In offering the first book-length study of the ‘Éléments de physiologie’, Warman raises the stakes high: she wants to show that, far from being a long-unknown draft, it is a powerful philosophical work whose hidden presence was visible in certain circles from the Revolution on. And it works! Warman’s study is original and stimulating, a historical investigation that is both rigorous and fascinating.

—François Pépin, École normale supérieure, Lyon

This is high-quality intellectual and literary history, the erudition and close argument suffused by a wit and humour Diderot himself would surely have appreciated.

—Michael Moriarty, University of Cambridge

In ‘The Atheist’s Bible’, Caroline Warman applies deft, tenacious and often witty textual detective work to the case, as she explores the shadowy passage and influence of Diderot’s materialist writings in manuscript samizdat-like form from the Revolutionary era through to the Restoration.

—Colin Jones, Queen Mary University of London

‘Love is harder to explain than hunger, for a piece of fruit does not feel the desire to be eaten’: Denis Diderot’s Éléments de physiologie presents a world in flux, turning on the relationship between man, matter and mind. In this late work, Diderot delves playfully into the relationship between bodily sensation, emotion and perception, and asks his readers what it means to be human in the absence of a soul.

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 publicaion of Diderot’s Éléments, long before its official publicaion 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.

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9. 1796–97: Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy at the Institut national

Pierre Daunou (1761–1840) rose to prominence as the author of the Constitution de l’an III (1795) which ushered in the Directorate, and also as the mover behind the law of 3 Brumaire an IV (25 October 1795) reforming public education and known as the Loi Daunou.¹ This law set down rules for primary, secondary, and ‘specialised’ education, and it also created the Institut national des sciences et des arts, of which he then became president. Before the Revolution, like Dominique-Joseph Garat, Daunou had been a minor author and a winner of academy prizes—with a study of Boileau’s literary influence (Académie de Nîmes, 1787) and an investigation into the origins, extent, and limits of paternal authority (Académie de Berlin, 1788).² He had also been, like Garat, a regular member of Mme Helvétius’ salon in Auteuil, and continued to be.³ Daunou’s Institut national des sciences et des arts was set up with the following aims:

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3  There are many descriptions of this salon and their role in it. The major study is (still) Antoine Guillois, Le Salon de Madame Helvétius: Cabanis et les idéologues (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1894). Mariana Saad neatly sums up what is known in her Cabanis, comprendre l’homme pour changer le monde (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016), pp. 20–21.

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1. To perfect the sciences and arts by means of uninterrupted research, by means of the publication of discoveries, by means of correspondence with learned societies in France and abroad; 2. To undertake, in accordance with the laws and decrees of the executive directory, scientific and literary work whose purpose is the general utility of all and the glory of the republic.

There had been no single research institution of this sort before. The various (previously royal) Académies had been dissolved in 1793. As we saw, the École normale awkwardly straddled the gap between research and teacher-training institutions. The Institut national des sciences et des arts emphatically reintroduced the research focus, specified in this passage as being uninterrupted. Uninterrupted by students and their awkward questions, certainly, because there were none.

It had three departments or ‘classes’: the ‘sciences physiques et mathématiques’, the ‘sciences morales et politiques’, and ‘littérature et beaux-arts’, and the three ‘classes’ were divided into a number of ‘sections’. First in the list of ‘sections’ for the ‘sciences morales et politiques’ was the ‘Analyse des sensations et des idées’. Each section had six Parisian members and six associate members from around France: in the case of the ‘Section Analyse des sensations et des idées’, Garat and Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis were Parisian members, and Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy, resident in Auteuil, an associate member. The Institut national held its meeting at the Louvre, renamed

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the Palais national des sciences et des arts. Their lectures were published in the *Mémoires de l’Institut national des sciences et des arts*: in the case of the ‘classe’ of Sciences morales et politiques, only five volumes were published, as Napoleon Bonaparte closed it down in 1803. No lecture by Garat is recorded, which, in the context of the furore around his lectures at the École normale, is unsurprising and yet stark; it is not as if he did not have anything to say on the subject, as we know, and what he had said was left incomplete. Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy, however, did give numerous lectures, all of which were published, initially in installments in the *Mémoires de l’Institut*, and then separately. Cabanis’s became the *Rapports du physique et du moral*, first published in 1802, and then in a revised edition in 1805, with further posthumous editions in 1815 and 1824. Destutt de Tracy’s were published as the *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser* in the *Mémoires de l’Institut*, to which he added the *Dissertation sur quelques questions d’idéologie*, a new extended version in the *Projet d’éléments d’idéologie à l’usage des écoles centrales de la République française* (1801), then the *Idéologie proprement dite* of 1804, which was the first volume of the *Éléments d’idéologie*. This grew into four volumes, was completed in 1815, and republished in 1824.

As we see therefore, unlike Garat’s, the lectures of Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy not only made it into publication in the *Mémoires* but also flourished as separate works through various editions. And as we also see when we look at the publication dates, these works are published not so much separately as in tandem. This impression is further reinforced when we see that it was Destutt who wrote the eighty-page summary or ‘Table analytique’ for the second edition of Cabanis’s *Rapports sur le physique et le moral* (1805). Their focus on the ‘analyse des sensations et des idées’ is a shared one, and when we read their works, it is clear that the project is a shared one whose ideas benefit from the amplification they receive from being said twice, or rather, not just twice but many many times over by two different voices occupying slightly different positions on the same terrain, one more physiologically-informed

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6 The volumes came out between An IV (1795/96) and An XII (1803/04).
7 Garat was sent as French Ambassador to Naples in 1798, but his tenure was brief.
(Cabanis), the other self-consciously occupying the same space as Condillac, with his work not just on sensations but on grammar and logic (Destutt). The style of both is strikingly ceremonious and oral, emphasising the origin of these texts as lectures delivered at the Institut national. As we will see, both writers retain these markers of oral delivery generally, alongside references to the Institut specifically, and thereby stake a firm claim to virtuous republican authority and identity. As Jean Starobinski remarks with customary incisiveness in his analysis of ‘la chaire, la tribune, le barreau’, that is, of sermons, political speeches, and legal utterances, ‘le lieu d’où l’on parle’, that is, where one speaks from, is crucially important in determining or even authorising its meaning, and neither Cabanis nor Destutt de Tracy intend to let us forget it.\(^9\) We will return to these markers of style in due course, but first we need to see what they actually said, in order to establish whether or not their lectures are relevant to the argument we are attempting to make here, that is, that Diderot’s *Éléments de physiologie* was known by these writers, and that its influence can be perceived at various moments in their writings. Thus far, all that has been established is that they were in the same section of the same class as Garat at the Institut national, and that they would have known him anyway as a fellow-member of the Cercle d’Auteuil, Mme Helvétius’s salon, and that the same goes for Daunou (although he was in a different section of the same ‘Classe des Sciences morales et politiques’: his section was ‘Sciences sociales, et Législation’).\(^{10}\) Jacques-André Naigeon, too, was made a member of the Institut national, Classe des Sciences morales et politiques, but the section he was invited to be part of, interestingly, was ‘Morale’.\(^{11}\) One sees why he would not have been invited to join the section ‘Analyse des sens et des idées’—his reputation as a diehard atheist and his public association with Diderot would hardly have helped keep the field of their enquiries controversy-free where, as we will see, there is some real proximity to Diderot and to materialism in their work.

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11 Naigeon doesn’t appear to have given any lectures.
Both Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy make the ‘analyse des sens’ into the analysis of life itself. In so doing, they are more ambitious than Garat. He starts with sensation, the senses, their flaws, correctibility, and perfectibility. And indeed he does not get a lot further than that. But Cabanis and Destutt cover more ground, and use more words. Once comfortably commenced, and with thousands of words to cushion him, Cabanis plants this aphoristic statement in the middle of a long and multi-claused sentence:

[…] vivre, c’est sentir […].

To live is to feel.

Destutt restates this foundational principle as a question, with the help of a judiciously-deployed synonym and syntactical reformulation:

Qu’est-ce qu’exister, si ce n’est le sentir?

