The Atheist's Bible

Diderot and the Élémens de physiologie

Caroline Warman

The Atheist's Bible challenges prevailing scholarly views on Diderot's Éléments, asserting its contemporary philosophical importance and prompting its readers to inspect more closely this little-known and little-studied work. This book is accompanied by a digital edition of Jacques-André Naigeon's Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de Denis Diderot (1823), a work which, Warman argues, represents the first publication of Diderot's Éléments, long before its official publication date of 1875.

The Atheist's Bible constitutes a major contribution to the field of Diderot studies, and is of further interest to scholars and students of materialist natural philosophy in the Age of Enlightenment and beyond.
5. 1790: Naigeon and the Adresse à l’Assemblée nationale

In 1784 Diderot died. The following year, the set of manuscripts which Diderot had prepared for Catherine II were sent off to her along with all his books.¹ No catalogue of his library survives, and the books themselves have been dispersed or lost.² The manuscripts, however, would go on to form the basis of the edition of his complete works that Jules Assézat and Maurice Tourneux prepared, and which came out in twenty volumes between 1875 and 1877. The Éléments de physiologie is to be found in volume nine, but this version, as indicated in Chapter 2, was an early draft of the text. Diderot had had another complete set of his manuscripts made, and these passed to his daughter, Angélique de Vandeul. Jacques-André Naigeon (1738–1810), a member of d’Holbach’s circle younger than Diderot by a generation, and, like him, a co-writer of the baron’s most famous work, the Système de la nature (1770), was named in Diderot’s will as his literary executor.³ It is to him that we now turn.

Jacques-André Naigeon’s contribution to the Diderot story—as editor and guardian of Diderot’s works and reputation—was decisive,

---

² Sergeï V. Korolev has attempted to reconstitute it, see his study, *La Bibliothèque de Diderot. Vers une reconstitution* (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d’Études du dix-huitième siècle, 2014).
and did not perhaps always work to Diderot’s advantage or to his own. This however is more owing to the unpredictable unfolding of what we now know as the French Revolution as if it was one event with one identity, and which Naigeon misread more than once, than to any innate inadequacy on his part. The remainder of this study is therefore as much about the Revolution and its cultural politics and polemics as it is about Naigeon or Diderot or any of the other figures we will be looking at. Its twists and turns cannot be relegated to some sort of decorative backdrop; it is the ‘context’ here which directly influences the form any ‘text’ can take, with some truly odd, even distorting, results in the case of the hardline atheist materialist Éléments de physiologie. I will argue that for Naigeon, it was Diderot’s most important text bar none, and that pages 207–90 of his Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de Denis Diderot constitute its first, disguised, publication. This, however, did not occur until 1823, thirteen years after Naigeon’s death. This is despite Naigeon’s advertising the Mémoires as early as 1792 in the article on ‘Diderot’ he wrote for the philosophy volumes of the Encyclopédie méthodique and again in his preface to Diderot’s Œuvres which came out in 1798. Yet, even in 1823, it was immediately banned and the publisher fined.  

As we can see from even this short overview, the story is convoluted in chronological terms and stretches beyond Naigeon’s named publication of Diderot’s Œuvres in 1798 across different texts with different genres, from the dictionary entry to the intellectual biography, and from the early years of the Revolution to the reign of the ultra conservative Charles X. Given this complexity, it seems clearest therefore simply to follow the years through in chronological order. This will involve moving between Naigeon and other players, specifically the politician-philosopher-lecturer Dominique-Joseph Garat and the philosophers Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis and Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy, later known as Ideologues after Destutt’s neologism of ‘Idéologie’, important figures who were not necessarily in sympathy with Naigeon and whom we will introduce in greater detail in due course.

The story starts though with the first of Naigeon’s publications to touch on any of Diderot’s works since the latter’s death, and the first

---

(and last)\(^5\) to engage directly with Revolutionary politics, seeking to influence decisions in the making.\(^6\) This is his *Adresse à l'Assemblée nationale sur la liberté des opinions, sur celle de la presse*, published in Paris in February 1790.\(^7\)

Detailed work by Pascale Pellerin, Raymond Trousson, and René Tarin has explored and explained why the consecrating glory bestowed on Voltaire and Rousseau is emphatically denied to Diderot throughout the Revolutionary years. They show how, for different reasons and at different moments, Diderot is persistently perceived as, in Pellerin's words, ‘violent, extrémiste, ennemi implacable des rois et des prêtres’ [violent, extremist, and an implacable enemy of kings and priests].\(^8\) As Pellerin argues, this perception seems to be set on its juggernaut course by Naigeon’s vitriolically anti-clerical *Adresse à l'Assemblée nationale*, which tarnished Diderot by association. Naigeon’s description of priests as ‘des espèces de bêtes féroces qu’il faut enchaîner et emmuseler, lorsqu’on ne veut pas être dévoré’ [species of wild beasts that must be chained and muzzled if one wishes to avoid being devoured] was quoted and requoted in a relay race of righteous indignation, and rapidly associated with Diderot.\(^9\) This impression, that ‘derrière chaque phrase de Naigeon, le public observe l’ombre de Diderot’ [behind each sentence Naigeon wrote, the public saw the shadow of Diderot],\(^10\) and that that shade was a vengeful and violent one, was confirmed by Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s damaging anecdote, published in 1791, that Diderot used to say that ‘le genre humain [...] ne sera heureux que quand on aura étranglé le dernier

---

5 Apart from the censored preface to his edition of Montaigne, although that never made it to publication (see discussion below).


7 Jacques-André Naigeon specifies the month in which the *Adresse* was published in the ‘Discours préliminaire’ to his 3-volume dictionary: *Encyclopédie méthodique: Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, 3 vols (Paris: Panckoucke, 1791–94), vol. 1, pp. i–xxvi (p. xxii: the printed number on this page is ‘xii’ but this is an error): ‘cet écrit a été publié dans le mois de février 1790’ [this text was published in the month of February 1790].


roi avec les boyaux du dernier prêtre’ [the human species [...] will not be happy until the last king has been strangled with the guts of the last priest], and for all that Naigeon carefully and accurately restores this expression back to its rightful source, the parish priest Jean Meslier, in the article on him which appeared in the third volume of the Philosophie ancienne et moderne in 1794, it remained indelibly associated with Diderot, not least because of his poem, Les Eleuthéromanes, later published in 1796, contains a rephrasing of exactly this. So we see what the issue is, and it does not really matter a great deal that the exact phrase did not originate with him and in fact reached its pithy apogee in a reworking of Meslier authored by Voltaire in 1762, and thus that Diderot is the third not the first to come out with this threat to the twin authorities of church and monarchy; his being associated with it is not incorrect. And of course it gives superb ammunition to the anti-revolutionaries: Jean-François de La Harpe (1739–1803), literary critic and erstwhile philosophe in the ambit of Voltaire, whose imprisonment in 1794 is credited with transforming his views into reactionary conservatism, influenced generations to come when he wrote in his Cours de littérature of 1797 that Diderot was ‘un auteur immoral et subversif mais aussi sanguinaireʹ [not only an immoral and subversive author but also a blood-thirsty one].

