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Varieties of Flattery: Intersections in the Moralistic and Strategic Accounts

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Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art
By Daniel J. Kapust. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 238. $99.99.

Such a subject as flattery is bound to speak to political situations across a range of times and places. Yet Daniel Kapust's 2018 take on this topic still strikes one as remarkably timely, given American politics today. That he began the project well before the 2016 election is almost too incredible to believe. In fact, Kapust explains how he made the conscious choice *not* to change the basic manuscript upon hearing back from the publisher in fall 2016,[1] probably a prudent decision given the unrelenting pace of political developments to date. The fact that Kapust began his project a few years before, though, and made no significant changes afterward throws into sharp relief one of the book's main points—namely, that flattery is perennial in politics and, as such, remains understudied as a political phenomenon.

Many are acquainted with such fables as *The Raven and the Fox* that caution against flattery: a fox compliments a raven sitting high in a tree, coaxing the raven to demonstrate its singing abilities and drop the food it is holding in its mouth.[2] Even when thought to benefit the flatterer in some way, such stories instruct, ultimately these tactics promise harm to both the flatterer and the flattered. The flattered faces the threat of deception and ill-counsel, and both parties face the consequent ruin of character.[3] Such lessons

have been the stuff of children's stories for centuries. Moreover, many of the examples from political thought appearing in the book point in this same moralistic direction, as I will explain below. Yet, Kapust explains, this moralistic account does not by itself exhaust the full range of flattery's implications and applications in politics. To be sure, warnings that leaders not fall prey to flatterers abound in political thought. However, Kapust rounds out our understanding of flattery in political fora by introducing another category, one that recognizes acts of flattery as seemingly justified, or at least not entirely blameworthy.

Beyond the moralistic accounts that we find in Aesop's fables, we may think of these alternative cases in "strategic" terms.[4] Specifically, Kapust calls attention to the possibility that people engage in flattery not necessarily because they seek to benefit at the expense of another, but because they seek simply to survive otherwise arbitrary circumstances and caprices of the powers that be. He describes "demoralized flattery, a sort of strategic use of flattery put into play by those who are subject to domination."[5] Thus, Kapust brings readers to understand flattery with greater nuance; more than an instrument of selfish gain, flattery may be the result of dependence on others and the need to contend with power imbalances. In this way, he grounds this alternative account of flattery in republican political theory. Indeed, the lengths to which people will resort in navigating the arbitrariness of power reveal flattery as a potential weapon of the weak, as it were—a symptom of subservience that would not be necessary among those enjoying true liberty in a republican sense

This strategic account is both intuitive and compelling. Even those who would adopt a conception of freedom different from that of classical republicanism can imagine the sort of scenario that Kapust paints, namely, of a person saying whatever he or she must in order to stay in the good graces of another who has some sort of power over him or her. A slave might attempt to appease through flattery his or her master, for example, to avoid physical abuse. With such dire examples in mind, one need not adopt a full-blown theory of freedom as nondomination in order to find plausible the proposition that certain power dynamics encourage flattery for reasons

other than gratuitous selfishness. Indeed, even such alternative understandings of freedom as noninterference could in many instances comprehend this strategic account of flattery in that the sheer need to survive may be what motivates one to flatter.

While this strategic account is compelling and a helpful contribution to understanding flattery in political fora, the traditional negative connotations linger and perhaps even loom larger than the strategic account in the examples of the book. The introduction explains that flattery is not a mere vice in the history of political thought, contrary to traditional accounts.[6] Even if flattery does not always appear as a personal vice, however, each chapter still rests on some condemnation of flattery, that it should be avoided and largely for the harm it can inflict on people and politics. For example, chapter 3 recounts the great lengths Hobbes goes to in demonstrating that monarchs are no more susceptible to flattery than democratic governments. In fact, he argues that monarchs are *less* susceptible for the very reason that they are unitary and not as easily moved by the passions as, say, an assembly beholden to the whims of the demos. Flattery here is not a strategy the weak employ to overcome domination but an obstacle for public officials to overcome lest they be deceived or swayed to act in ways they would not otherwise.

Other instances in which flattery continues to appear in a negative light come in chapters on Bernard Mandeville and Adam Smith, and the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Chapter 4 recounts how Mandeville understands flattery as a matter of fact, a function of our "asocial and egocentric" nature as human beings, and a measure we come to understand as necessary to create a prosperous society.[7] Even if he suspends judgment on this practice, insofar as it is part of the human condition, Mandeville's account has the potential to raise the traditional moralistic concerns about flattery among those who possess different starting points with respect to human nature. And indeed, Kapust goes on to explain how Smith does "remoralize" flattery, distinguishing mere praise from praiseworthiness, so passing judgment on Mandeville's treatment of these subjects.[8] In this way, a more conventionally negative, even moralized, account of flattery rears its head.

Finally, in chapter 5 we see how the Federalists and Anti-Federalists used the term pejoratively. Members of the opposing parties frequently accused one another of being in the business of flattering the people of the Early Republic. The ultimate goal of the other side, each party contended, was not to secure the best constitution for the true common good of the polity but to see its own particular vision for the young country realized. Hence, the Anti-Federalists accused their opponents of flattering the people with the promise of grandeur on an international stage, and the Federalists criticized the Anti-Federalists for flattering local prejudices.[9] Once again, flattery takes on a moralistic cadence here.

Even if we might say that the Federalists and Anti-Federalists were somehow *dependent* on the people to enact their respective visions of America and flattered the people accordingly, it seems incorrect to say that they otherwise risked domination by the people. Indeed, insofar as such factors as social class are salient for discussions of (non)domination, it seems less likely that instances in which the demos is the flattered party will implicate republican concepts of (non)domination. To this extent, although flattery may certainly be deployed toward strategic ends, it will likely display the republican upshots Kapust identifies only when a subordinate flatters a superior.

While the foregoing examples present largely negative accounts of flattery, a few of Kapust's examples admit clear space for strategic, republican explanations. Interestingly, one such example comes in the case Kapust describes as still moralized.[10] In particular, elements of the strategic account come through in chapter 1's recounting of Cicero's and Pliny's thoughts on flattery. In this chapter we see the necessity of a virtuous ruler in order to prevent a culture of flattery. Specifically, only the virtuous ruler can be trusted to remain just and so achieve a requisite friendship amid inequality with those over whom he rules. On the other hand, the friendship that is required among citizens would not be possible under a ruler of lesser character who would be more subject to flattery.[11] Kapust's full account is more nuanced, particularly in his treatment of Cicero. Still, in this we see an account of flattery that

is moralized while also revealing the potential for strategic explanations. It is moralized in the sense that it explicitly raises the ill effects of flattery for individual people and political community more generally. However, we see also the great purchase of the strategic account in the problems that may come of the unequal status of ruler and ruled. Indeed, flattery is a potential issue only because of their unequal status.

