

ABSTRACTS

Mauro Falzoni, *La Philosophie moderne di Henri Lelevel: un manuale di filosofia malebranchiana*, pp. 116–160

Henri Lelevel's *La philosophie moderne par demandes et réponses* (1697) is a very interesting as well as pretty neglected attempt to disseminate the new philosophy among a larger audience, including the non specialists. Either the style of presentation (*par demandes et réponses*) or the oversimplification of the topics discussed is clearly intended to reach people interested to a smattering of philosophy. More than the comparisons between the traditional (aristotelico-scholastic) and the new philosophy and the compendia, this work vouches for the great interest toward the new philosophy. In this particular case the model is the philosophy of Malebranche, whose interpretation of Descartes thought is preferred by Lelevel, worried by the excessive twist given toward empiricism in P.-S. Régis rendering of Cartesian philosophical system. Lelevel's logic is directed to eliminate the confusion between sense data and knowledge, echoing also Malebranche's notion of *étendue idéale*, one of the major contribution to the reconsideration of Descartes' thought. This paper aims to sketch the mains topics discussed in the four sections of Lelevel's work, with some cross-references to Malebranche's writings.

Marco Storni, *Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu chez Samuel Formey*, pp. 161–199

The perpetual secretary of the Berlin Academy Johann Heinrich Samuel

Formey (1711–1797) is best known as a populariser of Christian Wolff’s doctrines. As of Formey’s activity in the Berlin Academy, scholars have mostly emphasized his role in the controversy over monads with Leonhard Euler, while overlooking other interesting contributions Formey presented in the “speculative philosophy” class of the Academy. In this paper, I analyse two articles Formey published in 1747 on the *Mémoires de l’Académie de Berlin*, namely the *Preuves de l’existence de Dieu, ramenées aux notions communes* and the *Examen de la preuve qu’on tire des fins de la nature, pour établir l’existence de Dieu*. In these texts, Formey presents some of Wolff’s methodological and metaphysical ideas, in an implicit dialogue with other members of the Academy – in particular, with the president Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis – who were also interested in metaphysics and the philosophical method. Formey reworks the Wolffian arguments as to make them more accessible, in order to promote an open confrontation over core philosophical questions. Far from adopting a controversial tone, Formey’s attitude is rather conciliatory: any disagreement, as he thinks, can be easily settled once the true method for philosophizing is made available to everybody.

Serena Massimo, *Condillac e i suoi recensori (Journal de Trévoux, Journal des Sçavans)*, pp. 200–267

In the 17th century the dissemination of philosophical ideas relied also on the critical summaries and reviews published by the journals. The focus of this paper is the reactions of two of these journals – the *Journal de Trévoux*, edited by the Jesuits of the Parisian Collège Louis Le Grand, and the *Journal des Sçavans* – to Condillac’s works (namely his *Essai sur l’origine des connoissances humaines*, *Traité des systèmes*, *Traité des sensations*, *Traité des animaux*, as far as

the *Journal de Trévoux* is concerned, and the *Essai* and *Traité des sensations* in the *Journal des Sçavans*). The Jesuit journal, under the direction of *père* Berthier – probably himself the author of the reviews – had a precise plan in presenting Condillac’s philosophy as an anti-empiricist and anti-materialist doctrine, sometime giving a misrepresentation of the author’s thought, which is also criticized on some points. The decision of the *Journal de Trévoux* to review the main works of Condillac is anyway worthy of attention, and probably betrays a certain interest toward the more up to date philosophical enquiry. The *Journal des Sçavans* was on the other hand more faithful in presenting Condillac’s works.

Andrea Strazzoni, *The Letters of Burchard de Volder to Philipp van Limborch*, pp. 268–300

These notes contain an annotated edition of the only four extant letters of Burchard de Volder (1643–1709) to Philipp van Limborch (1633–1712). In the first letter (18 July 1687) De Volder provides Van Limborch with some information about the subscription to the Dordrecht Confession of Faith by professors. In the second letter (3 November 1687) De Volder comments upon Van Limborch’s *De veritate religionis Christianae* (1687). This letter is interesting as it provides insights into De Volder’s views on religion and theology (topics on which he was silent in his public writings). The third letter (16 November 1694) served as a cover letter for De Volder’s sending to Van Limborch a copy of the *honestum testimonium* on Jacobus Arminius that was requested by Arminius’s widow in 1611. In the fourth letter (6 May 1699) Volder comments upon the visit that Pieter Burman had paid him. The visit was an episode in the quarrel between Pieter Burman, his brother Frans Bur-

man jr., and Van Limborch, caused by Van Limborch's remark, in his *Theologia Christiana* (1686), that Frans Burman sr. had used Spinoza's words while treating the issue of divine omnipotence in his *Synopsis theologiae* (1671–1672).