And yet this is not the whole story. The Diderot (or the La Harpe) of 1797 was not the Diderot (or the La Harpe) of 1790. And Naigeon’s Adresse was not universally negatively received; on the contrary, great swathes of it—twelve pages, no less—were quoted verbatim and approvingly in the Mercure de France in its issue of 5 March 1791, the journalist explaining that he preferred to provide the original given that his own views were identical: ‘nous nous sommes étendus sur ces idées et au lieu d’y mêler les nôtres qui sont absolument conformes à celles de l’Auteur, nous avons cité, en le resserrant, tout son système’ [we examined these ideas and instead of mixing ours in with them decided, given that they

---

follow the Author’s exactly, to quote, in condensed version, his whole system]. And when we read the Adresse, we discover that the ‘public’ was not wrong to observe Diderot’s shade hovering behind Naigeon, as Pellerin put it: Naigeon in fact directly quotes, without acknowledging it, from a number of Diderot’s works. We find lengthy paragraphs from his Plan d’une université pour le gouvernement de Russie, and also sentences or recognisable expressions from the Éléments de physiologie, his letters, Jacques le fataliste, and the ‘Prière du sceptique’. Naigeon also invisibly quotes from D’Holbach’s Système de la nature, and (extensively) from his own articles on Cardan and Mirabeau, due to appear in 1792 and ‘An II’ (1793–94) in volumes 2 and 3 of the Philosophie ancienne et moderne (there may well be more extensive quotation even than this, but I have not been able to source any more).

From the point of view of this study, then, it looks as if Naigeon was using his Adresse to prepare the way for his multi-staged Diderot publication project, and also as an advert or appetiser for his forthcoming Philosophie ancienne et moderne, with its important ‘Diderot’ article. If so, as we have already intimated, it did not work very well. It was his first misstep. But we can see from the text itself that he thought the time was ripe: ‘quand on a quelque chose de bon à dire, il faut se presser’ [when you have something good to say, you must hurry up and say it]. In the pages that follow we will look at what ‘the good thing’ he had to say was, and why it was urgent.

The goal of Naigeon’s one-hundred-page argument with its two lengthy notes, bringing the page count to 140, is in his sub-title: ‘Examen philosophique de ces questions; 1°. Doit-on parler de Dieu, & en général de religion, dans une déclaration des droits de l’homme? 2°. La liberté des opinions, quelqu’en soit l’objet; celle du culte & la liberté de la Presse peuvent-elles être légitimement circonscrites & gênées de quelque manière que ce soit, par le Législateur?’ [Philosophical

---

15 It is not clear whether the ‘Prière du sceptique’ really was authored by Diderot. Adams does not include it in his Bibliographie des œuvres, but Christian Albertan and Anne-Marie Chouillet conclude that it was his, see Christian Albertan and Anne-Marie Chouillet, ‘Autographes et documents’, Recherches sur Diderot et sur l’Encyclopédie, 36 (2004), paragraphs 14–15, https://doi.org/10.4000/rde.618.
examination of the following questions; 1. Should God and religion in
general be mentioned in a declaration of the rights of man? 2. Can the
freedom to have any opinion about any object, the freedom of worship
and of the press ever be legitimately circumscribed and blocked in any
way whatsoever by the Legislator?]. The answer Naigeon gives to both
questions is an emphatic no. To the first one: ‘Les seules matières où
il soit permis de parler de Dieu, sont celles de Théologie [...]. Il faut
le bannir de toutes les autres, sans exception [...]’ [the only subject in
which God may be discussed is Theology [...] It must be banished from
absolutely every other one without exception].17 And to the second:

Le commerce des pensées ne doit être, sous quelque prétexte que ce soit,
ni plus gêné, ni plus restreint que celui des denrées et des marchandises;
c’est le même principe général d’utilité et de justice appliqué à des objets
divers. S’il est des circonstances difficiles et momentanées, où la liberté
absolue du commerce puisse être modifiée, suspendue même pour un
temps, dans quelques-unes de ses parties; ce qu’il n’est pas de mon
sujet d’examiner, il n’est aucun cas, sans exception où celle de penser et
d’imprimer, puisse être légitimement limitée.18

The trade in thoughts must not, on any pretext whatsoever, be blocked
or hindered any more than the trade in foodstuffs and goods; this is the
same general principle of utility and justice applied to different objects.
If there are any difficult and momentary circumstances in which the
absolute freedom of trade can be amended or even suspended for a
short time in any particular aspect is not something I can examine here.
However, there is no case or exception when the freedom to think and to
publish can be legitimately limited.

Naigeon’s argument is an interesting one: the free circulation of thought
is as important as the free circulation of goods, and can never be
legitimately restricted. His view, expounded at length, is that personal
satires, calumny or libel, can have no negative impact if they are false,
and that they will mostly cancel each other out (p. 72) or be boringly
written (the only unexpiatable crime, he writes, p. 74, sounding very
like Voltaire), that ‘un bon Gouvernement’ would never tolerate
unjust defamation, and further, that, while ‘un libelle diffamatoire’ [a
defamatory libel] only imperils individuals, the freedom of the press is

---
17 Naigeon, Adresse, p. 21.
18 Naigeon, Adresse, p. 76.
a ‘bien général’ [general good] (p. 77). It is this entire section which the Mercure de France approvingly quotes at length, with some gaps.19

These two views, broadly, on the one hand, that church and state should be separate and discussion of God limited to theological debate, and on the other, that freedom of the press should be absolute, are not particularly radical in Revolutionary France. Naigeon’s anti-clerical pro-tolerance pro-free speech stance is not even particularly far from the Voltaire of the Lettres philosophiques (1734). So it is interesting that this particular publication is associated in scholarly literature with an expression of anti-clericalism deemed excessive, and indeed typical of Naigeon.20 This view seems to replicate and pursue the anti-Revolutionary rhetoric so effectively harnessed by La Harpe. Naigeon certainly does express unbridled animosity towards priests with their institutional power but that is not the only feature of his text, and as we have already seen, other aspects were also given the limelight, and viewed as well-expressed and important.21

Let us turn to the aspect which is of most importance to this study, that is, Naigeon’s quotation from or stewardship of Diderot’s writings and thought, not omitting the Éléments de physiologie. As Naigeon’s quotation of Diderot’s texts in the Adresse seems not to be fully recognised, I will give it in full.22 Apart from the fact that this will hopefully be of interest to scholars of Diderot and Naigeon anyway, the relevance for this specific argument is to begin to chart and track the patterns of Naigeon’s quotation of and references to Diderot, which we will follow through his other publications all the way to the Mémoires of 1823.