The chapter on Cicero and Pliny thus reveals a greater complexity in the way flattery may actually manifest in politics. It shows the potential for the moral and the strategic accounts to share a portion of explanatory power in the same case. We see a general belief in Roman times that flattery was detrimental to people and a healthy polity, and so to be avoided. However, it was considered harmful for the very reason that it undermined a republican conception of freedom. Flattery becomes an attempt to gain freedom from the arbitrary, even while serving as continual evidence of the persistence of very real disparities.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that a republican, strategic account seems to come to the fore in this chapter that considers thinkers squarely within the classical republican tradition. In particular, it seems the larger framework in which Pliny and Cicero operate informs their ability to see that flattery is not merely bad for individual character but a seemingly natural reaction to certain power imbalances and threats of arbitrariness. It poses deep problems for politics, but problems that can be prevented if we tend to republican values of freedom and virtue. In this way, Kapust's analysis implicitly brings the moral and the strategic together. Although he initially presents the strategic account of flattery as something of an alternative to the moralistic, it seems that the strategic understanding of flattery cannot but be suffused with a moral dimension. For while resorting to flattery may be understandable (that is, not blameworthy) from a republican perspective that takes seriously the harm that arbitrariness and domination pose to freedom, this perspective still serves as a strong condemnation of flattery. Thus, even within a strategic, republican explanation, a moralistic element persists.

In this light, the strategic account remains compelling, and particularly so as an elaboration of the more conventional moral accounts. Indeed, the differences between the moralistic and strategic accounts may not be so stark after all. This suggestion finds some support beyond the primary historical examples of the book, in an anecdote that Kapust recounts briefly in a footnote. At a meeting a few months into Trump's presidency in 2017, apparently each cabinet member took turns publicly praising the president.[12] This episode might be described in both moralistic and strategic terms. The strategy is pretty clear. On the one hand, these cabinet members wanted to keep their jobs and perhaps already saw evidence of the high turnover among the cabinet and aids of the administration. Maintaining their positions of power would thus require flattery. On the other, the circumstances were such that these individuals had a choice about whether to join the Trump administration at all, about whether they were willing to do what apparently they had to (that is, flatter) in order to stay in the administration. One could argue that their advancement, their careers, depended on their flattering Trump, but this argument does not negate that they accepted their posts in the first place—a fact that in some cases could betray an unbridled ambition rather than a mere attempt to survive or contend with Trump's domination.

Perhaps a more unifying analysis might have brought out more such connections between the moralistic and the strategic accounts of flattery, relating these themes to the arguments local to each chapter. Yet, one of the book's main points comes through only in the complexity and diversity of the individual chapters' arguments, namely, that flattery is a multifaceted phenomenon. Kapust is clear that he does not necessarily intend this book as a narrative about the development of flattery in the history of political thought. And ultimately, one of the book's many virtues is the vast conceptual and historical ground covered, as each chapter takes on various aspects of flattery through the lens of different political thinkers. Each chapter is rich on its own, but together this book constitutes a real tour de force.

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Weakness and Weaponized Flattery

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Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art
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After looking at the cover of Daniel Kapust's *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art,* we might think we know all that we need to about the book's thesis. It features the image of a 1592 painting by Pieter Brueghel the Younger titled *Man with the Moneybag and Flatterers*, which perfectly depicts what it means to be a "suck up": a man sits with an overflowing bag of money as waiting flatterers line up to crawl inside him—from the bottom up. The image strikes us immediately because of its familiarity. This is the commonplace view of flattery, one altogether unflattering to both parties. As Kapust reminds us, it is also the view that has persisted in the history of political thought. Theorists as varied as Plutarch, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Edmund Burke denounced flattery as vicious, corrupting, and simply "a bad thing," both for the cunning flatterer and the object of his deceptive praise.[13]

But Kapust writes to challenge the commonplace, straightforward account suggested by his book's cover art. He argues that we cannot understand instances of flattery apart from the complicated, messy, hierarchical "friction" of everyday politics. While contemporary political theorists have discussed flattery in the terms of republican theories of domination and democratic speech acts, they have overlooked its subtle but strategic use by the disempowered in "response to conditions of subordination," when the weak wield the weapon of flattery to "manipulate [superiors] into doing what they otherwise would not."[14] Kapust's account urges us to give apparent

flatterers the benefit of the doubt. We can't dismiss *all* flattery out of hand as morally repugnant, since we do not possess perfect knowledge of a flatterer's intentions, reasons, motives, or even sincerity (or lack thereof). To those who dismiss the practice as universally harmful and dangerous, Kapust responds that flattery is complicated, just like politics. We cannot evaluate it abstractly; instead, we have to ask who is doing the flattering, when, how, and why.

One of the many merits of the book is that it examines conceptual political theory in a very thoughtful way. It disentangles the concept from its typical uses, describing flattery both at its moralized worst—the sly fox of fables—and its strategic best—an illocutionary weapon of the weak. Having challenged the dominant moralistic view of flattery with the strategic one, Kapust then complicates and enriches his own distinction in five chapters on figures and debates in the history of political thought. The goal is not to construct a theory of flattery but to show how its uses are contextual, relational, and messier than they first appear. Once we appreciate the "realist" messiness behind flattery, we can see its nonmoral, strategic side. Since this is Kapust's central claim—that we ought to understand some acts of flattery as expressions of agency—I focus my comments there.

Kapust calls this side of the concept "dependent" flattery, and his chapters present examples of flatterers who are dependent on superiors: Roman elites subject to *princeps,* courtiers advising a prince, even children learning to curtsey in front of their parents (and in that example, we should note, it is the parents who finally do the flattering).