What is it to exist if it isn’t to feel?

It is interesting to see how cautiously these formulas are planted and stated. By the time he gets to the *Idéologie proprement dite* of 1801, Destutt is able to state with more confidence and more prominence that:

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12 Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme: introduction de Serge Nicolas suivie des commentaires de François Thurot et A.L.C. Destutt de Tracy*, 2 vols (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005 [Facsimile of the 1802 1st edition]), vol. 1, p. 91 (lecture 2) [N.B. For the avoidance of doubt, where the edition is not specified in footnotes, this is the one used.].

13 Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, De la métaphysique de Kant, et autres textes*, ed. by Anne Deneys and Henry Deney (Paris: Fayard, 1992), p. 69; lecture 2. Destutt de Tracy gave his *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser* initially as four *Mémoires* in five installments; he then revised it and re-read it at the Institut; the *Mémoires de l’institut national*, vol. 1, give the text of the second reading, while recording the date of the very first lecture. The approved text has three parts, which are each sub-divided into chapters: part 1 has twenty-seven pages in the 1992 edition, and two chapters; part 2 has sixty-seven pages and six chapters; part 3 has forty-four pages and two chapters. We assume that part 1 constituted the first lecture, and that part 2 includes lectures 2 and 3, and maybe part of 4; part 3 therefore may include some of part 4, and certainly part 5. The dating between parts 1 and 2 in any case is clear: Destutt differentiates them temporally by talking about what he did ‘dans la première partie’ [in the first part] and what he is going to do ‘Aujourd’hui’ [today] (*Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*, p. 65 [Préface to part 2]).
Penser, sentir et exister ne sont pour nous qu’une seule chose.\textsuperscript{14} 

To think, to feel, and to exist are in our eyes nothing other than the same thing.

These statements are very close to one another, and very close also to the starker aphorism we find in Diderot’s \textit{Éléments de physiologie}, that:

\begin{quotation}
Sentir, c’est vivre.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quotation}

To feel is to live.

Cabanis’s ‘vivre, c’est sentir’ chiastically mirrors Diderot’s ‘sentir, c’est vivre’, while Destutt’s ‘Qu’est-ce qu’exister, si ce n’est le sentir?’ affirms the same parallelism between existing/being alive and feeling via a rhetorical question. The similarity of these statements by Diderot, Cabanis, and Destutt is striking, and yet it is hardly conclusive with respect to any putative influence by or presence of the \textit{Éléments de physiologie} specifically. Perhaps all it does is show that Diderot, Cabanis and Destutt are in alignment with respect to a basic notion of sensationism. Interestingly, however, Destutt immediately follows his statement that ‘Penser, sentir et exister ne sont pour nous qu’une seule chose’ [To think, to feel, and to exist are in our eyes nothing other than the same thing] with the following curious remark: ‘J’ai cru fermement ne l’avoir pas appris de Condillac’ [I firmly believed I did not learn this from Condillac].\textsuperscript{16}

For the suspicious reader, this is a gift. Is Destutt drawing attention to the fact that he did not learn it from Condillac in order to plant the idea of having learnt it from someone else, that is, Diderot? He could be. One might want to argue, on the basis of Condillac’s \textit{Traité des sensations} of 1754 or his less well-known but arguably more relevant \textit{La Logique}, published posthumously in 1780, that sensation and life are obviously presented as equivalent in some sort of way, and this is certainly true.


\textsuperscript{16} Destutt de Tracy, \textit{Idéologie proprement dite}, p. 191.
But we would have to point out nonetheless that Condillac never says so in so many words, and that his style is circumlocutory rather than pithy or aphoristic. That the little aphorisms in Cabanis and Destutt linking life, existence and sensation are very close to an almost identical aphorism we find in the *Éléments de physiologie* cannot be denied, but nor does it prove knowledge or influence. It is nonetheless suggestive, as is Destutt’s curious statement about not having learnt it from Condillac. In any case, we cannot at this point exclude the notion that there *may have been* knowledge on their part of Diderot’s *Éléments*, and that it might have influenced them. It is a possibility.

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Yet while we can see that it is a possibility, we also see how cautious Cabanis and Destutt are, how carefully they present this definition of life as sensation. Whether Diderot’s influence is present or not is only part of a problem which requires them to avoid the sort of charge of materialism which Garat had been subjected to, and which had so quickly got out of hand. When Cabanis and Destutt pick up the baton, they do so protected by the newly founded Institut national, according to its codes, and therefore with new forms of virtuous distance between themselves, their work, and anything that could be called materialist. Part of this is the distance they keep from Naigeon, nicely muzzled in the ‘Morale’ section. Fortunately, moreover, one of the key terms of the Institut is the notion of improvement or ‘perfecting’: the Constitution de l’an III, article 298, states that ‘Il y a, pour toute la République, un Institut National, chargé de recueillir les découvertes, de perfectionner les arts et les sciences’ [*There is, for the entire Republic, a National Institute, charged with recording discoveries and with perfecting the arts and sciences*].\(^{17}\) The Loi du 3 Brumaire an IV, titre IV, article premier, states that the Institut National ‘est destiné à perfectionner les sciences et les arts par des recherches non interrompues, par la publication des découvertes, par la correspondance avec les sociétés savantes et étrangères’ [*To perfect the sciences and arts by means of uninterrupted research, by means of the publication of discoveries, by means of correspondence*

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\(^{17}\) *Institut national de la République française* (Paris: Baudouin, Brumaire An VI (Oct–Nov 1797), p. 1.)
with learned societies in France and abroad].\textsuperscript{18} we quoted this earlier. So, ‘perfectionner’, to perfect the sciences and arts, or more accurately translated, the different branches of knowledge and the different skills and crafts, is the fundamental aim of the Institut National. Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy have nothing to worry about therefore when they talk about perfecting the senses: they are speaking the language of the Institute itself, even if perfecting the senses is not the same operation as perfecting branches of knowledge or crafts, and is manifestly closer to materialist positions about the processes of embodied thought. Yet the term ‘perfectionner’ legitimises this area of their thinking, such that there is no evidence whatsoever of the sort of syntactical caution and embedding that we saw when, in passing, or as a rhetorical question, they defined life as sensation. We remember of course that Garat had also enthusiastically proposed learning to perfect the senses, and this shared feature of their thought provides a key link between his 	extit{Cours} and their 	extit{Mémoires}, and a perceptible moment of transmission from him to them. Whether Diderot is also behind this notion remains a moot point.

On reading Cabanis, we see how grand, how educational, this notion of perfecting the senses has become:\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{quote}
Si notre première étude est celle des instrumens que nous avons reçus immédiatement de la nature ; la seconde est celle des moyens qui peuvent modifier, corriger, perfectionner ces instrumens. Il ne suffit pas qu’un ouvrier connoisse les premiers outils de son art ; il faut qu’il connoisse également les outils nouveaux qui peuvent en agrandir, en perfectionner l’usage, et les méthodes par lesquelles on peut les employer avec plus de fruit.

La nature produit l’homme avec des organes et des facultés déterminées : mais l’art peut accroître ses facultés, changer ou diriger leur emploi, créer en quelque sorte de nouveaux organes. C’est-là l’ouvrage de l’éducation, qui n’est, à proprement parler, que l’art des impressions et des habitudes.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

If our first objects of study are the instruments which we have received directly from nature, the second are the means by which we may modify,

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\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Institut national de la République française} (Paris: Baudouin, Brumaire An VI (Oct–Nov 1797), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{19} Mariana Saad examines the importance of ‘perfectibility’ for Cabanis’s thought more widely in her study: \textit{Cabanis, comprendre l’homme}, pp. 239–68.
\textsuperscript{20} Cabanis, \textit{Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme}, vol. 1, pp. 75–76 (lecture 1).
\end{flushright}
correct, and perfect these instruments. It is not enough for a workman to know the basic tools of his craft; he must also know all the new tools which can expand and perfect it and the methods by which they can most fruitfully be used.