19 Direct quotation (as opposed to paraphrase which begins and ends the Mercure review) is to be found in Mercure de France 1791: 5 mars 1791; pp. 133–39, relating to Naigeon’s Adresse, pp. 60–79.
20 See for example Pellerin, ‘Naigeon’, 33, 36.
21 See for example Mercure de France 1791, p. 140, as quoted above.
22 Roland Mortier gives an ‘analyse détaillée de son contenu’ [detailed analysis of its content], remarking how Naigeon ‘se place […] sous l’égide de Diderot, dont l’autorité sera évoquée discrètement à d’autres occasions’ [places himself (…) under the auspices of Diderot, whose authority will be discreetly evoked on other occasions], one of these occasions being part of the section about the ‘Sorbonnistes’ which we quote below, but Mortier doesn’t name the source text or give precise references, so it’s not entirely clear whether he saw Naigeon’s ‘discreet evocation’ of Diderot as being in the order of quotation or just allusion. Roland Mortier, ‘Naigeon critique de la déclaration des droits’, RDE, 20 (1996), 103–13 (pp. 105, 107, 108, 111), https://doi.org/10.3406/rde.1996.1325.
Quotation and Allusion

The two most extensive verbatim quotations from Diderot are from his (then) unpublished *Plan d’une université pour le gouvernement de Russie*, and here both the title and the author are kept strictly quiet, although each passage is given in quotation marks and attributed to ‘un philosophe’ (in the first instance) and ‘un philosophe moderne’ (in the second). This text, sent by Diderot to Catherine II in 1775 (and not implemented by her), was a continuation of what are now known as his *Mélanges pour Catherine II* and in which he planned the earlier stages of education.\(^\text{23}\) The two passages Naigeon quotes are anti-clerical. The first proposes that churches be turned into lunatic asylums, with the priests kept on to look after the inmates, and the second claims that priests trained at the Sorbonne are all either deist or atheist, and all the more intolerant and disputatious for it; he shudders at the idea that such men should be allowed to propound their fanatical theories to the population as a whole. Here are the passages.

Naigeon is talking about how the population as a whole is ignorant and superstitious and ripe for fanaticism. This reminds him of:

> ce que disoit un philosophe avec cette éloquence et cette énergie que donnent la hardiesse et la profondeur des pensées. ‘Le gros d’une nation restera toujours ignorant, peureux et par conséquent superstitieux. L’athéisme peut être la doctrine d’une petite école, mais jamais celle d’un grand nombre de citoyens, encore moins celle d’une nation un peu civilisée. La croyance de l’existence de Dieu, ou la vieille souche restera donc toujours: or qui sait ce que cette souche abandonnée à sa libre végétation, peut produire de monstrueux? Je ne conserverois donc pas les prêtres comme des dépositaires de vérités, mais comme des obstacles à des erreurs possibles et plus monstrueuses encore; non comme les précepteurs des gens sensés, mais comme les gardiens des fous; et leurs églises je les laisserois subsister comme l’azile ou les petites maisons d’une certaine espece d’imbécilles qui pourroient devenir furieux, si on les négligeoit entièrement’.\(^\text{24}\)

---


what a philosopher said with that eloquence and energy that bold and
deep thoughts bestow on the speaker. ‘Most of a nation will always stay
ignorant, fearful and, in consequence, superstitious. Atheism may be the
doctrine of a small school, but never of a large number of citizens and
even less of a nation that is somewhat civilized. Belief in the existence of
God or the old stock will therefore always remain: yet who knows what
monstrosity this old root, left to grow freely, might produce? I would
never therefore allow the priests to stay on as the depositories of truth
but I would keep them to block other possible errors, possibly even more
monstrous; not as tutors for sensible people, but as wardens of asylums
for the insane. As for their churches, I would allow them to continue to
exist as the asylums or special refuges for the sort of imbecile that might
become violent if they were completely neglected.

We notice how he characterises this ‘philosophe’ as possessing the
eloquence and energy that audacious and profound thought bestows;
this is a not atypical description of Diderot.

In the second passage, Naigeon has been relaying a remark about
how those who teach theology do not believe in a word they say yet
spend more time than anyone else engaged in disputuation and lecturing;
as before, this leads him into his quotation:

sa remarque se trouve confirmée par celle d’un Philosophe moderne
qui avoit fait autrefois sa Licence à Paris, & qui regardoit la Faculté de
Théologie, comme une excellente école d’incredulité. ‘Il n’y a guère de
Sorbonnistes, dit-il, qui ne recelent sous leur fourure ou le déisme ou
l’athéisme; ils n’en sont que plus intolérans & plus brouillons; ils le sont
ou par caractere, ou par intérêt, ou par hypocrisie. Ce sont les sujets de
l’Etat les plus inutiles, les plus intraitables & les plus dangereux. Eux
& leurs adhérens, Prêtres ou Moines, ont souvent abusé du droit de
haranguer le peuple assemblé. Si j’étois Souverain, & que je pensasse
que tous les jours de Fêtes et de Dimanches, entre onze heures et midi,
cent cinquante mille de mes Sujets disent à tous les autres, & leur font
croire, au nom de Dieu, tout ce qui convient au démon du fanatisme &
de l’orgueil qui les possède, j’en frémirois de terreur.’

[This] remark is confirmed by what was said by a modern philosopher
who had previously studied for his degree in Paris, and who regarded

25 Naigeon, Adresse, pp. 46n–47n. The section in quotation marks (‘Sorbonistes’ to
‘terreur’) is from the Plan d’une université pour le gouvernement de Russie, in Diderot,
the Faculty of Theology as an excellent school for incredulity. ‘There is not a single Sorbonne-trained priest’, said he, ‘who does not hide either deism or atheism beneath the fur-lined gown of their office; they’re all the more intolerant and argumentative because of it, whether by character, interest, or simple hypocrisy. They and their supporters, priests or monks, have often abused their right to harangue their congregations. If I were the sovereign, and I thought that every Sunday and feast day, between eleven o’clock and mid-day, one hundred and fifty thousand of my subjects were saying to all the rest of them whatever the demon of fanaticism and pride possessing them inspired them to say, and making them believe it in the name of God, I would be shuddering with fear.’

Both these passages are striking, and strikingly disrespectful. It is perhaps not surprising, given the outraged reaction that Naigeon’s Adresse provoked at least in some quarters, and moreover the way in which its more extreme expressions of anti-clericism were attributed to and blamed on Diderot (not incorrectly, as we are beginning to see), that Naigeon did not return to the Plan d’une université in either his ‘Diderot’ article or in his fifteen-volume Œuvres de Diderot of 1798. It does, however, occupy twenty pages of his Mémoires sur Diderot (pp. 352–73), where we meet these exact same passages again, along with many others.26

These two passages are, to my knowledge, the most extensive quotations from Diderot in the Adresse, and, as we have seen, they are prominently presented as quotations from the conversation of ‘un philosophe’. Yet there are other sorts of quotation which are not demarcated from the text in any way. In the paragraph following the first passage (about priests guarding imbeciles kept in churches), Naigeon immediately follows on with a further substantial sentence, this one extracted from a letter Diderot wrote about meeting the unorthodox priest Dom Deschamps.27 It is thought to have been addressed to Mme de Maux, and it only survives because Naigeon copied it into a notebook of extracts from Diderot’s works and letters which is now part of the


27 Léger Marie Deschamps (1716–74), known as ‘Dom Deschamps’, Benedictine monk and radical atheist thinker.
Fonds Vandeul in the Bibliothèque nationale. And the Adresse is where Naigeon subsequently placed this passage. In the letter, Diderot explains he is paraphrasing Deschamps’s views on the destructive consequences of social inequality. In the quotation, Naigeon simply quotes the idea without the framing introduction. It is:

\[\ldots\] l'idée d’un état social où l’on arriveroit en partant de l’état sauvage, en passant par l’état policé au sortir duquel on a l’expérience de la vanité des choses les plus importantes, et où l’on conçoit enfin que l’espèce humaine sera malheureuse, tant qu’il y aura des Rois, des Prêtres, des Magistrats, des Loix, un tien, un mien, les mots de vice et de vertu, etc.\[29\]

the idea of a social state that could ultimately be arrived at, having started from a primitive state and moving through a civilized state on the way, at the end of which people would have experienced the emptiness of all the most important things, and would finally understand that the human species will be miserable for as long as there are kings, priests, magistrates, laws, a yours, a mine, the words of vice and virtue, etc.