Still, Kapust's interest in viewing these stories through the lens of James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* leaves us wanting more. How weak, in fact, are those who wield the weapons of dependent flattery in the stories Kapust tells? In chapter 1 on Rome, the relationship of inferior to superior is really a struggle of "status-conscious elites" who "chafe" at differences in relative status and feel humiliated by their relatively lower though undoubtedly still-influential place in the social hierarchy.[15] The counselors to princes played by Castiglione and Machiavelli in chapter 2 are certainly in

relationships of relative dependence, but they are nonetheless in positions of some influence. And their influence allows them to flatter for two overlapping purposes: to "seek favor" from a prince for self-interested reasons and to "give counsel" that encourages a prince to do what he otherwise would not, sometimes to further the common good unknowingly.[16]

These are strategic instances of flattery, to be sure. They protect inferiors and prevent bad policy. Most important for Kapust, they point to a potential diversity of reasons behind the practice of flattery. But the book misses an opportunity to push the idea of dependent flattery further—to recognize its use by those whose social standing renders them *unable* to engage in the persuasion characteristic of Machiavelli, who lack the privileged standing to "chafe" at their own subordination, and for whom any kind of friendship between superior and inferior is impossible. How do the truly weak use flattery, and how do they understand their own intentions and motivations for doing so? For one answer, we can consider the passage from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* that Kapust quotes in the introduction. In the novel, the narrator's grandfather advises:

> Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I gave up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you to they vomit or bust wide open.[17]

Kapust uses this image to introduce his vision of dependent flattery that frames the remaining chapters. But Ellison's description of the mechanisms and motivations behind the act are very different from what the political theorists of Rome, Renaissance Florence, and early commercial society provide. In Ellison's account, flattery is not simply protective or persuasive; it is *weaponized*—a

replacement for a surrendered gun. It grants at least some perceived social agency to a flatterer who lacks it entirely, at the same time forcibly lowering a flattered superior class that nonetheless believes it has the upper hand. For the grandfather of *Invisible Man*, the aim is not to gain the favor of one's superiors, nor to change their minds even for the most noble purposes, but to undermine them with ingratiating yeses and grins.

The example from *Invisible Man* introduces a different motivation for strategic flattery. It also offers another possible way to interpret its use. While the narrator's grandfather understands his own actions as artful manipulation, even those closest to him see the old man as consistently tame and servile, so much so that his dying words puzzle everyone. Either the narrator's grandfather has been particularly adept at his craft, or Ellison is suggesting a different conclusion: that flattery can be one of the lies we tell ourselves about the illusion of agency or the futile hope of influence. It is an attempt at control, but one that might do more to assuage the mind of the flatterer than to undermine existing power dynamics or change the flattered in any meaningful way. This insight only underscores Kapust's thesis about the messy complexity of flattery. But it is nonetheless overlooked in favor of the strategic and productive examples of flattery he presents. Given the book's interest in the complicated, nonideal social relationships behind acts of flattery, we might have hoped for more diverse examples of the "public transcripts" enacted by the excluded—those without political power and traditional social influence—along with the perspectives and motivations those transcripts can illuminate.

Even as we wish for more about strategic flattery, it is reasonable to worry that the book takes this demoralized view of flattery too far, so much so that it loses what ought to be retained from the moralized account. Put differently: our recognition of flattery as a sometimes-weapon of the weak ought not override its long-standing use as a support for the powerful. Specifically, we should not forget that the very *expectation* of flattery sometimes maintains the distance between superiors and their subordinates. In the book's introduction, Kapust discusses the Hans Christian Andersen story

"The Emperor's New Clothes," in which out of fear and self-interest, counselors and subjects alike pretend to see the emperor's allegedly beautiful, ornate, but actually invisible garments. They are worried about appearing foolish and unsophisticated, but also unfit for the positions they hold, and thus soon out of favor and out of work. As Kapust writes, they "reinforce their superior's tendencies" toward vanity.[18] In this case, flattery by dependents *deepens* their dependency and encourages bad habits, among them vanity, in the ruler. Though the story does not go this far, we need not stretch things too far to imagine the political consequences of having a consistently flattered, self-inflated ruler who remains unchecked by even the most influential advisers around him.

After all, one cannot help but read Andersen's tale and Kapust's entire book in the shadow of Donald Trump, who demands praise from his cabinet officials at the start of meetings. Our contemporary situation forces us to ask difficult questions about the demand for praise, the relationships of dependence it can maintain, and the political consequences flattery might have. It prompts us to return to the moralistic account of flattery. Kapust wants to ask these questions too, but though the book raises them in different ways, it is less clear on possible answers. Kapust aims to avoid offering a straightforward theory of flattery, but the reader still hopes for the suggestion of one. Can we assert that flattery is not always "a bad thing," while still being able to determine if and when it actually is? By what standard should we distinguish good from bad, or at least neutral from harmful instances of flattery? Under what conditions should we be concerned about the political consequences of flattery?

To respond to these concerns, we can revisit a theory that remains relatively underdeveloped in the book: Adam Smith's remoralized economy of praise. Ultimately, it is difficult to tell whether Kapust favors Bernard Mandeville over Smith in the fight over flattery. But Smith's connection between sympathy, language, and praiseworthiness remains untapped potential for evaluating the flatterer and the flattered. Smithean claims hide behind the book's thesis about the weak, whose strategic uses of flattery earn

the sympathy of an impartial observer who cannot know their intentions but nonetheless sympathizes with their actions. For Smith, the very desire to seek praise and the pleasure gained from undue praise are individual moral failures. One should seek to be *praiseworthy*, or truly deserving of the admiration of others. To be happy with praise when it is unwarranted—and often to get flattery by default—is to be servile. Smith's remoralized account might allow us to navigate the space between the narrowly moralistic view from the history of political thought and Kapust's strategic version and to evaluate both as needed. We can understand and sympathize with those who are forced to weaponize flattery out of necessity, yet at the same time remain skeptical of those on the receiving end of it, especially the powerful who seek it. Smith's impartial observer will sympathize with a strategic flatterer while condemning the powerful individual's pursuit of undue praise.

Moreover, Smithean sympathy reveals why the "moralized" account of flattery has been so dominant throughout history and why the dependent, strategic view is so difficult to see. For Smith, we naturally sympathize with the rich and powerful, but we avert our eyes from the poor and weak. The man of rank and distinction, Smith writes, is "observed by the all the world," whereas the poor man is "placed out of the sight of mankind."[19] This insight about sympathy and recognition makes the contributions of *Flattery and the History of Political Thought* all the more significant. By asking who is doing the flattering, why, and how, we can uncover what is typically concealed, to see acts of agency where they have been otherwise dismissed. What the book provides is an important account of flattery, and therefore of everyday politics, from the bottom up.