Nature produces man with organs and faculties already directed to a certain purpose, but skill can extend his faculties, change or direct their use, and in a certain way create new organs. This is the job of education, which is nothing other, properly speaking, than the art of impressions and habits.

Cabanis’s rather ceremonious and amplificatory style makes it hard to quote him briefly (unless snatching a tiny clause out of a big sentence, as I did earlier), but his meaning is clear: ‘we’ must study, firstly, the ‘instruments’ we receive from nature, and secondly, how to use them, and how to use them better; this, he declares, is the job of education. That what he means by ‘instruments’ and ‘organes’ denotes the senses and the physiology of their functioning is indicated by the fact that the ‘Histoire physiologique des sensations’ will provide the basis for his entire ‘Programme’.21 So, Cabanis is returning to that notion of working on the senses and improving them that Garat had proposed, but, although he does use the term ‘instrument’, he is not suggesting the actual internalisation of a tool as Garat had in the case of the telescope, nor does he mention coffee as a way of boosting the faculties.22 His notion is about learning to use the ‘organs’ skilfully, of extending their range, and changing or directing their use. As such, it is closer to Diderot’s remarks quoted earlier about practice and skill.23

The passage from Destutt—from his Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, first published in the Mémoires de l’Institut in 1798—is more ambitious again. He argues that if we come to understand the multiple, rapid, and often imperceptible sensations that give rise to our thoughts, we can begin to reform our sensations and our judgements, and thus, ultimately, begin to improve or perfect ourselves, and, subsequently, in

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22 For extra verification, see Pierre Sue’s remarkable index of ‘Table des matières’, published, along with Destutt de Tracy’s highly helpful Table analytique, at the end of the second volume of the 1805 Second edition (pp. 651–720). There is no mention of ‘téléscope’ at all, and just two passing mentions of ‘café’.
23 See above.
due Condillacian form, perfect signs and language. These are worthy objectives of the virtuous Republic.

[...] il faut commencer par jeter un coup d’œil sur les effets du perfectionnement graduel des individus, du perfectionnement successif de l’espèce, de l’usage des signes, et de la rédaction perpétuelle de chacun de ces trois phénomènes sur les deux autres. 24

We must start by looking at the effects of the gradual perfecting of individuals, the successive perfecting of the species, the perfecting and the use of signs, and of the way each of these three phenomena perpetually rewrite the other two.

So, for Destutt de Tracy too, the perfecting of sensory skills is the first step in this far-reaching project of human improvement, at once individual and social.

This emphasis we see in Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy on the improvement of the senses looks outwards to the actual operation of our five senses, but also inwards to our understanding and ability to perceive internal sensation. This focus on internal sensation was not present in Garat’s published Cours. It is present, however, in Diderot’s Éléments de physiologie. In proper ‘éléments d’une science’ style, as Jean le Rond d’Alembert had defined the matter in the Encyclopédie, the Éléments de physiologie indicate ‘la voie des découvertes à faire’ [the path towards new discoveries]. 25 Here is what Diderot had written:

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24 Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, ed. by Anne and Henry Deneys, p. 136 (beginning part 3).
25 D’Alembert had explained ‘Élémens des sciences’ as follows: ‘Des éléments bien faits, suivant le plan que nous avons exposé, & par des écrivains capables d’exécuter ce plan, auraient une double utilité: ils mettroient les bons esprits sur la voie des découvertes à faire, en leur présentant les découvertes déjà faites; de plus ils mettroient chacun plus à portée de distinguer les vraies découvertes d’avec les fausses; car tout ce qui ne pourroit point être ajouté aux éléments d’une Science comme par forme de supplément, ne seroit point digne du nom de découverte. Voyez ce mot. (O)’ [Well-constructed basic elements, according to the plan that we have presented, when they are prepared by authors capable of carrying out such a project, would be useful in two ways. In the first place they would be setting good minds on the road to future discoveries by presenting prior discoveries to them. And secondly, they would be putting everyone in a better position to distinguish true discoveries from false ones. For anything that could not be added as a supplement to the basic elements of a Science would not be worthy of being called a discovery. See Discovery.] Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres, ed. by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, 28 vols (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751–72), vol. 5, pp.
Ce que nous connaissons le moins, ce sont les sens intimes, c’est nous, l’objet, l’impression, la représentation, l’attention.26

What we know least are the intimate senses, that is, ourselves, the object, the impression, the representation, attention.

What is original about this is not the description of the route from external object to internal impression and representation, but the way in which this process connects to or in some way produces ‘nous’, that is ‘ourselves’, and the very notion of ‘les sens intimes’ [intimate senses] that enable our internal awareness and ‘attention’. Cabanis does not use this term of ‘les sens intimes’ but he does assert that ‘les impressions internes’ [internal impressions] need looking at, and that this is a ‘question nouvelle’ [new question]. He asks why ‘analyst philosophers’ have not considered this before:

Les philosophes analystes n’ont guère considéré jusqu’ici que les impressions qui viennent des objets extérieurs, et que l’organe de la pensée distingue, se représente, et combine : ce sont elles seulement qu’ils ont désignées sous le nom de sensations ; les autres restent pour eux dans le vague.27

Analyst philosophers have barely considered until now anything but those impressions which come from external objects and which the organ of thought distinguishes, represents to itself, and combines: it is only to them that these philosophers have attributed the name of sensations: the rest remain in a sort of vague area for them.

Cabanis goes on to present two options: either to follow Condillac ‘et quelques autres’ [and various others] in assuming that all our ideas come via our senses from the outside world, or, alternatively, to ask whether ‘les impressions internes’ might be part of this process:

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26 DPV 468/PQ 294/MT 283.

La question nouvelle qui se présente, est de savoir s’il est vrai, comme l’ont établi Condillac et quelques autres, que les idées et les déterminations morales se forment toutes et dépendent uniquement de ce qu’ils appellent sensations; si par conséquent, suivant la phrase reçue, toutes nos idées nous viennent des sens, et par les objets extérieurs: ou si les impressions internes contribuent également à la production des déterminations morales, et des idées, suivant certaines lois dont l’étude de l’homme sain et malade peut nous faire remarquer la constance [...].

The new question that arises is to find out whether it is true, as Condillac and various others have established, that ideas and moral decisions are all formed from and depend solely on what they call sensations, and hence whether, to use the common phrase, all our ideas come from the senses and from external objects, or whether internal impressions contribute equally to the production of moral decisions and ideas, in accordance with certain laws which the study of humans in health and illness show to be equally constant [...].

As for Destutt de Tracy, he talks in his Mémoire sur la faculté de penser about the ‘sentiment intime’ using the same adjective that Diderot had, and in the Idéologie proprement dite about the ‘sensations internes’. Interestingly, in the recent critical edition of this latter text, editor Claude Jolly draws attention specifically to the idea of internal sensations, saying that neither Condillac nor Bonnet had gone beyond the five external senses and that this idea of a sixth internal sense is original to Cabanis, by whom Destutt de Tracy is directly influenced on this point.

And yet, as we know, Diderot had conceptualised this notion of ‘les sens intimes’, and not only that, he had also indicated that more work needed to be done to develop knowledge in this area. At the very least, it is of

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28 Cabanis, Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme, vol. 1, pp. 104–05 (lecture 2). He also talks about those signs which remain ‘cachés dans l’intérieur; ils sont pour l’individu lui seul’ [hidden within; they are for the individual alone] (vol. 1, p. 73); he references ‘le sens interne’ [the internal sense] (vol. 1, p. 231 ital. in orig.).

29 Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 74 (Part II, §1); Idéologie proprement dite, p. 100.

30 Jolly comments as follows: ‘Tant Condillac que Charles Bonnet réduisaient la sensibilité aux cinq sens. C’est Cabanis qui, dès les premiers mémoires lus dès l’an 4 (1796) devant la seconde classe de l’Institut national, a élargi son champ aux sensations internes. Destutt de Tracy lui est sur ce point directement redevable’ [Condillac like Charles Bonnet reduced sensibility to the five senses. It is Cabanis who, from the very first memoirs read out in Year 4 (1796) to the second class at the Institut National, extended the field to internal sensations. Destutt de Tracy is directly indebted to him on this point.] (Idéologie proprement dite, p. 100n.).
interest to note that while neither Condillac or Bonnet had mentioned ‘les sensations internes’, Diderot had done, and therefore that Cabanis was not original in doing so. The coincidence of these points in the work of Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy, on the one hand, and in Diderot’s, on the other, is striking.