Here, the ‘etc.’ signals the end of this particular passage, and in fact it is how Naigeon tends to indicate a cut, as we will see more clearly when we look at the Mémoires sur Diderot. However, that cut is invisible to the reader unaware of Naigeon’s codes, and he then proceeds to argue that any reference to God, while useful in a legal code or charter, is completely unnecessary in a Declaration of Rights. It is not perfectly clear why one passage would be set apart from the rest of the text as an official quotation from ‘un philosophe’ and the other invisibly embedded, other, perhaps, than if it is owing to the desire to give those particular extracts of the Plan d’une université a bit more visibility, possibly with a view to later publication, which, if so, was dropped. It is not the passage’s status as an informal letter per se, as Naigeon does not always invisibly embed

---


29 Ibid. Pellerin states that this precise text ‘faisait référence à deux passages du Supplément [au voyage de Bougainville]’ [refers to two passages from the Supplément au voyage de Bougainville], citing the ‘adieux du vieillard’ and the dialogue between Orou and l’aumônier (Pellerin, ‘Naigeon’, 30), and of course she’s not wrong that these passages resonate, but it’s rather that the letter will (as often happened) have provided the source that Diderot later worked up into a finished text (the Supplément appeared in Grimm’s Correspondance littéraire in the course of 1773–74).
extracts from Diderot’s letters. The Adresse proper opens with an extract from a letter which offers a sort of moral fable:

Un philosophe faisoit un jour cette question à un homme du monde: si le bal de l’opéra duroit toute l’année, que pensez-vous qu’il en arrivât?
– Ce qui en arriveroit! C’est que tous les masques se reconnoitroient. – Eh bien, reprit le philosophe, ces masques-là sont les symboles de nos erreurs: souhaitez que le bal dure & ils finiront tous par être reconnus.30

One day, a philosopher put this question to a man of the world: ‘If the masked balls at the opera were on all year round, what do you think would happen?’ ‘What would happen? People would end up recognising all the different masks.’ ‘Well,’ replied the philosopher, ‘those masks symbolise our errors: you should hope that the balls carry on because then every single one will end up being seen through.’

As we have already begun to see, the relation of what ‘un philosophe’ said or did is a sure sign of the beginning of a quotation, and often (but not always)31 directly refers to Diderot. This extract, too, comes from a letter to Mme de Maux. The dialogical dialectical style is very familiar from our reading of Diderot, particularly from texts such as the Rêve de d’Alembert or the Neveu de Rameau, and indeed summer 1769, when this letter was written, is when he composed the Rêve, even if the moralising talk of masks and error feels closer to the Neveu. So, in sum, Naigeon does quote from the letters more than once, and he varies the way in which he presents or embeds his extracts.

At points, he even paraphrases them. One such, from which will become perhaps the most requoted part of the Adresse, certainly in anti-Revolutionary texts, is where, in a development of the theme about

---


31 Other allusions to the views of perspectives of ‘un philosophe’ are to be found in Naigeon, Adresse, pp. 33, 46n, 55, 90, 91, 98; the references on pp. 11, 33, and 46n are to Diderot as we have seen; 55 is to Cardan; and the others are non-specific.
which sections of the law or constitution God, religion, and priests may (or may not) appear in, Naigeon describes priests as:

des espèces de bêtes féroces qu’il faut enchaîner et emmuseler, lorsqu’on ne veut pas en être dévoré.  

species of wild beasts that must be chained and muzzled if one wishes to avoid being devoured.

We mentioned this extract in our introduction to Naigeon’s Adresse, and only return to it here to replace it in the context of an argument whose features we are beginning to be acquainted with. On the following page of the Adresse, Naigeon quotes—still invisibly—from the Système de la nature (1.29–30):

[...] l’histoire de Dieu est écrite en caractères de sang dans les annales de tous les peuples du monde [...]  

the history of God is written in characters of blood in the annals of all the peoples of the world.

Naigeon was, as we know, one of d’Holbach’s assistants in the writing of the Système de la nature, along with Diderot. The extent of their contribution is not known; it is perfectly possible that Naigeon wrote this particular bit, or even Diderot himself. This hazy multiple authorship raises interesting questions about whether it is important (let alone possible) to identify any one voice over any other one.  

For the time

---

32 Naigeon, Adresse, p. 37. Quoted by Pellerin, ‘Naigeon’, 35, 43: ‘... Moi, Naigeon, Encyclopédiste gagé, je ne puis croire que ce soit troubler l’ordre établi par la loi, que de mettre au grand jour mes principes Didérotiques, et de soutenir avec ce grand Maître de politique et de morale, qu’il n’y aura de bonheur sur la Terre, que le jour, où le dernier des Rois sera étranglé avec les boyaux du dernier des Prêtres’ [I, Naigeon, a sworn Encyclopedist, cannot believe that it would disturb the order established by law to expose my Diderotian principles to the light of day and claim with this great Master of politics and morals that there will be no happiness on Earth until the day that the last King is strangled with the guts of the last Priest]. Naigeon also quotes this image in his ‘Discours préliminaire’, p. xxii. The footnote is about Meslier but refers also the Naigeon’s Adresse.


34 Naigeon, Adresse, p. 38.

being, let us leave it that Naigeon does lift and re-use recognizable chunks of Diderot’s words, and that, given that this study is attempting to establish whether a particular work of Diderot’s was circulating and if so, where and how, it is a necessary part of our process and method to trace and place quotation of this sort.

It is perhaps appropriate therefore that I now turn to the three very glancing quotations from the Éléments de physiologie that I have found in the Adresse. These passages are devoid of the vitriolic anti-clericism we have seen thus far, but they also question God, while the materialist theory underpinning the rejection of religion comes more clearly into view. The first is at the very end of a footnote, mainly quoting Thomas Hobbes, which itself expands on a point being made in the main body of the text about banning discussion and even the name of God from all areas of study apart from theology. Naigeon adds this:

Pascal dit expressément de Dieu, qu’on ne sait ni ce qu’il est, ni si il est.\footnote{Naigeon, Adresse, p. 21n; see discussion of this particular passage in Chapter 2. Reference to Denis Diderot, Éléments de physiologie, ed. by Jean Mayer, Œuvres complètes, DPV (Paris: Hermann, 1987), vol. 17, pp. 261–574 (p.515); Diderot, Éléments de physiologie, ed. by Paolo Quintili (Paris: Champion, 2004), p. 358; Diderot, Éléments de physiologie, ed. by Motoichi Terada (Paris: Éditions Matériologiques, 2019), p. 327 [hereafter notated as DPV 515/PQ 358/MT 327].}

Pascal specifically says about God that we do not know what he is or whether he is.