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Bribed by Interest: Hobbes, Kapust, and the Flatterer's Witness

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Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art
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Flattery and the History of Political Thought is a good book, contemplating flattery through an impressive range of authors and periods. It begins, however, with an abstract consideration of the topic. It confronts us with the question of whether or not we ought to look at flattery and flatterers from a moral perspective. Then comes the detailed consideration of specific authors: these include ancients such as Cicero, and Pliny's praise of Trajan. Early moderns, including Machiavelli and Hobbes, and contemporaries, among them Castiglioni and Milton and Shakespeare, are also contemplated. It reaches the finish with such Enlightenment figures as Bernard Mandeville, Adam Smith, the Federalists, and the Anti-Federalists.

Most important, through discussions of these thinkers Daniel Kapust's treatment invites us to dwell on what we might think of flatterers in the contexts of particular lives and societal needs. Should we generalize regarding the damage flatterers are said to do? What claims of necessity, in light of the particulars, might they make in defense of this often despised social and political practice? Are there no excusable forms of flattery? Perhaps, as Kapust suggests, a "demoralized" perspective is needed.

Tempted by the less censorious conclusions, Kapust does not follow his most daring defender of flattery, Mandeville, all the way. Kapust goes so far, especially in his Introduction, as to chasten

those who presume to universally assign bad intentions or bad character to flatterers. He wishes us to look with greater sympathy on those who flatter from a socially subordinate position. Mandeville's case is made from a still higher, comic distance. From that height we are invited to see the divide between morally self-conscious and cultivated intentions, on the one hand, and the consequences of our unknowing, and less admired, impulses, on the other. The unearned praise we receive from flatterers, in this view, helps civilize us. It is the payment we accept to compensate for the price we pay for otherwise not indulging in less sociable conduct. The pride that makes us overvalue ourselves yields a collective benefit.[20]

Before making a closing case for pulling back further from demoralized perspectives on flattery, I turn to a thinker less enamored of pride, Thomas Hobbes. Kapust's comments on this philosopher are largely focused on areas touching on the concept of sovereignty and where it dovetails with Hobbes's expressed preference for monarchy over other forms. Hobbes was an absolutist, but he allows that the sovereign of a properly constructed commonwealth might be democratic, aristocratic, or monarchical. Only the last, however, has the advantage of investing the office of sovereign in one person. In all other forms, the sovereign will is determined by the deliberations of an assembly.[21] As Kapust argues, this point is connected to Hobbes's claims about flatterers.[22]

Which forms are more, or less, likely to fall victim to the flatterer's schemes? The flatterers Hobbes described implore those in charge to make choices that serve their selfish ends, rather than those that might serve the state. The sovereign, whose office it is to protect that state, can be tricked or seduced. Where the sovereign is itself an assembly rather than an individual, Hobbes invites us to think that the assembly is more likely to make such mistakes.[23]

Here we can weave in another element of Kapust's work. The question of flattery is quite often arrayed within what is called the rhetorical situation. Does the speaker flatter his or her audience? How are they flattered, and to what end? We might ask, were we to extend the debate on flattery, whether rhetorical situations are

always the best starting point: Is flattery always primarily a matter of persuasion?

The rhetorical frame is, however, a good starting point for Hobbes. Beginning with his work on Thucydides, we see that Hobbes insists that we extend the suspicion of flatterers to the crowd's own susceptibility. Hobbes struggles against the view that flattery is perhaps most naturally at home in courtly, monarchical, settings. He insists that we also scrutinize plural audiences. The assembled group, the people and/or assembly members may be swayed one way or another by appealing to their passions. Flattery is a part of this tool set.

Hobbes's works have a stronger indictment of the plural rather than unitary sovereigns. Nonmonarchical governmental forms are more likely, not less, to fall victim to the stratagems of their flatterers. The crowd cannot resist being swayed in ways that individuals can be.

Hobbes's case is neither evident nor simple. He does not claim that monarchs are not subject to human weaknesses. As individuals, they too are likely to listen to, and yield to, the will of those who know how to flatter them. In fact, all sovereigns, no matter the form of their sovereignty, can be—to borrow a phrase Hobbes uses to describe corrupt councilors—"bribed by their own interest."[24] Private interests can lead them to adopt policies, laws, and decisions that serve them, their intimates, and family members more than they do the common good of the people. Hobbes's sovereign is not James I's, who must invest too much of his legitimacy in his reputation for virtue.

As Kapust notes, Hobbes sets less idealistic goals for his sovereign. He must be responsible for protecting the people and making them, in some sense, strong. They must together form the body politic, for a weak body politic is to no one's advantage.

But why are monarchs less likely to deviate from these duties, to build and maintain the Leviathan's strength? Why are they less likely to give in when flatterers threaten? As Kapust also points out, Hobbes believes they will hold strong if they do not take their counsel in a public forum. Those who speak before the sovereign

monarch in such forums do so before an assembled audience. In the confines of the prince's private chamber, however, the monarch can interrupt to ask questions. The effects we see with crowds can thereby be avoided, including the sway of sentiment that builds as people listen and react collectively. These dreaded crowd-dynamics may make a popular man a more powerful voice for his cause than he ought to be. Plural sovereigns cannot enjoy this advantage.

We can be forgiven if we wish to question Hobbes on these matters, and Kapust seems to hint at this possibility in his provocative ending to his chapter on Hobbes. We should go further: Hobbes may not be entirely persuasive on this question of kingship and flattery. Hobbes's defense is hardened because he does not insist that his sovereign monarch must be virtuous. Nevertheless, Hobbes's charity for the fallible monarch presumes that the sovereign may be made more immune to flattery by engaging in diligent private question-and-answer sessions with his potential flatterers. Is that what will happen behind closed doors? It might, if the monarch knows his duty and wishes to do it. But what if he has little regard for duty?

Couldn't the defender of the crowd—especially the republican, publicly spirited crowd—enjoy the same degree of charity? When the sovereign (of whatever form) hears the advice of a potential flatterer, we might make the comparative case on behalf of the multitude. Might not the recipient of that flattery, whether a sovereign monarch or a sovereign assembly's faction, be less inclined to accept the blandishments when offered in public? That is, shouldn't we prefer that the flattered audience and the flattering person know they will be witnessed? Are closed doors a true solution to flattery? Isn't flattery more difficult when one knows that those one is *not* flattering are listening and watching? Perhaps the flattered may have more difficulty giving in to the flatterer when others are watching. They know that persons are too easily bribed by their own pride and/or greed.

Perfect altruism is not required here either. Those who know that a public interest is being sacrificed to a private one may serve both themselves and the public by pointing to the discrepancy.

