The hard case is, of course, Mandeville. As we have seen, Mandeville goes to considerable lengths in order to accommodate parental affection within the broader context of his egoism. But does his considered view of parental affection offer anything that the care ethicist can take heart in? On first glance, it might seem not. After all, the upshot of his discussion would seem to be that parental affection, properly understood, ultimately involves only one object of care: the parent herself. It is no doubt this that leads Mandeville to suggest that motives of affection bear no moral significance. This, of course, is just another way of flagging Mandeville's and Hutcheson's shared assumption: namely, that moral motives must be selfless ones. It was suggested above that the ethics of care is predicated upon rejecting this view of the moral significance of selflessness. For this reason, no accurate account of the ethics of care will characterize the view as wholly faithful to Mandeville's outlook (or to Hutcheson's, for that matter). However, it strikes me as important to consider exactly why and how care ethicists abandon the assumption. We can go some way toward understanding this by considering the care ethicists view of the *local* character of care relationships. Paradigmatic examples of care relationships are, according to the care theorist, relationships between moral agents and the particular people in their lives they happen to care about. This is not necessarily to say that care relationships are self-interested, but it nevertheless suggests a sense in which care relationships are *self-centered*. The compass of one's caring concern is defined, in effect, by the range and extent of one's personal affections. It is not difficult to see how Mandeville's account of the natural operation of the passions in producing parental affection, including his view of the growth of affection in proportion to

acquaintance *with* and the interest *of* one's offspring might account for the locality of caring relations.

This is possibly a bit oblique, but there is a *stronger* sense in which the self-centeredness of care is asserted in standard accounts of care ethics. On most accounts, the ethics of care rests upon a fundamentally *relational* conception of the self. As Held explains, the ethics of care "conceptualizes persons as deeply affected by, and involved in, relations with others; to many ethics of care theorists persons are at least partly constituted by their social ties."[14] At least one reason for the prominence of the parental paradigm in accounts of care ethics is the strong sense in which that paradigm conveys the social aspect of selfhood. There is great plausibility to the suggestion that, in typical cases, parents' selfhood (or at least their sense of it) is deeply affected by the relations they bear to their offspring. One effect of this special kind of intimacy is that, for the parent, the line between self-interested motivations and motivations of benevolence toward the child are blurred. This is perhaps a further strain of explanation for the localized character of morally significant care. But for present purposes, the important point is that the care ethicist's view of selfhood actually *sustains* Mandeville's contention that parental affection is a species of *self*-concern.

Judged from the perspective of the care ethicist, however, Mandeville made two important mistakes. First, he was wrong to suggest that self-interested urges cannot be motives to act in the interests of others (and, as such, are morally neutral). Second, he operated with the wrong conception of self in defending his egoistic account of parental affection. The care ethicists correction of this second error goes a long way to correcting the first as well. If the self is understood as having an intrinsically relational nature, then the self-regarding character of parental affection takes on an entirely new, and moral, significance. On this account, caring for the self necessarily involves caring for those around me. However, in operating with this inclusive notion of selfhood, there is a clear sense in which care ethics preserves the broadly Mandevillian thesis that the concerns we experience and which motivate us in our caring relationships with others are concerns for our selves.

Given that nothing like the inclusive self of the ethics of care figures in Mandeville's own account of parental affection, it is also safe to say the perspective that care ethics adopts toward familial relationships is significantly different from Mandeville's. It is arguable that the care ethicist's insight regarding the relational character of the self offers the most likely means of accounting for that *feeling* many people have that Mandeville's account of parental affection cannot be right. Care ethics suggests a model of caring relationships that collapses the distinction

between self-interest and benevolence insofar as caring for others contributes to the unity and coherence of the carer's identity. The result, however, is that affection for others remains confined to very localized contexts. By contrast, Hutcheson's account sought to make benevolence both *selfless* and *general* as a natural disposition. It is in its resistance to these aspects of Hutcheson's view of natural benevolence that care ethics most clearly shows its Mandevillian colors.