In the conclusion to the Éléments de physiologie, we read this:

Pascal dit expressément de Dieu, qu’on ne sait ni ce qu’il est, ni s’il est.\footnote{DPV 515/PQ 358/MT 327.}

Pascal specifically says about God that we do not know what he is or whether he is.

The reference is slight, and its positioning at the end of a long footnote could hardly be less eye-catching. One might also feel sceptical about this being attributable to Diderot given that it is a reference to Blaise Pascal, and yet to the sceptic I would make two points; firstly, that this formula gives a rather specific twist to what Pascal had written in what is now known as his ‘wager’ or ‘le pari de Pascal’ (and which we discussed in Chapter 2), and secondly that ‘expressément’ does
not feature in the Pascal text; this sentence with its emphatic adverb does not sound like a cliché or a received idea; it sounds very written. Furthermore, it is not possible that Naigeon was still unaware of the *Éléments de physiologie* in 1790: he had had continuous access to the manuscripts at least from Diderot’s death on, and probably earlier, and as has been mentioned, integrated many pages from the *Éléments* into the *Mémoires* which he had been writing from 1784 onwards. It seems safe therefore to conclude that Naigeon is indeed quoting from it here, and that it has a marginal but perceptible presence in the *Adresse*. And indeed it is already there, twice, in the opening pages, where Naigeon declares that what the Assemblée nationale needs is ‘un esprit vaste et sage qui arrête et dessine le plan dans lequel ils doivent entrer’ [a mind of great depth and wisdom to decide on and sketch out the plan that the members of the Assemblée nationale need to adopt]; he says moreover that ‘les matériaux existent, il est vrai, mais épars et sans liaison, sans rapports entre eux’ [the materials exist, it is true, but they are scattered, disconnected, without relationships between them]. He goes on to say that for the Assemblée nationale’s work, ‘il importe, sur-tout, que les fondemens en soient solides, & le choix n’en est pas indifférent, car ici, comme dans beaucoup d’autres cas, il n’y a qu’une seule manière d’être bien, & mille manieres d’être mal’ [the most important thing is that the foundations be solid, and the choices it makes do matter, for here, as in many other cases, there is only one way to be well, and thousands of ways of being bad].

These ‘matériaux’ which are ‘épars et sans liaison’ [scattered and disconnected] recall the ‘Avertissement’ of the *Éléments de physiologie*, a passage we have already analysed in some detail, also in connection with Pascal, and which evokes the incomplete ‘matériaux’ written on its ‘feuilletés épars et isolés’ [on scattered and separate scraps of paper] in contrapuntal echo to the introduction to Pascal’s *Pensées* by his nephew, Étienne Périer, in which he describes his uncle’s fragments as being ‘quelques matériaux épars et sans aucun ordre entre eux’ [a

---

few scattered materials with no internal order]. We see these allusions re-echoing here in the opening pages of Naigeon’s *Adresse*, and they will return in his *Mémoires*.41

He follows on, as we saw, with this allusion to the single way of being good or well as opposed to the thousand ways of being bad or unwell, which he introduces as being applicable in many other cases. Here is the one he was probably thinking of:

Il n’est qu’une manière de se porter bien; il y en a une infinité de se porter mal.42

There is only one way of being well, but there are thousands of ways of being ill.

This is the opening sentence to the chapter on ‘Maladies’ in the third and final part of the *Éléments*. ‘Se porter’ in Diderot’s words has become ‘être’ in Naigeon’s, to pull it away from its relevance to health, and yet, ‘être bien/être mal’ is rather clunky, particularly if what Naigeon is referring to here is the Assemblée nationale’s decision-making processes. It seems as if he did not wish to alter the original sentence beyond recognisability, instead affirming its sententious or axiomatic nature, rather than making it fit better in the context.

So, what have we got here with respect to the *Éléments de physiologie*? Not much in terms of quantity, but some discernable references, one from its opening pages and another from its close, along with this third one about health and the variety of ‘ill’ ways of doing things, or simply of ‘being’ in the awkward rephrasing we find here, itself embedded in Naigeon’s own opening paragraphs, which, as we have already seen, are rich in precise quotation from Diderot. In sum, a marginal presence, yet in the sense that margins can also be the frame, or perhaps, to bring in Naigeon’s own metaphor of ‘[des] fondemens […] solides’, that on which the rest is built or which provides the ‘matériaux’ out of which it is built, bref, the assumptions that underpin Naigeon’s argument. Of such a sort is the definition of man from ‘un point de vue plus philosophique’ [a more philosophical view-point]—more philosophical, that is, than the religious view of man—as a ‘portion nécessairement organisée d’une

---

42 DPV 508/PQ 347/MT 321.
matière éternelle, nécessaire’ [a necessarily organised portion of eternal and necessary matter]: this definition of man is lifted from Diderot’s ‘Prière du sceptique’ [The Sceptic’s prayer]. The necessity of human material organisation, that is, its determined character, resurfaces again in the remark in passing about ‘ces hommes malheureusement nés’ [these humans born in an unfortunate form] who cannot be influenced or contained by law; this is specifically in the context of the importance of everyone having ‘le droit de tout dire et de tout imprimer’ [the right to say and publish anything] (p. 86); those who are ‘malheureusement nés’ [born in unfortunate form] must simply be destroyed, given that they cannot be punished. This particular formula appears to be related to the French version of Hobbes, but is most recognisable as the view of Jacques’s captain: ‘il prétendait qu’on était heureusement ou malheureusement né’ [his claim was that one was born in a fortunate or unfortunate form].

Naigeon’s Strategy

To summarise and characterise Naigeon’s referencing of Diderot in the Adresse, then, we can say firstly, that Diderot is clearly present in this text in the form of exact quotation from a range of works, none of which were published in 1790 (although Jacques le fataliste had been circulated in the manuscript periodical, the Correspondance littéraire); secondly, that Diderot’s name is never given; thirdly, that Naigeon sometimes signals that he is quoting, by the simple deployment of quotation marks, and that these quotations are attributed to ‘un philosophe’; and finally, that a rough characterisation of the Diderot texts deployed here would suggest that they are primarily anti-clerical, secondarily anti-authoritarian and anti-hierarchical, and lastly, materialist. The verb ‘deployed’ suggests a

43 Despite some question about the authorship of this piece, as referenced above, recent scholarship considers that this ‘Prière du sceptique’ was by Diderot: see Albertan and Chouillet, ‘Autographes et documents’, paragraphs 14–15.