We might imagine that a truly talented flatterer of a plebiscitary sovereign would be immune from this kind of correction. That is not, however, evidence in favor of Hobbes's assumption that a monarch who takes his advice in private rather than in a publicly witnessed place (like Parliament) will likely render better service to the state. Why shouldn't we expect the worst when the sovereign and his or her flatterers are immune from the speculations of witnesses? Crowds can be swayed, but why should we assume that the assembled are *always* more likely to be seduced?

Finally, as Kapust notes, in the 1611 *Discourse on Flattery* Hobbes's pupil William Cavendish had repeated the usual script warning princes against being flattered by a courtier. Only later does he take a turn and make flattery more of the crowd's problem. This, combined with Hobbes's own anxiousness to have his advice heeded, makes one wonder if Hobbes was in fact flattering the Stuart monarchs by making them more exempt from the flatterer's threat.[25]

This brings up a second area where we could extend the discussion on flattery. Kapust has not attempted to have the last word on flattery, and he has worked to show us some areas where we might learn to have sympathy with flatterers, especially where they can be said to be offering up a public transcript and where we suspect that the private transcripts are quite different. We can, with James C. Scott, salvage the dignity of the flatterer because we imagine that he or she might be secretly subverting those who dominate and govern them in ways we would find unjust.[26]

Yet, there is a reason why flatterers need to be salvaged. Here the question of what to do when we witness flattery is again operative. As Kapust sometimes notes, one of the most damning things we can say about flatterers, especially out of the republican tradition, is that they are servile. Building on the weakness of Hobbes's position identified here, I would argue, we need to consider more than the flatterer's position relative to the person being flattered. Speaking pleasing falsehoods to power may be the best some can do, but how often should we extend sympathy?

Kapust mentions those who occupy subordinate positions. Truth be told, just about all Kapust subjects, flatterers or not, are

not exactly candidates for maximal sympathy. True, tortured Machiavelli was brought low by the Medici, but it was because he was elevated relatively high, for a time, by the Florentine Republic. Cicero's is a more complicated case; he gets no sympathy from Ronald Syme, but Syme was no republican.[27]

It is not difficult to imagine situations in which the truly subordinate and dominated feel the need to flatter. Can they be criticized? Actually, yes. Such criticism is especially effective when that criticism comes from fellow subordinates and the fellow afflicted. That is, a part of the tradition of detesting flatterers isn't merely from the prince looking down at low cunning, tricksters, or of demagogues who flatter their public audiences. It also comes from persons at the bottom, or at least from the flatterer's equals, looking laterally as a member sacrifices principles to curry favor with the mighty.

It is the view that allows us, sometimes with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to differentiate those who sacrifice their dignity and pay obeisance from those who refuse to do so and suffer. As Kapust knows, sometimes flattery isn't so much a strategy as a demand from those in power. Can we not still differentiate between the individuals who comply with the demands and those who hold their heads high? People also climb high in corrupt institutions: they degrade themselves before their kings, bosses, religious leaders, and deans. Do we let them all off the hook?

One of the healthier reactions to the presidency of Donald Trump has been the moral condemnation of his flatterers: ambitious lickspittles need not be objects of pity. Today they endanger liberty. We rightly censor the enablers, and we might wonder if the present culture doesn't suffer from too much sympathy for those who do what they must to achieve their personal aspirations. Not all claims to necessity need to be credited.

Kapust's book therefore raises important questions. Should those who praise the blameworthy stand as high as those who blame the blameworthy? Mandeville might say we cannot do any better than that. Once we depart from his proto-anthropological, "demoralized" speculations on the potential, unexpected causes of our collective well-being, we inevitably return to particular cases.

When we do, that argument loses its power. Kapust's recognition of Adam Smith's remoralized account of flattery is largely focused on the ways in which humans—assumed to be driven, contra Mandeville, by a desire for sympathy—will come to spurn false praise. Moral learning occurs, and those who do learn prefer to be genuinely praiseworthy, even when their virtues go unacknowledged.[28]

Refusing false praise is ultimately distinct from an unwillingness to give false praise or from feeling disdain for those who do. Smith contributed some thoughts on these matters as well. His account of Louis XIV's fawning subjects is noteworthy. His account of the praise and devotion offered to high-stationed mediocrities needs a wider audience. And his account of the misplaced and, indeed, corrupting sympathy of the common man for the great and wealthy is today quite timely.[29]

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Commentary on *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art*

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Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art
By Daniel J. Kapust. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 238. $99.99.

Flattery requires no introduction: everyone knows what it is (at least, perhaps, when they *see* it), and everyone knows that it is quite *bad*. A flatterer is all sorts of things, none of them good: he or she is, variously, false, cunning, lying, crafty, servile, obsequious, and sycophantic. The person who is the object of flattery doesn't fare much better, come to think of it: he or she is likely to be some combination of stupid and vain. What distinguishes flattery from run-of-the-mill deception, after all, is its connection to pride and self-love; the serpent, we recall, "beguiled" Eve in the garden with the promise that she would eat and "become as god knowing good and evil."[30] Through "fraudulent temptation," Milton's Satan is undeniably a flatterer: "Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair," he calls Eve,

> Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
> By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore
> With ravishment beheld, there best beheld
> Where universally admired . . .

Milton's creation here recognizes the bond between pride, self-love, and flattery, asking Eve pointedly, "Who *sees* thee?"[31] Any link to the *original* sin carries pedigree!

Perhaps because it has such strongly moralistic connotations, flattery has thus far escaped a systematic *political* treatment—and it's here that Daniel Kapust's *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art* appears to fill the proverbial lacuna. Kapust traces the winding path of a concept, flattery, through a number of salient episodes in the history of political thought—a thematic and methodological approach that recalls noteworthy recent work by David Runciman on hypocrisy, Don Herzog on cunning, Sharon Krause on honor, and Pierre Force on self-interest.[32] Kapust brings impressive erudition to the proceedings: his attention to linguistic and rhetorical detail is rare in political theory, and he manages to cover an admirably large field of work without stretching things too thin. Kapust's background in classics and his previous work on Roman and Renaissance political thought pay dividends here, as he capably brings ancient and early modern sources to bear on a concept that drips with contemporary import.[33] More could be said about the virtues of the book and of Kapust's approach, but this is hardly the occasion to heap praise. Instead, echoing the sentiments of Machiavelli—whose characteristically clever musings on the futility of flattery appear in chapter 11—I come to this book frankly and plainly, in honest critique!