There is also an interesting replication and development of an approach we already saw in Garat: there is total radio silence with respect to Diderot, even when talking about the cases of people born blind, which in this context is an almost automatic recall of the well-known *Lettre sur les aveugles*, and at the same time, while there are frequent mentions of the avowed master Condillac, very many of these are critical.31 I hope I may be forgiven for showing this aspect via a mash-up of passages, the point that I am trying to make here being the multiplicity of anti-Condillacian statements, rather than the specific nature of the objections. Thus Cabanis, talking about ‘les assertions de Condillac’ [Condillac’s assertions] criticises their ‘extrême généralité’ [extreme generality] which is ‘absolument contraires aux faits’ [completely in opposition to the facts]; he praises Claude Adrien Helvétius and Condillac only to regret that ‘ils ont manqué l’un et l’autre de connoissances physiologiques, dont leurs ouvrages auroient pu profiter utilement’ [they both lacked any physiological knowledge, and their works would have much benefited from it]; he asserts his own accuracy under a mask of worry about diverging from his views: ‘Quand nous croyons nous écarter des vues de ce grand maître, il est bien nécessaire d’étudier soigneusement et d’assurer nos pas’ [when we consider we may be diverging from the opinions of this great teacher, we must be extremely careful to watch where we step]; talks about ‘une suite d’actions qui sont bien plus inexplicables encore, suivant la théorie de Condillac’ [a series of actions that are even more inexplicable if we follow Condillac’s theory]; and praises ‘les belles analyses de Buffon, de Bonnet et de Condillac’ [fine analyses of Buffon, Bonnet, and Condillac]

only then to point out ‘une certaine fausse direction qu’elles pourraient faire prendre à l’idéologie et (le dirai-je sans détour?) sur les obstacles qu’elles sont peut-être capables d’opposer à ses progrès’ [a sort of wrong direction that they might make ideology go in and (shall I say it without roundaboutation?) the obstacles that they might be capable of setting in its way] and, having indeed decided to say it straight, states that ‘Rien sans doute ne ressemble moins à l’homme, tel qu’il est en effet, que ces statues […]’ [There is no question that there is nothing which resembles man as he really is less than these statues].

We see that where Cabanis does also contest the theories of thinkers apart from Condillac (Buffon and Bonnet, for instance), it is he who is the red thread throughout.

Destutt de Tracy’s criticisms of Condillac are more frequent and sharper in tone. In the Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, we find the following remarks: ‘Est-il bien vrai, comme Condillac le dit, que […] Je ne le pense pas’ [Is it really true, as Condillac says, that […]. I don’t think so]; ‘Ici Condillac me paroît commencer à s’écarter de son exactitude ordinaire’ [Here Condillac seems to me to depart from his usual precision]; ‘Ici, quelque respect que j’aie pour Condillac, je dirai nettement que ce n’est pas le sentiment de la statue qui est vague, que c’est l’idée de l’auteur qui est louche et mal déterminée’ [Here, whatever respect I have for Condillac, I have to say that it’s not the statue’s feeling which is vague, it’s the author’s concept which is askew and ill-defined]; ‘Condillac, qu’il faut toujours citer, lors même qu’il ne satisfait pas entièrement […]’ [Condillac, whom one is always obliged to cite, even when he is not entirely satisfactory]; ‘Je n’ai pas besoin de dire pourquoi je n’ai pas, comme Condillac, fait du raisonnement une partie particulière de la faculté de penser’ [I have no need to say why I have not, unlike Condillac, made reason into a particular part of the faculty of thought]; ‘Il n’est donc pas très-exact de dire avec Condillac

32 Cabanis (page references in order of appearance): Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme vol. 1: Préface, p. xvi [the preface was first published in the 1802 edition]; lecture 1: p. 37; lecture 2: p. 113; p. 130; Part 10 (parts 7–12 of the 1802 RPM had not been given as lectures at the Institut national, and were new to the 1802 version), vol. 2, p. 442.

33 Other modern authorities Cabanis mentions (without necessarily contesting them) are Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes (p. 29); 36: John Locke (p. 36); 37: Bonnet, Helvétius, Condillac (p. 37). Authorities from Antiquity: Pythagoras, Democritus, Epicurus (p. 18); Hippocrates (p. 24-7); Aristotle (p. 29). All from Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme, Lecture 1.
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[...]’ [It is therefore not very accurate to say, as Condillac does]: we see how these criticisms when stitched together begin to look like repeated resistance.34 His Dissertation sur quelques questions d’idéologie, given as a lecture to the Institut national on 7 Prairial an VIII (27 May 1800) and published the following year, and ostensibly an occasion to praise Condillac on the occasion of the publication of his Œuvres in 1798 (a complete set of which Garat presented to the Convention), is a thorough-going critique of his work, as he himself notes: ‘j’eus beaucoup moins l’air de commenter Condillac que de le combattre’ [it looked much more as if I was disagreeing with Condillac than explaining his work]; drawing attention to contradiction even as he asserts the opposite: ‘En disant cela je crois fermement ne faire que continuer Condillac, et non le contredire’ [When I say this, I firmly believe that I am doing nothing other than continuing his work and not contradicting him]; is pleased to find some key shared ground (the implication being that this is rather rare): ‘j’ai le bonheur de me rencontrer avec Condillac dans ces trois articles fondamentaux’ [I am lucky enough to find myself in agreement with Condillac on these three fundamental articles] only to discover a further disagreement: ‘je diffère essentiellement de Condillac’ [I profoundly differ from Condillac], concluding that, if he is right, ‘on doit m’accorder que [...] la première partie de son Traité des sensations tombe toute entière’ [one must agree with me that (…) the first part of his Treatise on sensations falls away completely].35 The Idéologie proprement dite continues in the same vein: Locke and Condillac are not ‘exempts d’erreurs’ [free of errors]; what is useful when tracking such errors in Condillac, ‘c’est de voir ce qui a pu égarer cet homme habile’ [is to see what misled this clever man]; later, we find this quite thorough-going statement: ‘Je persiste donc à penser que la manière dont Condillac a composé notre intelligence est vicieuse; et que plus on y reflechira, plus on se convaincra que la pensee de l’homme ne consiste jamais qu’à sentir des sensations, des souvenirs, des jugements et des désirs’ [I persist in thinking that the way in which Condillac constructed our intelligence is


defective, and that the more one thinks about it, the more one realizes that human thought never consists of anything other than feeling sensations, memories, judgements, and desires], and finally, as quoted before, ‘Penser, sentir et exister ne sont pour nous qu’une seule et même chose. J’ai cru fermement ne l’avoir pas appris de Condillac’ [To think, to feel, and to exist are in our eyes nothing other than the same thing. I firmly believe that I did not learn this from Condillac].36 These are far from the only moments in the text when Destutt de Tracy criticises one aspect or another of Condillac’s theory. It happens so frequently that it draws commentary from Tracy scholar and editor Claude Jolly: ‘Par cette note, Tracy s’oppose une fois de plus à Condillac’ [with this note, Tracy opposes Condillac yet again].37