44 Naigeon, Adresse, p. 87. ‘Hommes malheureusement nés’ may be a Hobbesian formula in French clothes; also in Jacques le fataliste: ‘[Jacques] prétendait qu’on était heureusement ou malheureusement nés’, see DPV, vol. 23, p. 189; also ‘dans une lettre à SV, Diderot écrit que la plupart des hommes “naissent moitié sots et moitié fous ”’ [in a letter to Sophie Volland, Diderot writes that most men ‘are born half stupid and half mad’], Diderot, Correspondance, ed. by Roth and Varloot, vol. 3, p. 98.
strategy on Naigeon’s part. Are we right to use such a verb? Is there a strategy at work in his supposed ‘deployment’ of Diderot in this text, and if so, what is it? Of course, in asking this question, we set aside Naigeon’s explicit aim of convincing the Assemblée nationale to omit any mention of God and also to enshrine freedom of speech in the Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen as this is not the concern of our study. The question is thus not how Naigeon uses Diderot to boost his arguments, but more specifically, whether Naigeon uses this text as an occasion to publicise or publish Diderot, and if so, how.

Without being able to produce a conclusive answer, we can nonetheless look at what Naigeon does say generally about readers, publication, timeliness, and quotation. In an early footnote, for example, he apologises for not having had enough time to integrate the footnotes with the main body of the text, but states that the ‘Lecteur attentif & intelligent’ [attentive and intelligent reader] will have no trouble linking the ideas and seeing the ‘rapport très-immédiat’ [very direct relationship] between the different text levels.45 This tells us immediately that Naigeon has an ideal reader in mind, and that this reader will understand his text in a way that others, undescribed but existing in implicit contrast to this ‘attentive and intelligent reader’, will not. So there are different levels of readers and different levels of understanding, and some will see what the text really means, whereas others will not. This is a hierarchisation of the elite reader that we will meet again in the Mémoires, when, specifically in the context of the ‘quelques matériaux éparss et sans aucun ordre entre eux’ which we mentioned only a few paragraphs back in connection with the ‘Avertissement’ to the Éléments de physiologie and its allusion to Pascal’s Pensées, Naigeon says that these ideas, however scattered, will nonetheless have meaning ‘aux yeux du philosophe assez instruit pour couver les idées neuves et fécondes dont Diderot a semé ses recherches’ [in the eyes of the philosopher who is

sufficiently knowledgeable to appreciate the new and fertile ideas that Diderot planted in his work].\textsuperscript{46} So, looking at this notion of the ideal reader from the perspective of the Mémoires, we see that s/he (probably ‘he’ for Naigeon) is ideal specifically in the way in which he will be learned enough to appreciate the new and productive ideas that Diderot seeded across his research. The ideal reader is one who is capable of appreciating Diderot.

The ideal writer, on the other hand, says what he means and publishes at the right time. Claude Adrien Helvétius’s De l’homme had met neither of these criteria, Naigeon tells us:

\begin{quote}
comme il avoit résolu de le faire imprimer, malgré les conseils de ses amis qui prévoyoient les suites funestes de son imprudence, il craint de laisser pénétrer ses vrais sentimens; mais on les apperçoit au travers du voile dont il cherche en vain à se couvrir.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

as he was determined to publish it, despite the advice of his friends, who foresaw the disastrous consequences of his imprudence, he was fearful of allowing his real views to be detected. Yet they are still perceptible through the veil with which he seeks in vain to cover them.

Helvétius wished to publish but also wished to get round censorship by disguising his real meaning; the result is a disaster, in that he fails to avoid censorship, and his attempt to disguise his real meaning leads, claims Naigeon, to pages and pages of tedious and confusing argumentation—‘des longueurs accablantes’.\textsuperscript{48} This sort of writing which attempted to disguise its real meaning had a name: ‘la double doctrine’.\textsuperscript{49} According to Naigeon, this is what Helvétius was using, and not only was it a failure, it was unworthy of a ‘philosophe’. Thus we read that:

\begin{quote}
L’usage de la double doctrine convient mieux à un Hiérophante dont l’intérêt est d’obscurcir les notions les plus claires, & qui ne vit que de l’ignorance & de la crédulité des Peuples, qu’à un Philosophe [...]
\end{quote}\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{46} Naigeon, Mémoires sur la vie et les ouvrages de Denis Diderot, p. 291.
\textsuperscript{47} Naigeon, Adresse, p. 28n.
\textsuperscript{48} Naigeon, Adresse, p. 29n (this is a continuation of the note on p. 28).
\textsuperscript{49} For a thorough analysis of libertine rhetoric, see Isabelle Moreau, ‘Guérir du sot’: Les Stratégies d’écriture des libertins à l’âge classique (Paris: Champion, 2007).
\textsuperscript{50} Naigeon, Adresse, p. 28n.
The deployment of the double doctrine better befits a hierophant in whose interest it is to make the clearest notions as obscure as possible, and whose survival depends upon the ignorance and credulity of the people, than it does a philosopher.

The brave, wise, and virtuous philosophe does not publish primarily for glory (‘Helvétius aimoit la gloire’ [Helvétius loved glory]), against the advice of his friends, resorting to ‘vains subterfuges’ in order to protect himself and thereby making his book incomprehensible. The philosophe tells the truth, whatever it costs, even if that means foregoing publication. Naigeon goes on to reprove Newton for having chosen to appease the theologians by giving some weak proofs of the existence of God (pp. 30–32), only subsequently quoting from a philosophe who wrote ‘avec cette éloquence et cette énergie que donnent la hardiesse et la profondeur des pensées’ [that eloquence and energy that bold and deep thoughts bestow on the speaker] and about most people being ignorant, afraid, and superstitious. This is the passage we have already quoted, starting ‘Le gros d’une nation’ [most of a nation] and that quotation is from Diderot. In this long castigation of writers who failed in their duty or judgement in one way or another, therefore, it is Diderot who is presented as the shining counter-example, even though his name is hidden.

This all seems quite clear, even stridently so. Naigeon is in charge, and although Helvétius did not understand when the right time to publish was, Naigeon does, and that time is now, as he had said in his introduction:

[...] quand on a quelque chose de bon à dire, il faut se presser; car on est presque sûr que la vérité qu’on découvre aujourd’hui, & qu’on n’annonce pas, sera trouvée & publiée demain par un autre. Il est très-indifférent, sans doute, que l’auteur d’une grande découverte s’appelle Newton ou Leibniz; ce [qui] importe beaucoup, c’est que cette découverte se fasse; mais il n’en est pas moins vrai que le soin de sa propre gloire n’est pas à dédaigner, & qu’il ne faut pas paroître suivre ceux qu’on peut précéder, ou à côté desquels on a droit de se placer. 51

when you have something good to say, you must hurry up and say it; because you can be almost sure that the truth you discover today and

51 Naigeon, Adresse, pp. 9–10.
don't publicise will be found and publicised by someone else tomorrow.
It is completely irrelevant, no doubt, whether the name of the author of a
great discovery is Newton or Leibniz; what is really important, is that this
discovery should be made. And yet it is no less true that one’s own glory
should not be neglected, and that one should not allow it to seem that
one has followed in the footsteps of those one has preceded, or in whose
company one has the right to stand.