Thus if the book has a weakness, it stems from Kapust's relative inattention to conceptual analysis; in particular, the reader wants to find a bit more theoretical work on the idea of flattery itself. We get a definition of flattery in the introduction, on pages 17–18:

> [F]latterers use deferential or laudatory speech (or action), the content of which may be believed true or false (though normally believed false), to achieve a goal (or goals), the benefits of which accrue more to the speaker or actor than the audience or recipient, benefits that would not have accrued were it not for manipulation.[34]

This definition is precise, yes, but I submit that it is a bit bloodless—particularly considering the deeply moralistic connotations of flattery found in Milton and elsewhere. Kapust is led to this

somewhat dissatisfying definition, I argue, by some conceptual choices made elsewhere in the opening pages. After beginning with a discussion of what he calls the "moralistic" reading of flattery—based partly on Aesop's fable "The Crow and the Fox" and Hans Christian Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes"—Kapust immediately problematizes the traditional account in two distinct ways. The first he does by noting that flattery can often be, in James Scott's phrasing, a "weapon of the weak"; there is, he writes, "an important distinction between a slave who flatters his master to avoid being whipped and a conman who flatters his mark to take advantage of him."[35] In other words, context matters; more specifically, *power* matters: flattery is talk, and talk is cheap, particularly compared to other ways of getting people to do what we want them to do. Second, Kapust rightly notes that much of our commonsense intuitions regarding flattery rely on unstated assumptions about *internal states*—states that he is justifiably worried about building into his conceptual analysis. To distinguish a flatterer from an earnest, if effusive, admirer, for example, requires knowing that the flatterer is acting in *bad faith*: the fox in Aesop's tale *knows* that crows (or ravens) do *not* possess lovely voices, but he pretends to; likewise, we *know* the fox praises the crow *in order to take advantage* of her—after all, he's a fox! But people aren't foxes, and our ability to diagnose flattery is going to depend in large part on our ability to attribute, reliably, bad faith motivations to flatterers. Kapust's definition of flattery—laudatory speech undertaken to acquire a one-sided benefit—avoids both of these problems.

This more analytically precise—but simultaneously more bloodless—conception of flattery has a kind of transactional quality to it, something that really comes out in the book's ambivalent encounter with Bernard Mandeville in chapter 4, which is probably the highlight of the book. As Kapust explains, Mandeville's rigorous adherence to the doctrine of self-interest brings him in Book II of the *Fable of the Bees* to argue that language *itself* originates, *not* in some (relatively noninstrumental) natural desire to be understood or to communicate with those around us, but in the (far *more*

instrumental) desire to persuade others to act on our behalf. Language is for getting things—a view of speech that rings true to followers of Mandeville and to parents of small children. But if language is for getting things, then flattery—which is, after all, a kind of speech-act specifically designed to *get things*—isn't particularly special or morally blameworthy. It's just as bad as its linguistic neighbor, *praise*, because according to this view, neither praise nor flattery is uttered for the benefit of the recipient. Mandeville encourages us not to get too worked up over flattery—it's not any more self-interested than other forms of speech, and like any other form of speech, it serves a useful transactional function.[36]

Mandeville, coming out of the continental Augustinian tradition of Montaigne and especially La Rochefoucauld, is notoriously skeptical regarding internal states. We struggle, he thinks, to interpret the motives of others, and we especially struggle to interpret our own motivations. This means that Kapust's move to define flattery in a way that avoids attributing internal states should satisfy a Mandevillian; it is an inductive move, and one that helps to pull the various chapters together conceptually.

But let's look again at the definition. Flattery happens (and *only* happens) when the following obtains (and here I'm paraphrasing):

1. Laudatory or deferential language is employed (regardless of whether the language refers truthfully to beliefs held by the speaker)
2. to achieve a goal,
3. the benefits of which are enjoyed *more* by the flatterer than the flattered.

If this is our view of flattery, then it seems that the most relevant consideration—the thing that sets flattery apart from ordinary rhetoric or praise—is *who benefits more* from the speech-act. Again, this is in keeping with Mandeville's transactional approach—flattery refers to an exchange whereby what Mandeville calls "aerial coin of praise" buys something more than the mere "breath of man," be it power or money.[37] But it is altogether unclear whether

the question of "who benefits more" from an act of flattery really captures the moral intuitions at play here—moral intuitions that Dan spends most of the book exploring!

In the concluding pages, Kapust leaves us with something of a challenge—to remoralize the idea of flattery. He confesses to wanting to reevaluate his own thinking after watching the political ascent of Donald Trump—as good a reason as any to reevaluate our political thinking. I think the way back to a moralized flattery is laid open, partly through a reading of *Flattery and the History of Political Thought*, and partly by placing flattery in a less precise and more political context.

Kapust offers a more explicitly political—at least in the democratic or republican sense of the term—view of flattery his final substantive chapter, covering the Federalist–Anti-Federalist debates of the early American Republic. In this telling, flattery served as a kind of rhetorical bludgeon for *both* sides, a pejorative meant to guard against excessive promising by either side. These, I think, are perfectly viable—and altogether instructive—uses of the concept of flattery. In particular, it seems that these *warnings* of flattery are more in keeping with our long-held moral intuitions about flatterers: that they are something to be *guarded against*. The purpose of Aesop's fable, after all, was to instruct—to demonstrate the ways of the flatterer to the average (vain) person as a means of protection against certain kinds of appeals. There is something of this in Mandeville's analysis, too, only he seeks to warn individuals against a kind of *self*-flattery—against seeing their own motivations as pure, and those of others as impure.

Thus, an analysis of flattery that emphasizes its *defensive* character might go some way in remoralizing it while preserving the historical richness that Kapust so ably documents here. The applications in a republic seem straightforward: a people should be taught to be sensitive to the harms of flattery and to recognize a fox when they see one.

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Response to Critics

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I'd like to begin by thanking all the participants in this Symposium, which grew out of a panel at the 2019 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting. At this panel, I was honored to receive kind and generous comments from Professors Christina Bambrick, Gianna Englert, Ted Miller, and Brandon Turner and from a number of audience members who showed up at the somewhat early time slot of 8:00 on a Thursday. Part of the fun of writing a book like this was that I got to play around with the concept of flattery, and I'll start by saying that I feel flattered by my readers, flattered in the sense that they are perhaps being nicer than they need to be, a niceness that reflects their manifold excellences and impeccable characters. In truth, I'd describe such engagement as an honor— I think there's a difference—and humbling.