Should we really understand this resolute and continuous countering of Condillac uniquely as the further substantiation of his theories through the critical attention brought to them by his philosophical offspring, whose contestation is actually evidence of their respect, and of their working within his frameworks to further develop them? It seems a bit of a weak justification for such extensive disagreement. And then of course we do have the Diderotian shadow hovering quite close by, however absent the name Diderot is. 1798 was not only the year in which Condillac’s Œuvres were published and so ostentaciously presented to the Convention, but also the year Naigeon finally brought out his edition of Diderot’s Œuvres. What was in them and how Naigeon framed them will be discussed in the next section, but in any case no one offered them to the Convention with a special speech. We have already noted how in one instance, when Destutt de Tracy says he is not following Condillac, there may be reason to believe that he is evoking Diderot in silent contrast. Just a few pages earlier than that passage, in a note he adds to the 1817 edition of the Idéologie proprement dite, Destutt de Tracy (again) both praises and criticises Condillac: he praises him for inventing the field, and he criticises him for not bringing his insights together into ‘un traité unique qui contint son système tout entier’ [a single treatise which brought together his whole system].38

On another page, he also wrote about how ‘ce célèbre métaphysicien a

36 Destutt de Tracy, Idéologie proprement dite, pp. 76, 157n, 190, 191.
37 Destutt de Tracy, Idéologie proprement dite, p. 181n.
38 Destutt de Tracy, Idéologie proprement dite, p. 187n.
eu si peu d’émules dans la carrière qu’il a parcourue, que l’histoire de ses pensées est pour ainsi dire l’histoire de la science pendant ce long intervalle de temps’ [this famous metaphysician had so few emulating him in the career he followed that the history of his thoughts is, so to say, the history of knowledge during this long period].39 When we know that Diderot had brought all his insights in this area into ‘un traité unique’ and that he had also been writing and thinking about the same questions as Condillac over the same time span, from the Lettre sur les aveugles to the Éléments de physiologie, that he is a better candidate, as editor of the Encyclopédie, for the person whose thoughts are the history of knowledge at that time, and when we have some grounds already to think that Tracy did know that work, are we wrong to wonder whether that criticism of Condillac might be a shield here for discussion of that same work, or even a signal that it is being alluded to? These are the questions that we must now investigate further, through more detailed comparative inspection of the works of Diderot, Cabanis, and Destutt de Tracy.

In what follows, I will consider passages from Cabanis, first, and Destutt de Tracy, second, that seem to bear some striking resemblance to a similar passage in the Éléments de physiologie (although on one occasion I also refer to the Rêve de d’Alembert, also unpublished other than in the élite manuscript journal the Correspondance littéraire, where it had appeared in installments between August and November 1782). My underpinning enquiry is to establish whether the textual evidence allows us to assert that Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy knew the Éléments de physiologie. My aim is not necessarily to assert that they are parroting it or that they see their work as disseminating its theories, although they might be. It is also not to consider their theories as a whole, nor the extent to which these theories may or may not have been influenced by Diderot. These are all interesting and important questions, but they go beyond the purview of this study. Furthermore, because I have chosen not to discuss general parallels but only to put forward the most visible textual similarities, those which seem to be referring to specific passages in the Éléments, I am also not presenting the work of either Cabanis or Destutt de Tracy in a particularly coherent way—I am obliged to dart.

39 Destutt de Tracy, Dissertation sur quelques questions d’idéologie, p. 184.
about from one passage to another without there necessarily being any connection between them, nor do I have space to supply much theoretical contextualisation. This is regrettable but I think unavoidable, given that this section is subservient to our larger investigation into whether the *Éléments de physiologie* was being read and drawn on in the 1790s.

**Cabanis and the *Éléments de physiologie***

There seem to be perceptible similarities between passages in the *Rapports sur le physique et le moral* and the *Éléments de physiologie* particularly in Cabanis’s discussion of attention, of dream-thinking (although here we refer to *D’Alembert’s Dream*), of the notion of the brain as a thought-secreting organ, in his presentation of the senses as having their separate memories, in his examples of exceptional strength, and in his consideration of drowned people. We will take them in that order, with Cabanis first, and Diderot after for ease of comparison, as we did in the section on Garat.

We start with the idea that attention and absorption come hand in hand with obliviousness to other things:

[Cabanis] [...] l’être sensitif n’étant capable que d’une certaine somme d’attention, qui cesse de se diriger d’un côté, quand elle est absorbée de l’autre.\[^{40}\]

Given that the sensitive being is incapable of more than a certain amount of attention, it stops being directed on one side when it is absorbed on the other.

[Diderot] Toutes sortes d’impressions se font, mais nous ne sommes jamais qu’à une. L’âme est au milieu de ses sensations comme un convive, à une table tumultueuse, qui cause avec son voisin, il n’entend pas les autres.\[^{41}\]


\[^{41}\] DPV 467/PQ 294/MT 283. See also: ‘Dans l’état parfait de santé, où il n’y a aucune sensation prédominante qui fasse discerner une partie du corps, état que tout homme a quelquefois éprouvé, l’homme n’existe qu’en un point du cerveau: il est tout au lieu de la pensée’ [In a perfect state of health, when no single dominant sensation draws attention to any particular part of the body, a state which everyone has experienced sometimes, then a person exists only in one point in their brain and is completely absorbed in the thought] (DPV 330/PQ 146/MT 151) and here in Cabanis: ‘Quand tous ses organes jouissent d’une activité moyenne, et en quelque
All sorts of impressions are being made, but we only ever focus on one. The soul in the midst of its sensations is like a guest at a boisterous dinner table. He’s conversing with his neighbour, and he can’t hear anyone else.

Cabanis asserts that ‘the sensitive being’ is only capable of a certain amount of attention, and that if it is all absorbed on one side, it will not notice what is happening on the other. This idea, in Diderot’s version, had been illustrated with reference to a person at a noisy dinner table, literally absorbed on one side in a conversation and oblivious to everything else. If the idea is similar and the motif of being absorbed on one side and oblivious to the other relatively similar, how striking the difference in style is! Poor Cabanis. His statement looks almost lifeless next to the busy word picture in Diderot’s illustration of the mind having a great chat at a dinner party. Interestingly, Cabanis comments directly on his flat style, also in connection with the question of attention:

Notre intention n’est point de retracer des tableaux faits pour plaire à l’imagination; rien assurément ne seroit ici plus facile. Dans les sujets de cette nature, le physiologiste est sans cesse entouré d’images qui peuvent le captiver et le fasciner lui-même […]. Nous voulons éloigner, au contraire, tout ce qui pourrait s’écarter de la plus froide observation: nous sommes, en effet, des observateurs, non des poètes; et dans la crainte de détourner l’attention que cet examen demande, par des impressions entièrement étrangères à notre but, nous aimons mieux n’offrir que le plus simple énoncé des opérations de la nature, et nous renfermer dans les bornes de la plus aride et de la plus froide exposition.42

Our intention is not to paint pictures that the imagination will find attractive; certainly nothing would be easier here. In connection with subjects of this sort, the physiologist himself is constantly surrounded by images which are likely to captivate and fascinate him […]. We wish, on the contrary, to set aside anything which might depart from the coldest observation: we are, in fact, observers and not poets; and for fear of distracting the attention that this enquiry requires with impressions which are entirely alien to our aim, we prefer to make nothing but

sorte proportionnelle, aucun ordre d’impressions ne domine; toutes se compensent et se confondent’ [when all a person’s organs are enjoying a moderate level of activity, no particular order of impressions dominates; they all balance out and merge with one another] (Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme, vol. 1, p. 134: lecture 2).

the simplest assertions about the operations of nature, and to confine ourselves to the driest and coldest exposition.

He sets the imagination aside, he asserts his identity as an observer and not a poet, he embraces the statement and the cold aridity of exposition.\textsuperscript{43} He is also, we note, rather verbose; because of this aspect of his style (which we will return to), we are often obliged to cut his sentences out of sheer practicality. The particular passage we have just looked at is only slightly cut, and it is interesting to contrast it with the following rather famous (and pithier) statement by Diderot, already quoted in connection to Garat:

L’homme à imagination se promène, dans sa tête, comme un curieux dans un palais, où ses pas sont à chaque instant détournés par des objets intéressants.\textsuperscript{44}

The imaginative man walks about in his head like a curious person in a palace, his steps constantly drawn by interesting objects.