The care ethicist *can* agree with Mandeville that all forms of caring involve a self-centered component, and yet has the theoretical resources to disagree that the motivation to care for others is, merely, selfish. To some extent, then, the ethics of care shares intuitions with Hutcheson. Parental affection can plausibly be accounted for as an instance of other-regarding care, since the parent's actions are motivated from genuine concern for well-being of her child. The care ethicist might also be able to say, with Hutcheson, that parental affection exemplifies the capacity for individuals to make the interests of others their own, without necessarily compromising her commitment to relational identity. Parental love need not be wholly selfless in order to count as a true species of natural affection; however, *benevolence in general* need not, conversely, require embeddedness in personal relationships.

University of Guelph

NOTES

1. Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962), p. 34.

2. Richard I. Cook, *Bernard Mandeville* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1974), p. 11.

3. This paper developed out of a commentary on Jennifer Welchman's paper, "Who Rebutted Bernard Mandeville?" which was delivered at the Canadian Philosophical Association in London, Ontario in 2005. In her paper, which has recently been published in *History of Philosophy Quarterly* (vol. 24, no. 1 [January 2007], pp. 57–74), Welchman argues that Mandeville's most famous critics failed to produce a fatal counter-argument to Mandeville's egoism. Welchman considers Hutcheson's rebuttal, but limits her discussion to his counter-example of acts of public spiritedness. As Welchman demonstrates, Mandeville has a fairly tidy answer to such counter-examples. However, Hutcheson's case of parental affection presents a more difficult counter-example for Mandeville and one that he is less successful in rebutting.

4. William Law, *Remarks upon a Late Book, Entitled, The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits. In a Letter to the Author*. Reprinted in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (London: Printed for William and John Innys, 1725), p. 6.

5. Anthony Early of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. John M. Robertson, in two volumes, vol. 2 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 83. In this quote, Shaftesbury is citing *Philocles*, one of the interlocutors in this dialogue (*The Moralists*).

6. Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God, the Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*, 3rd ed. Reprinted in *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (London: Printed by Will. Botham; for James Knapton, 1711), p. 75.

7. Bernard Mandeville, *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War*, ed. M. M. Goldsmith (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1971), p. 39.

8. Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* went through a number of editions, and expanded with each one. In its two volumes, it encompasses a number of essays and dialogues all bent on defending and illuminating Mandeville's system. For the sake of stylistic flow, any references to Mandeville's work will simply be to the *Fable*, volume I or II.

9. All in-text references to the *Fable* I and II are to Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, Part I and II, ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

10. Mandeville's emphasis on social approval as the primary motivating factor in moral behavior is echoed in recent work by primatologist Frans de Waal. In his book, *Good Natured*, de Waal argues that systems of morality arise from collective perceptions of the advantages of cohesive and safe social environments. As individuals come together in increasingly complex social environments, the common desire to maintain that social environment leads to an emphasis on community over individual interests. In such an environment, there is a definite benefit to encouraging, and engaging in, actions that serve the interests of others than oneself. de Waal terms this socializing mechanism *community concern*, which he defines as follows: "the stake each individual has in promoting those characteristics of the community or group that increase the benefits derived from living in it by that individual and its kin." Frans de Waal, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 207. Although de Waal observes this mechanism at work in primate species, he notes that humans have a degree of social awareness that makes us more sensitive to the social effects of our actions. Our moral systems, de Waal argues, arose out of our more finely tuned community concern.

Of course, it is unclear whether this presents any serious counterexample to Hutcheson's position. The special kind of social awareness that de Waal identifies as being a feature of enlightened self-interest would very likely be interpreted by Hutcheson as evidence of an innate human capacity for altruistic behavior.

11. All in-text references to the *Inquiry* are to Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1969 [orig. pub. London, 1738]).

12. Francis Hutcheson, *Reflections upon Laughter, and Remarks upon The Fable of the Bees* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1971 [orig. pub. Glasgow, 1750]), p. 77.

13. Virginia Held, "Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 50, suppl. (Autumn 1990), pp. 321–344, p. 337. Other theorists who subscribe to a similarly "relational" view of moral identity include, to name but a few, Carol Gilligan, Nell Noddings, and Sara Ruddick.

14. Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 46.