Before turning to my responses to Professors Bambrick, Englert, Miller and Turner, I want to indulge myself a bit to say a few things about why I wrote this book. There are the scholarly reasons—things I noticed in texts, things I read in the secondary literature—and I note these in the book. But there are two more personal reasons, one of which isn't particularly good: I thought it would be fun to write a book on flattery. But I also wrote it for an even more personal set of reasons, one which Professor Englert put her finger on in her remarks. I've been fascinated for about as long as I remember, or at least going back to junior high, that cesspool of brutal and arbitrary social hierarchy, with the question of how we use speech to navigate power. In junior high, and high school, this involved a sort of reflexive turn to humor in dealing with other males who were larger, more aggressive, and sadistic; in grad school, it involved me figuring out how to deal with faculty members I encountered who seemed blissfully unaware of just how

much power they had. And then there was the time I spent waiting tables, having to chat guests up to get better tips (talk about dependent flattery), or being a pool manager in a pretty rough neighborhood and trying to find ways to keep the peace and avoid having the police there all the time. I've long been interested in, and very much self-aware, of the performance we engage in and how these performances vary with patterns of power.

Now, I'll begin with Professor Englert's comments, though I'll return to them when I come to Professor Bambrick's comments. With all three of my interlocutors, I won't respond to everything, but just say a few things. I think that Professor Englert is right to say that most of my analysis of strategic flattery does not focus on those who lack agency altogether, functioning as a sort of weapon to replace power not merely lessened, but lost altogether. Were I to rewrite the book, I would have moved even further from the canon than I did for just such reasons. I agree with her point, made via her engagement with Adam Smith, who I discuss in tandem with Bernard Mandeville, that we can sympathize with those who are forced to deploy flattery as a weapon and we remain skeptical of those who receive it. Broadly speaking, as I wrote the book I was much more interested in the former—the one using it—than the latter—the one receiving it. And even if my interest has shifted a bit since completing the book, a point I will revisit with Professor Bambrick, I'm still far more interested in when and why those with less power use it than those with more power seek it. Perhaps I am cynical, but I expect that those with power and position will seek praise and affirmation and, of course, flattery. A Smithian perspective along the lines of what Professor Englert suggests would indeed provide a contextually sensitive way of sympathizing with the flatterer *while* blaming the flattered. I should also note that I think Professor Englert is right to note that it is hard to tell whether I find Mandeville or Smith more persuasive on flattery, a difficulty rooted in the fact that I found myself working harder to reconstruct Mandeville's argument sympathetically (no Smith pun intended) than I did with Smith. But I should say that I do, in fact, favor Smith because while I think Mandeville's argument is certainly fun,

it's painfully lacking in nuance; sure, we all like praise, but we don't all, I think, fail to recognize the difference between merited and unmerited praise.

I'll turn now to Professor Miller. I should probably begin by saying that I agree with his point about Hobbes: Hobbes's argument in defense of monarchy, especially monarchy done in private, against plural forms of sovereignty isn't the strongest argument he makes. It's plausible, as Professor Miller points out, that Hobbes may have been flattering the Stuarts in his later writings, and even in the second edition of the 1611 *Discourse on Flattery*. More broadly, why should we think that crowds are less effective at sniffing out flattery than individuals in at least certain highly restricted situations of listening? I suspect that for Hobbes it has to do in part with what emotions are at stake in political flattery, or at least which ones are particularly worrisome. Hobbes is especially disturbed at the prospect of the desire to seem brave, or to take up apparently brave courses of action, triumphing over fear, a point he makes in his 1629 essay *Of the Life and History of Thucydides*. Fear is a feeling we might feel ashamed to display in public, and Hobbes believes this perverse dynamic is more likely in public than private and with groups than individuals. But there are other emotions that may be more salient in groups and in public than among individuals or in private—for example, the shame of being perceived as a flatterer.

The other point Professor Miller notes, and which connects both to Professor Englert's point about Smith and Professor Bambrick's comments, has to do with the odd phenomenon that happened as I was finishing the manuscript. This phenomenon was the public display of lickspittlery on the part of Donald Trump's subordinates in televised cabinet meetings, as well as the infinite number of stories we read then and after from a variety of sources detailing his love of praise and his seeming indifference to or inability to discern between true and false praise. I think Professor Miller is right to say that we are probably going to be less sympathetic to the people who climb high in corrupt institutions and who degrade themselves in the process; these are habitual flatterers, or

flatterers who engage in flattery because of a defect in their character. One imagines that these sorts of individuals always hang about the tables of the rich and powerful, whether they live in conditions of political liberty or not.

We can recall, in this instance, a photograph that circulated on social media of Trump meeting with Mitt Romney when Mitt Romney was being considered for a cabinet post, with the caption beneath Romney's face saying, "My name is Reek." "Reek" is the nickname given to a character reduced to terrified submission and subordination in the HBO series *Game of Thrones*. Romney, to his credit, said, "No thanks." Many didn't. It is plausible to think that some may have said yes out of a Burrus- or Seneca-like desire to do their best in a bad situation; this is the narrative we often encounter of the generals who have all departed from the cabinet. But to turn to Professor Miller's point about corruption, it's just as likely that those who serve do so either because of ambition or because they are true believers. I'd be more inclined to sympathize with the likes of a Machiavelli or a Cicero who sought, arguably, to speak truth to power—albeit indirectly—than, say, Mick Mulvaney.

And this brings me to Professor Bambrick, whose point about republicanism strikes me as spot-on: from a republican perspective, we tend to worry far more about superiors (say, a monarch, real or would-be) being flattered than we do the *demos*. As small-r republicans, we would tend to think that republican citizens ought not to be in positions such that they need to flatter anyone at all.

And I also think that Professor Bambrick is right to say that more than something of the negative coloring of flattery is retained in my particular chapters. This often has to do with me trying to think about how and why someone is speaking in a certain way to a superior (think of Cicero addressing Caesar in the *Pro Marcello*) or how to speak to a superior (think of Machiavelli in his *Dedicatory Letter* preceding *The Prince*). The point is well taken, and it is especially accurate in terms of my chapter on the debates over ratification.

But I wanted to say more about Professor Bambrick's take on the public Trump cabinet meeting, a point made by Professor

Miller, a meeting I discuss briefly in the conclusion and also discussed at greater length in a piece published by the *Monkey Cage*.[38] It's awfully hard to know what we are seeing in that meeting. Strategically, as Professor Bambrick rightly notes, the cabinet members presumably want to keep their jobs, and, like the courtiers of Hans Christian Anderson, they can do so only through ingratiation. And, one might add, there are few better ways of showing that you are trustworthy than being willing to humiliate yourself on national television to please your superior.