How curious to see not so much the similarity between these two passages—they are rather different—but the common reference point, that of the person with an imagination being attracted to first one thing and then another. When Cabanis says he will set aside imaginative tableaux—which he informs us all physiologists are ceaselessly surrounded with—he first evokes it and then rejects it; he evokes writing like a poet and then rejects that approach; he evokes the attention being distracted (détournée), only to reject distraction. He is doing a lot of rejecting, but he is also doing a lot of evoking, so much so, that one wonders whether he is in fact alluding to Diderot in this insistence on/rejection of imaginative style, an evocation which is also a resolve not to get distracted ‘par des impressions entièrement étrangères à notre but’ [with impressions which are entirely alien to our aim]: is this also a warning that he will not be diverted from his aim to establish the connections between ‘le physique’ and ‘le moral’, whatever sensitivity there is around the subject or around others who happen also to have treated it, possibly those who have treated it more poetically? If this is

\textsuperscript{43} Cabanis had in fact started his writing life under the aegis of the poet Antoine Roucher as a translator of the \textit{Iliad} and poet himself.

\textsuperscript{44} DPV 475/PQ 303/MT 290.
so, then the allusion cannot be to any writer other than Diderot, and
certainly not to Condillac, whose ‘sécheresse’ Garat had criticised, as we
quoted above. This may be a reach too far. Yet, we note his assertion
that he will not be a poet, and in the first textual comparison we offered,
looking at the workings and blind spots of attention, we can see that the
contrast between Cabanis’s and Diderot’s versions is that of the bald
statement to the poetical one.

In this context therefore it seems relevant to ask whether the
following passage, presenting the notion that the mind, with the aid of
the imagination, can process ideas overnight, is a non-poetical treatment
or re-writing of the same subject as addressed in the intensely poetical
*Rêve de d’Alembert:*

> En effet, l’esprit peut continuer ses recherches* dans les songes; il peut
> être conduit par une certaine suite de raisonnemens, à des idées qu’il
> n’avoit pas [...]. Enfin, certaines séries d’impressions internes, qui se
> coordonnent avec des idées antérieures, peuvent mettre en jeu toutes les
> puissances de l’imagination, et même présenter à l’individu une suite
> d’événemens, dont il croira quelquefois, entendre dans une conversation
> régulière, le récit et les détails.

In fact, the mind can continue its research in dreams; it may be led by
a certain series of reasons to ideas which it did not have before [...]. In
short, a given series of internal impressions, in coordination with existing
ideas, can get all the powers of the imagination going, and even present
to an individual a series of events in which he will sometimes believe he
is hearing a regular conversation with narration and details.

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45 See above: ‘la sécheresse de ses narrations dépouillées de toute imagination et de
toute beauté de style’ [the dryness of his accounts devoid of any imagination or
stylistic beauty] (Première leçon, p. 75).

46 See also: ‘une attention forte, une méditation profonde, peut suspendre l’action des
organes sentans externes’ [concentrated attention or deep meditation can suspend
the action of the external sensory organs] (Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du
moral de l’homme*, vol. 1, p. 166); Diderot had discussed attention and distraction in
*Éléments de physiologie* DPV 485/PQ 315–16/MT 300 and DPV 499–500/PQ 336–67/
MT 313–14. Destutt de Tracy also engages with the question: ‘Mais, dit-on, quand je
fais attention à une sensation, j’en ai la conscience, et toutes les autres disparaissent.
Hé bien! Les autres sont nulles; et vous avez une sensation: voilà tout’ [But, it is
said, when I pay attention to a sensation, I am conscious of it, and all the others
disappear. Well then! The others are nothing, and you are having a sensation: that’s
all], *Idéologie proprement dite*, p. 189 (original italics).

47 Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme*, vol. 2, pp. 547–48 (Part 10 of the
1802 edition).
This description of the dreaming working mind, with all the powers of the imagination at play, including a regular conversation, a sustained narrative and local details, is not a bad description of the Rêve de d’Alembert. It is therefore almost funny to see that the asterisk following ‘recherches’ leads us to a footnote discussing guess who? It’s Condillac:

* Condillac m’a dit, qu’en travaillant à son cours d’études, il étoit souvent forcé de quitter, pour dormir, un travail déjà tout préparé, mais incomplet, et qu’à son réveil il l’avoit trouvé plus d’une fois terminé dans sa tête.

* Condillac once told me that when working on his course of study [a sort of educational manual], he was often forced to interrupt, at bedtime, some work that he had got completely ready but hadn’t completed, and that when he woke up he more than once found it finished off in his head.

There is no reason this anecdote should not be perfectly true. It is just interesting to find it right here, appended to what sounds very much like a description of the Rêve de d’Alembert, sitting in a footnote that blocks that association by presenting an alternative and much more respectable source.

We see how speculative and associative this process of textual comparison and allusion is obliged to be. In the following passage, however, it is more straightforward. Cabanis presents the brain as an organ which produces or even secretes thought. We find this exact idea in the Éléments de physiologie. Here is Cabanis first, and Diderot second, as usual:

[Cabanis] Pour se faire une idée juste des opérations de la pensée, il faut considérer le cerveau comme un organe particulier, destiné spécialement à la produire [...].

In order to gain an accurate idea of the operations of thought, it is necessary to consider the brain as a particular organ, specifically destined to produce it.

[Cabanis] […] le cerveau digère en quelque sorte les impressions; […] il fait organiquement la sécrétion de la pensée.

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The brain digests impressions in a sort of way [...] it organically produces the secretion that is thought.

[Diderot] Le cerveau n’est qu’un organe secrétoire.\footnote{DPV 353/PQ 172/MT 172.}

The brain is nothing other than a secretory organ.

Serge Nicolas, editor of the facsimile 1802 edition *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme* (2005), draws particular attention to this notion of Cabanis’s that the brain secretes thought, presenting it as a perfect case of Cabanis’s anti-Cartesianism and prominent role as ‘le plus illustre apologiste’ [the most illustrious apologist] of materialism, the writer who will provide nineteenth-century materialists with ‘leurs meilleurs arguments’ [their best arguments].\footnote{Serge Nicolas, ‘Introduction’, in Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme*, vol. 1, p. xi, n. 13. In his study on Cabanis, Yves Pouliquen also draws attention to the importance and originality of this feature of Cabanis’s thought: *Cabanis, un idéologue: de Mirabeau à Bonaparte* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2013), p. 175. Saad also underscores this point, in her *Cabanis, comprendre l’homme*, pp. 30, 149–50.} He cites other ‘esprits illustres’ [illustrious minds] of the materialist camp—d’Holbach, La Mettrie and Helvétius. No Diderot mentioned. And in fact, no Buffon either; the idea was not original to Diderot, as Paolo Quintili points out when commenting on this statement in his edition of the *Éléments de physiologie*; it was Buffon’s. Motoichi Terada adds a further three sources in Daniel de Laroche, Antoine Le Camus, and Jean-Paul Marat. Let’s start with what Buffon had written:

Le cerveau, au lieu d’être le siège des sensations, le principe du sentiment, ne sera donc qu’un organe de sécrétion et de nutrition.\footnote{Buffon, *Histoire naturelle*, vol. 7 (1758), p. 122 (‘Les animaux carnassiers’); reference given by Quintili in *Éléments de physiologie*, ed. by Quintili, p. 172, n. 20.}

The brain, instead of being the seat of sensation, the source of sensation, is therefore nothing other than an organ of secretion and nourishment.

It is interesting to see that when it comes to presenting an uncompromisingly materialist statement such as this idea of thought as a bodily secretion, both Buffon and Cabanis choose to wrap it up nicely in introductory clauses and qualifications; Diderot, however, strips this all away to its baldest version. No poetry here. Returning to the question of the genealogical transmission of this idea, however, we can see that
Diderot receives the idea either from Buffon or Marat (or both). Marat had written this:

Le cerveau n’est qu’un organe sécrétoire, & n’a aucun rapport à l’Ame, qu’en tant qu’il filtre plus ou moins de fluide & que ce fluide est plus ou moins élaboré: c’est à cet égard aussi qu’il influe sur l’intelligence.53

The brain is nothing other than a secretory organ, and has no connection to the soul other than insofar as it filters more or less fluid, and that this fluid is more or less developed: it is in this respect also that it influences the intelligence.