Or is he quite so clear? This particular argument seems to be coming
from a different angle. The right moment to publish in this presentation
is based not on issues of censorship and prudence but on getting a move
on and making sure someone else does not grab one’s rightful glory. Is
he contradicting himself? Perhaps there is no need to set Naigeon’s two
positions against one another, as if he were in bad faith for lambasting
Helvétius’s interest in glory; perhaps it is enough simply to say that
what Naigeon says in his introduction and what he says twenty pages
later are two separate things, that so far as Naigeon is concerned, times
have changed, and the interests of the nation require him to say ‘quelque
chose de bon’ [something good] straightaway, and not neglect his own
reputation—or that of the author whose manuscripts it is his job to
look after and disseminate as he sees fit—in the meantime. But in any
case, as we know, Naigeon’s confidence, both in the timing of his (and
Diderot’s) anti-clerical message and in the readiness of his readers to
hear it, was—ironically—completely misplaced.

Thus far, in our attempt to understand whether Naigeon has a
strategy, we have looked at what he says about readers, publication, and
timeliness. He presents a strident display of confidence and knowledge
combined, a sense of knowing better, that is not so much persuasive
as dogmatic and dominant, and yet as we have also seen, there is a
perceptible thread of self-contradiction that undermines some of what
he says. We have not yet analysed an important aspect for this study,
that is, his strategies or practices of quotation more generally.

Describing these practices of quotation reveals an economy that is
so mixed that it is hard to discern any strategy. This is not to suggest
that the result is a textual (or authorial) mess but rather that it is
extremely complex. As we have already seen, he quotes Diderot on
multiple occasions and from multiple texts, and also in multiple ways,
while never actually naming him.\(^52\) Some of the quotation is made textually prominent and visible as quotation by the straightforward use of quotation marks; some of it is introduced by ‘un philosophe disoit’ [a philosopher said] or ‘un philosophe faisoit un jour cette question’ [a philosopher one day asked this question]—and we note the emphasis here on orality and conversation rather than on written texts—and some of it is not given textual prominence of any sort but is invisibly embedded in a sentence—this may be simply an expression we can trace to a Diderot text or which echoes a Diderot text quite closely but does not replicate it exactly. But Diderot is not the only author he quotes. We also meet La Rochefoucauld half way through a sentence, his ‘il n’y a rien d’absolument bon et d’absolument mauvais’ [there is nothing absolutely good or absolutely bad] recycled into a statement presenting itself not as quotation but as a declaration of the truth.\(^53\) It would be tempting to extrapolate from this that for Naigeon, writing and philosophising is not about a display of authorial attribution and sources, but about a depersonalised or rather a de-authorialised establishment of the truth, if we did not have the counter-evidence of the paragraph on publishing in order to stamp one’s name on a discovery and maintain one’s rightful glory. Furthermore, in fact, we also find a great deal of attributed citation, predominantly from Latin authors. Tacitus and Horace appear frequently to lend their classical authority and clinch a point.\(^54\) Pierre Bayle is named and precisely referenced.\(^55\) Yet Lucretius is also quoted in Latin, without being named

---

\(^{52}\) Elsewhere we have studied some of the striking behaviour around naming sources (or more often, not naming them) in the 1790s, and it seems that Naigeon’s practice of calling Diderot ‘un philosophe’ fits quite neatly into that analysis whereby certain unproblematic authorities are named, while others (generally Diderot) are anonymised. See Caroline Warman, ‘Caught between Neologism and the Unmentionable: The Politics of Naming and Non-naming in 1790s France’, *Romance Studies*, 31 (2013), 264–76, https://doi.org/10.1179/0263990413Z.00000000051.


\(^{54}\) See for example Naigeon, *Adresse*, p. 5n (Horace); p. 41n (Tacitus). References to Tacitus in this period carry a particular polemical and political charge, see Catherine Volpilhac-Augier, *Tactice en France de Montesquieu à Chateaubriand* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1993).

or referenced. Naigeon quotes a line of *De rerum natura* advising the writer to ‘bathe his work in the charm of the muses’ (‘musaeo contingens cuncta lepore’), and he places it at the end of a paragraph discussing how best to write about ‘des matières philosophiques’ [philosophical matters]. This is suggestive; Lucretius’s Epicurean poem about a world of atoms is an important text and model for the thinkers (and covert materialists) of the Early Modern period. The fact that Naigeon is at pains to advertise the references of all Latin sources apart from Lucretius means he is treated in the same way as Naigeon’s principle unnamed source, Diderot, and they are thereby associated. One wonders what the non-naming here is supposed to do. Presumably a learned reader, ‘un lecteur attentif & intelligent’ [an attentive and intelligent reader], will not have very much trouble recognising Lucretius, and we know that contemporaneous readers did espy Diderot’s presence within Naigeon’s pages, even if, we assume, they were not acquainted with the specific texts being used.

So Naigeon is hiding quotation in full view, at least to some extent. Is this a form of provocation directed either at the authorities or to the reader? Or is it a game of associations and connections? Or both? Or a series of implicit directions to the informed reader, so that they knew they were dealing with a text with a materialist undertow? Could it be all of these things? It is not very clear precisely how this functions or how we are supposed to read its allusions and intertextual flags, but it is clear, paradoxically, that the text is not quite so clear or so open as Naigeon’s loud rejection of the ‘double doctrine’—saying one thing while meaning another—would have us believe. In the *Adresse*, he also quotes—unacknowledged—whole pages of his own articles on ‘Cardan’ and ‘Mirabeau’ from his forthcoming three-volume philosophical dictionary, *La Philosophie ancienne et moderne*. These three volumes

---

56 Naigeon, *Adresse*, p. 4: ‘musaeo contingens cuncta lepore’, from *De rerum natura*, book 1, line 934, meaning ‘bathing all with the charm of the muses’.


58 See also Naigeon’s quotation of Lucretius in support of an allusion to Diderot and an injunction to crush fanaticism in his ‘Discours préliminaire’, *Encyclopédie méthodique: Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, vol. 1, p. xxiii.

59 Naigeon, *Adresse*, pp. 53–55 (‘Cardan’) and pp. 101—9 (‘Mirabeau’). The *Philosophie ancienne et moderne* was part of Panckoucke’s immense *Encyclopédie méthodique*.
were published in 1791, 1792, and in the Revolutionary ‘An II’, that is, 22 September 1793–21 September 1794. ‘Cardan’ fills or rather constitutes the Supplement at the end of vol. 2 (alphabetically it should have appeared in vol. 1, which runs ‘Académiciens’ to ‘Collins’), and ‘Mirabeau’ appeared in vol. 3, in its expected alphabetical position, although it is not about Mirabeau at all but is instead a summary of the *Système de la nature* which had been (falsely) published under Mirabeau’s name by its real author, the baron d’Holbach, and his co-authors Diderot and Naigeon. And in a neat piece of reciprocal cross-text symmetry, where ‘Cardan’ provides the entirety of the supplement to vol. 2, the extract from ‘Mirabeau’ provides almost the entirety of the nine-page first note of the ‘Additions’ to the *Adresse*. Naigeon is right to appeal to the ‘lecteur attentif’; he needs an attentive reader, as the rest of us get hopelessly confused!