But Professor Bambrick is also right to say that cabinet members are distinct from, say, the flattering slave we encounter in the Roman comedies of Plautus: they had a choice and continued to have a range of choices that a slave does not. A third possibility, perhaps more troubling to some, is that they might mean it (think of Mike Pence's rather over-the-top performance, a performance that some might say rivaled the opening of *King Lear*).

Both Professors Bambrick and Miller bring me to a confession: I never expected to have to be writing about current events when I decided to write a book on flattery and the history of political thought. In addition, I certainly wish I hadn't already been several years behind schedule on the book when it came to writing the conclusion and while finishing the manuscript grappling with the prospect of a Trump presidency and then while copyediting, more or less, the fact of it. My own take, and this isn't a rejection of Professor Bambrick's perfectly reasonable points, can be clarified by looking back to what Professor Englert started us off with, a point I make in my *Monkey Cage* piece: from a republican perspective, there's something very troubling about the whole spectacle. While one can construct scenarios under which one might sympathize with Trump's cabinet members (I tend not to), it is much harder to construct scenarios under which one might sympathize with the object of their adulation. Think of George Washington's 1782 letter to Colonel Nicola, responding to the idea that he might become king: "Be assured Sir, no occurrence in the course of the War, has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the Army as you have

expressed."[39] Good republican citizens are not supposed to want to be worshipped; good republican citizens, or at least virtuous republican elites, are not supposed to want adulation. And even if it is the case, as I suspect it is, that narcissists tend to be attracted to politics, a point Elizabeth Anderson makes in an essay on the political economy of inequality,[40] republican norms would, one hopes, be strong enough to prevent them from thinking that such displays are in fact appropriate.

I'll now turn by way of conclusion to Professor Turner's comments. Now, I think Professor Turner is right to say that the more analytically precise account of flattery I try to develop in the introduction is somewhat transactional and somewhat bloodless. It is so, in part, because I want to avoid—perhaps in a Mandevillian way, perhaps not—what I see as often untenable claims about the mental states of agents, including ourselves, when we describe their speech acts. As a great poet of our day wrote, "It's so lonely when you don't even know yourself."

I will make two points here, though: first, what Mandeville sometimes identifies as flattery (think of the curtsey example[41]) would not, on my account, be flattery. Why? Presumably, the benefit of learning to curtsey adheres more to the child than the one speaking. Now, as a parent I can tell you that the benefits of my child being at least somewhat polite do indeed flow to me. But over the course of his existence, the benefits of his politeness will be more pronounced for him than to me. So sometimes, when Mandeville calls something flattery, it is hard for me to see how it is the same phenomenon. The other reason I'm skeptical of Mandeville—and perhaps I was more coy about this than I ought to have been, since both Professors Englert and Turner detect some ambivalence in the chapter—is that I think his account of language's origins is simply ludicrous compared to Adam Smith's.

To his last point: yes, a republican people ought to be taught not only to be sensitive to the harms of flattery but to recognize a flatterer. We have some examples of this in American literature, print, or film (think, for instance, of the film *A Face in the Crowd*).

The problem with this, I worry, is that it is predicated on the possibility of a common frame of democratic reference. That is, what to me might seem a gross act of demagogic flattery will seem to another to be an unscripted candidate taking it to the elites. This disagreement is not just about how to describe the world we share; it also raises the question of whether we share the same world at all—a fundamental disagreement about factual reality we can see and hear every day in American politics.[42] Though I fear this has brought me back to Professor Miller's point about corruption—a depressing point, but one that strikes me as quite true.

Notes

1. Daniel J. Kapust, *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 203.
2. Ibid., 1.
3. Ibid., 2-4.
4. Ibid., 4-9.
5. Ibid., 5-6.
6. Ibid., 13.
7. Ibid., 133.
8. Ibid., 166-167.
9. Ibid., 171.
10. Ibid., 133.
11. Ibid., 32.
12. Ibid., 203.
13. Ibid., 25.
14. Ibid., 4, 24.
15. Ibid., 64, 61.
16. Ibid., 65.
17. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1995), 16.
18. Ibid., 3.
19. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 51.
20. Kapust, *Flattery*, 135-143.
21. Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Ed. E. M. Curley. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994). Ch. 19:1, 4–5
22. Kapust, *Flattery*, 110-128.
23. Hobbes Ch. 19:4–9.
24 Hobbes Ch. 25: 9

25. See Kapust, *Flattery*, 128-131.
26. James C. Scott. *Domination and The Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).
27. Ronald Syme. *The Roman Revolution*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
28. Kapust, *Flattery*, 149-169.
29. Smith, pt. I, sec. 3.
30. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Robert Alter (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), III.i–xiv, 11–13.
31. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IX.530–50.
32. David Runciman, *Political Hypocrisy: The Mask of Power, from Hobbes to Orwell and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Don Herzog, *Cunning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Sharon R. Krause, *Liberalism with Honor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Pierre Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
33. Daniel J. Kapust, "Skinner, Pettit, and Livy: The Conflict of the Orders and the Ambiguity of Republican Liberty," *History of Political Thought* 25, no. 3 (2004): 377–401; Daniel J. Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought: Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
34. Kapust, *Flattery.* He refines this definition very slightly on p. 26.
35. Kapust, *Flattery*, 9, 13; see James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
36. Mandeville uses the example of a maid teaching an "awkward" girl to curtsy properly by flattering her; see "An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue," in Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. 2 vols. With a Commentary Critical, Historical, and Explanatory by F. B. Kaye. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), vol. I, 53. Kapust discusses this example on pp. 138–39; he thoughtfully revisits it in his discussion of teaching his son to swim, on p. 206. I note here, too, that Mandeville left "The Crow and the Fox" out of his English translation of La Fontaine's *Fables*; see Bernard Mandeville, *Aesop Dress'd; or, A Collection of Fables Writ in Familiar Verse by B. Mandeville* (London [1704]).
37. Mandeville, "Enquiry," 55.
38. Daniel J. Kapust, "The Founders Hated Excessive Flattery. What Would They Think about the Trump Administration?" Monkey Cage,

Washington Post, January 22, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/01/22/excessively-flattering-trump-hurts-the-republic-heres-how/.

39. George Washington, *George Washington: A Collection*, comp. and ed. W. B. Allen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/848#lf0026_head_102.
40. Elizabeth Anderson, "The Problem of Equality from a Political Economy Perspective," *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy* 3 (2017): 36.
41. Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, vol. I, https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/846#Mandeville_0014-01_354.
42. On the importance of factual truth and of being able to agree on it, see especially Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967.