Diderot’s ‘ne… que’ is a direct repetition of Buffon’s, and Marat seems also to repeat Buffon. Cabanis may have in mind Buffon, Diderot, Le Camus, Laroche, or Marat, singly or plurally: as Terada points out, ‘c’est une opinion très répandue à l’époque’ [this opinion was widely shared at the time].54 Notice, however, that Diderot drops the nutritional aspect that Buffon includes as an equal part of his formula: for Buffon, the brain is nothing but an organ of secretion and nutrition. Diderot drops the Buffonian nutrition as he also drops Marat’s inclusion of filters and fluid. In Cabanis, the notions of nutrition and filtered fluids are also absent, and although he does mention the associated process of digestion, it is in the form of an analogy to communicate the idea of thought as a secreted product of the brain, and not as a direct function of the brain itself. The more likely hypothesis therefore is that Cabanis is following Diderot and not Buffon or Marat, even if his style is somewhat more cautious.

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We also find similarity in their views about sensory memory. Cabanis writes that:

[...] je ne serois pas éloigné de penser que les sens, pris chacun à part, ont leur mémoire propre.55

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54 Éléments de physiologie, ed. by Terada, p. 172, n. 78.
I am not far from thinking that the senses, taken separately, have their own memory.

He goes on to illustrate this idea by talking about standing in front of a sun-lit window, closing his eyes, and continuing to see the image of the window frame and glass panes.

In the *Éléments de physiologie*, we read this:

Mémoire de la vue, mémoire de l’oreille, mémoire du goût, habitudes qui lient une longue suite de sensations et de mots, et de mouvements successifs et enchaînés d’organes.56

Memory of sight, memory of the ear, memory of taste, habits which link a long series of sensations and words and also link successive and connected movements within the [sensory] organs.

He goes on to evoke visual memory when the eyes are shut (although he gives no example): ‘les yeux fermés nous réveillent une longue succession de couleurs’ [the eyes when closed waken a long string of colours], concluding that ‘la mémoire peut donc être regardée comme un enchaînement fidèle de sensations, qui se réveillent successivement comme elles ont été reçues’ [the memory can therefore be regarded as a faithful chain of sensations, which are successively aroused in the order in which they were received].57 We can see that both Diderot and Cabanis are thinking explicitly about sensory memory, although Cabanis’s admission that he is not far from thinking that each sense has its own memory is less affirmative than Diderot’s formulation, while his rather concrete and undeveloped example of seeing an image remaining imprinted on his eyelids on closing his eyes is more tentative than Diderot’s confident ‘longue succession de couleurs’. Cabanis goes on to allude to auditory memory, to interruptions, and to sensory memories featuring in dreams or in the ‘silence et l’obscurité de la nuit’ [silence and darkness of the night], all topics which Diderot also discusses.58

So these passages do bear out the notion that Cabanis is following the earlier text, grappling with its assertions, trying to think them through,

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56 DPV 472/PQ 299/MT 287.
57 DPV 472/PQ 299/MT 287.
and that his *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme* bears the traces of this process.

We will just look at two more of these potential traces before turning to Destutt de Tracy. In the first, we see Cabanis arguing that ‘the energetic passions’ are capable of calling up unsuspected amounts of strength:

> [...] dans toutes les passions énergiques, chaque homme trouve en lui-même une vigueur qu’il ne soupçonnait pas, et devient capable d’exécuter des mouvements dont l’idée seule l’eût effrayé dans des temps plus calmes.\(^{59}\)

In all the energetic passions, each person finds within themselves a vigour that they had not suspected, and becomes capable of executing movements the very idea of which would have frightened them in calmer times.

In the *Éléments de physiologie*, we find this:

> L ’homme sain ne connaît pas toute sa force; j’en dis autant de l’homme tranquille.*

\(^{*}\) Mr de Buffon voit la flamme s’échapper avec de la fumée à travers les fentes d’un lambris; il arrache le lambris; il prend entre ses bras les planches à demi brûlées et les porte dans sa cour et il se trouve qu’un cheval n’ébranlerait pas le fardeau qu’il a porté. Une femme délicate est attaquée de vapeurs hystériques, de fureur utérine et trois hommes ne peuvent contenir celle qu’un seul d’entre eux aurait renversée, liée dans son état de santé. Le feu prend à la maison d’un avare, il prend son coffre-fort et le porte dans son jardin, d’où il ne l’aurait pas remué pour dix fois la somme qu’il contenait.\(^{60}\)

The healthy man does not know the extent of his strength; I say the same applies to a tranquil man.*

\(^{*}\)Mr de Buffon sees flames and smoke escaping through the slits of a piece of wooden pannelling; he tears it off; he carries the half-burnt planks in his arms out into the courtyard and it emerges that a horse would not have been able to move the load he carried. A delicate woman is attacked by hysterical vapours and uterine fury and three men are unable to restrain someone whom one of them could have knocked over and tied up unaided had she been in a state of health. The house of a miser catches light, he picks up his strong box and


\(^{60}\) DPV 327/PQ 143/MT 149.
carries it into his garden, and then wouldn’t have been able to move it for ten times the sum it contained.

This is a passage we have looked at before. There, we noted how it picks up a theme also treated by Condillac. Who’s to say which one (or who else) Cabanis is engaging with? We cannot be sure. And yet, Condillac’s version is neither particularly plausible nor physiologically-based, despite the mention of gout. Diderot focuses very specifically on extreme circumstances either of threat (to self or to something held precious) or illness, specifically hysteria. This is also what Cabanis looks at: a hysterical woman being stronger than a group of men trying to restrain her; sufferers from ‘maladies maniaques’ [manic illnesses] being able to break chains asunder, and finally, how the ‘forces vivantes’ [living forces] can suddenly, in ‘toutes les passions énergiques’, as quoted, bestow on every man (‘homme’) ‘une vigueur qu’il ne soupçonnait pas’. There is a clear parallel between the passages, supported by the appearance of the exceptionally strong hysterical woman in both, even though in Cabanis we find no specific anecdotes, and therefore no mention of Buffon saving his precious wood panels or the miser his strong box from fire.

The last passage I wish to look at in this section is about the persistence of life, or specifically, sensibility, in the absence of any perceptible signs of it, specifically in the case of drowned persons.

Here is what Cabanis writes. He has been dealing with the sensibility irritability polemic, and in the following extract evokes ‘others’ who hold a particular position on the matter:

Les autres, et l’on peut compter parmi eux plusieurs hommes de génie, objectent que la sensibilité subsiste dans les asphyxies, les léthargies, les apoplexies, en un mot dans les syncopes de tout genre, quoiqu’elle ne se manifeste alors par aucun acte précis qui la constate, quoiqu’elle ne laisse après elle aucune trace, aucun souvenir qui la confirme. Ils ajoutent qu’entre l’état d’un noyé qui revient à la vie, et l’état de celui dont la mort est irrévocable, la différence sera difficile à bien établir.

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61 See Chapter 3 in the section titled ‘The Gouty Man and the Fire’.
63 For the history of hysteria, see Sabine Arnaud, *On Hysteria: The Invention of a Medical Category between 1670 & 1820* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226275680.001.0001.
Others, and amongst them can be counted many men of genius, object that sensibility persists in different sorts of asphyxia, lethargy, and apoplexy, in a word in swoons of all sorts, although it is not evident in any precise action which might prove it, although it leaves no trace behind it, no memory to confirm it. They add that between the state of a drowned person who returns to life and the state of someone whose death is irrevocable, the difference is difficult to establish properly.

In the *Éléments de physiologie*, Diderot specifically looks at these questions, and we have quoted the following passage before. He has evoked melancholic lethargy and catalepsy, and here he thinking about a drowned person:

> Où est-elle [l’âme] dans le noyé, qu’on rappelle à la vie de l’état de mort, ou d’un état qui lui ressemble tellement, que si le noyé n’avait point été secouru, il aurait persévéré dans cet état sans éprouver d’autre changement qu’une torpeur plus profonde.