Confusion aside, there may be a few observations we could fairly make. Firstly, that these pieces of writing are not ‘neat’, to pick up on that adjective used a few lines back. The *Adresse* is not really a speech, and its different parts do need a ‘lecteur attentif’ to make sense of them all; the philosophical dictionary is not really a dictionary in any alphabetical sense—the entries are not published in clearly-planned alphabetical order, and ‘Mirabeau’ does not refer to ‘Mirabeau’, as the first line declares. And we clearly cannot argue that Naigeon thought of ‘Cardan’ late in the publishing process, and therefore put it as a sort of rushed afterthought at the end of vol. 2, firstly because an article sixty-seven pages long is not a rushed afterthought, and secondly, because he was already citing extensive passages from it in 1790. It may of course be the other way round, and that he developed passages from the *Adresse* in these later articles. It is not very easy to tell, and now is not the place to attempt any sort of conclusive analysis. What we can say is that there is some sort of overlap between the two works, that the *Adresse* and the three volumes of the dictionary are published in quite close proximity,

---

60 Naigeon, ‘Cardan’, *Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, vol. 2 (1792), pp. 873–940; the section quoted or pre-quoted by Naigeon in the *Adresse* appears on p. 989; ‘Mirabeau’, vol. 3 (an II), pp. 239–326; the section quoted in the *Adresse* appears on pp. 241–42.
that even if Naigeon is not citing paragraphs from articles he has already prepared, he will already have been working on the dictionary, and yet he does not use the opportunity provided by the Adresse to explicitly advertise that other work. So the citation, if citation it is, is not about advertisement.

Is he simply self-plagiarising? Is all this citation simply about Naigeon plundering the texts to which he had access, including his own? On the question of plagiarism, Naigeon himself has something to say, in the very ‘Cardan’ article we have been discussing. He has been talking about Cardan’s ‘larcins’ [thefts] from Aristotle, Theophrastus, Hippocrates, Galen, Celsus, and Dioscorides, and in particular from Pliny.\textsuperscript{61} He has this to say:

\begin{quote}
[Pliny] n’oublie point de nommer les sçavans qui lui en ont fourni les matériaux ; tandis que Cardan, bien loin de suivre cet exemple que l’équité, la reconnoissance, & l’intérêt même de sa gloire lui prescrivioient également, a voulu faire croire qu’en écrivant sur tant de sujets divers, il n’y employoit, pour me servir de l’expression de Montaigne, que ses propres & naturels moyens. C’est cette affectation à cacher les sources où il avoit puisé une partie de son savoir, qui l’a fait accuser de plagiat; & il faut avouer que ce n’est pas sans fondement. Scaliger assure même que le livre de Cardan sur l’immortalité de l’ame, n’est qu’un assemblage de plusieurs lambeaux pris çà et là, & que pour couvrir son vol, il mêla des déclamations ridicules aux doctrines qu’il avait tirées des écrits de Pomponace & d’Augustin Niphus.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
[Pliny] never forgets to name the scholars whose works he has borrowed from, while Cardan, far from following this example which fairness, gratitude and even the interests of his glory equally prescribed, wanted everyone to think that in writing on all these diverse subjects, he employed nothing, to use Montaigne’s expression, other than his own natural means. It’s this affectation of hiding the sources from which he drew part of his knowledge that caused him to be accused of plagiarism, and we have to admit that this charge is not a baseless one. Scaliger goes so far as to assert that Cardan’s book on the immortality of the soul is nothing other than an assemblage of numerous bits and pieces gathered from here and there, and that to cover up his theft, he mixed various ridiculous declamations in with the doctrines that he had taken from Pomponazzi & Agostino Nifo.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} Naigeon, ‘Cardan’, p. 931.
\textsuperscript{62} Naigeon, ‘Cardan’, p. 932.
And, on this page alone, backing up not only his punctilious references to Montaigne and Scaliger but providing other learned allusions, we find no fewer than seven notes giving Latin original and detailed source information. So, Naigeon knows that making a text from ‘un assemblage de plusieurs lambeaux pris ça et là’ [assemblage of numerous bits and pieces gathered from here and there] can be seen as theft. Here he calls the practice of hiding a source an ‘affectation’. He acknowledges that accusations of plagiarism are not unfounded. He further says that fairness, gratitude, and even Cardan’s reputation or glory required him to acknowledge his borrowings, but that Cardan pretended they were all his anyway. How curious this is! The impression of virtuous and scholarly authorship is further reinforced by the closing signature: ‘cet article est du citoyen Naigeon’ [this article is by Citizen Naigeon]. The ‘lecteur instruit’ [knowledgeable reader], Naigeon further adds, will be able to make their own mind up about Cardan’s work, and about what is true and useful, and what its faults are. That appeal to the superior sort of reader again! We really do need him (and he is definitely male)! Of course, here the dates may well be significant, and Naigeon’s reproof of the naughty Cardan who is otherwise, as a ‘médecin philosophe’ [medical philosopher] much praised, may be a form of response to Naigeon’s own critics who had derided the Naigeon of the Adresse as Diderot’s lapdog or monkey. Yet Naigeon was not accused of plagiarism, so far as I know.

If this display of righteous reproof and virtuous referencing is a response to Naigeon’s critics, then it takes the form of a simple denial, and of course it is a straightforward lie insofar as it applies to Naigeon’s own work. But one wonders whether there is something more complex going on than either denial or local inconsistency. Perhaps what we find here is the ‘double doctrine’ Naigeon had lambasted Helvétius for. Perhaps that very reproof was itself an example of the ‘double doctrine’ in action, whereby Naigeon was really disseminating the work he claimed to criticise, an ironic denunciation that not only gave further page space to

---

63 Naigeon, ‘Cardan’, p. 940.
64 Naigeon, ‘Cardan’, p. 938.
65 Naigeon, ‘Cardan’, p. 938; La Harpe famously called Naigeon ‘le singe de Diderot’ [Diderot’s monkey], see Jean-François La Harpe, Œuvres, 16 vols (Paris: Verdière, 1820), vol. 11, p. 41.
Helvétius but also advertised to the ‘attentive’ or ‘informed’ reader that censorship-bypassing codes of clandestine rhetoric were in operation in the Adresse? That he considered that some prudence was required is evident from the fact that while he did reference and name some sources, he never named Diderot, and that he was right to be cautious is only too clear from the outraged responses of some—but not all—reviewers. In any case, so far as the reputations of both Naigeon and Diderot were concerned, the damage was done anyway. Whatever the reasons informing Naigeon’s explicit condemnation of plagiarism in the case of Cardan, however, we can see that it would have been impossible for Naigeon as a writer who did also embed unacknowledged quotation in his work not to notice the irony. Whether his readers—or perhaps just the really attentive and informed one—noticed, and were even meant to do so, is not a question we can resolve here. We can, however, say that Naigeon is a more complicated and tricksy writer than has been considered to be the case, and we can also say that in the Adresse, he did disseminate some of Diderot’s hitherto unpublished manuscripts, drawing on some of the most intensely anti-authoritarian passages to do so, moreover. The extent to which this was an organised strategy of publication, of which the ‘Diderot’ article he wrote for the Encyclopédie méthodique was another part, with his edition of Diderot’s Œuvres of 1798 and the Mémoires historiques et philosophiques of 1823 completing the quartet, is not something we can yet determine, although we will continue to track which Diderot texts Naigeon named or published or described, and where, and how. We now turn to the article on ‘Diderot’.