Where is it [the soul] in the drowned man, who can be recalled to life from the state of death, or from a state which resembles it so closely, that if the drowned man had not been treated, he would have continued in that same state without experiencing any change other than a deeper torpor.

It is difficult to read Cabanis’s allusion to ‘plusieurs hommes de génie’ [many men of genius] arguing about the persistence of sensibility, and see him record that ‘they add’ this further point about establishing life or death after drowning, without thinking about these precise pages from the *Éléments de physiologie*, where these specific subjects are treated in exactly this order. Furthermore, how interesting to see Cabanis anonymise this group of thinkers at the same time as asserting their status as men of genius. In the course of his presentation of the different arguments and views about sensibility and irritability, he has named Locke, Bonnet, Condillac, Helvétius, and Xavier Bichat, as well as Albrecht von Haller, the Stahlians, and the medical schools of Edinburgh and Montpellier. So it is not as if he is averse to naming in general,

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66 DPV 333/PQ 151/MT 154.
67 Cabanis, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme*, vol. 1, pp. 84–88 (lecture 2). As mentioned earlier, Jean-Luc Chappey analyses the phenomenon and politics of the
although, as mentioned earlier, Diderot is not once named. In this context, therefore, it is striking to see Cabanis not only alluding to and semi-identifying (as geniuses) this new group, but also conveying to his reader that he aligns his own view with theirs. We have to suppose—given the similarity of the texts—that he is referring ever so carefully to Diderot, and that he must be using the *Éléments de physiologie*. Is there any other conclusion we can draw?

**Destutt de Tracy and the *Éléments de physiologie***

Destutt de Tracy’s connection to Diderot and the *Éléments de physiologie* is not quite so clear. This is because he remains strictly within the ‘rational’ part of what, from his second lecture onwards, he calls ‘l’idéologie rationelle’, we will turn to his coining of this influential neologism in a few pages. He distinguishes ‘l’idéologie rationelle’ from ‘l’idéologie physiologique’, stating that ‘Idéologie’ has two parts, the physiological and the rational, and that ‘En parlant de la sensibilité et des facultés qui en dérivent, je n’ai point osé rechercher leurs causes physiologiques’ [when talking about sensibility and the faculties which derive from it, I have not dared to research their physiological causes]. He is too modest to talk about what he does not master, so he does not talk physiology. This obviously makes it harder work to find any traces
of Diderot’s *Éléments de physiologie*, even supposing there were any in the first place. However, if he focuses on presenting a model of the mind and its functions in philosophically logical (and thus Condillacian) terms, he consistently refers to its physiological bases and relation to the body in general (he also continuously criticises Condillac, as we saw). His view of the mind and thought as fundamentally physiological is made even more explicit when he states, in the preface to the first stand-alone edition of the *Idéologie proprement dite* (a lightly reworked version of the *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*) that ideology is a subsection of zoology: ‘L’idéologie est une partie de la zoologie’ [ideology is part of zoology].

Statements of thorough-going physiological determinism are ubiquitous. For example, having disputed the accuracy of the definition of need/s which Condillac gives in the *Traité des sensations*, he states that:

> je pense que nos premiers besoins [...] résultent directement de notre organisation [et qu’ils] sont des perceptions simples, de purs sentimens [...].

I think that our primary needs [...] are the direct result of our organization [and that they] are simple perceptions, pure feelings [...]

A few pages later (but within the same lecture chapter), he further states that:

> tout plaisir ou peine est un besoin, et toute sensation perçue est en elle-même un besoin.

Every pain and pleasure is a need, and every perceived sensation is in itself a need.

In the third lecture chapter, he returns to the same theme, even more explicitly:

> [...] tout ce que nous pensons, tout ce que nous sommes, dérive de nos besoins physiques dans toute leur simplicité, de notre seule organisation.

Everything that we think, everything that we are, derives from our physical needs in all their simplicity, from our organization alone.

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72 Destutt de Tracy, *Idéologie proprement dite*, p. 75.
73 Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*, p. 97 (Part II, §v, lecture 3 or 4).
74 Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*, p. 99 (Part II, §v, lecture 3 or 4).
75 Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*, p. 140 (Part III, §iv, lecture 4 or 5).
This view manifestly goes much further than anything Condillac said, while being very close to the sort of materialist physiological determinism which saturates the *Éléments de physiologie* from one end to the other. ‘Organization’ is a rather specific term, relating to particular eighteenth-century theories of the body, and should be understood as a sort of synonym for it, for the sort of body a person has, how it works, what its particular characteristics are. (We touched on ‘organisation’ in Chapter 4.) It is a crucial conceptual term for Diderot. Thus, in the chapter on *la volonté*, the will, we read this:

Le désir est fils de l’organisation, le bonheur et le malheur, fils du bien-être ou du mal-être.  

Desire is the child of the body’s organization, while happiness and unhappiness are the children of well-being or the lack thereof.

One’s whole being—one’s health and happiness—derives from one’s ‘organisation’. Meanwhile, in the chapter on muscles we read this about pleasure and pain and their influence on all animal parts and functions:

Le plaisir et la douleur ont été les premiers maîtres de l’animal: ce sont eux qui ont appris peut-être à toutes les parties leurs fonctions et les ont rendues habituelles et héréditaires.

Pleasure and pain were the animal’s first teachers: it may be they who taught all its parts their functions and made them habitual and hereditary.

Sensibility—fundamentally either pleasurable or painful—is made responsible in this statement for developing not just muscle function, but all parts of the body and all its functions.

These assembled passages combine to make a different sort of argument from the earlier one about the proximity between Cabanis and Diderot; there it seems that there is a case for claiming specific connections or influence. Here, it is rather more diffuse. Nonetheless, the philosophical position Destutt de Tracy takes with respect to the body and mind, and the physiological bases of thought, feeling, and being, is measurably close to Diderot’s. However, there are moments when the texts themselves seem very close, despite Destutt de Tracy’s

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76 DPV 486/PQ 317/MT 301.
77 DPV 366/PQ 186/MT 186–87.
general avoidance of physiological description and discussion. Here, for example, returning to the question of the will, the chapter dedicated to which we alluded to very briefly a few paragraphs ago, we read this. Here Diderot comes first:

Je veux, n’est qu’un mot, examinez-le bien et vous ne trouverez jamais qu’impulsion, conscience et acquiescement: impulsion volontaire, conscience ou aseité, acquiescement ou attrait senti.\textsuperscript{78}

*I want* is nothing more than a phrase, examine it carefully and you will never find anything other than impulsion, consciousness and acquiescence: voluntary impulsion, consciousness or aseity, acquiescence or felt attraction.

Diderot reduces the expression of the will, *I want*, to desire, impulse or need, whether conscious or not: he says that *I want* is nothing more than a word. Destutt de Tracy has something similar to say about the word *freedom*:

Plus j’y ai réfléchi, plus je me suis persuadé qu’être libre consiste à pouvoir agir en conséquence de sa volonté, et que le mot liberté, de quelque manière qu’on l’emploie, ne signifie rien, ou signifie la puissance de satisfaire ses désirs.\textsuperscript{79}

The more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that being free consists in being able to act in accordance with one’s will, and that the word *freedom*, however it is used, signifies nothing, or signifies the power to satisfy one’s desires.

He says that the word *freedom* is meaningless, or simply designates the power or ability to satisfy one’s desires. There is a palpable parallelism between the texts here beyond the similarity of their positions on free will (i.e., that there is none); they both assert the emptiness of the words themselves, with, on the other hand, the identification of the will with the drive to fulfill desires.

On a separate note, it seems worth remarking Tracy’s insistence on the word ‘liberté’ here. In the context of the French Revolution and its clarion call motif of ‘liberté égalité fraternité’ it is startling to see one of

\textsuperscript{78} DPV 484/PQ 314/MT 298.

\textsuperscript{79} Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*, p. 104 (Part II, §v, lecture 3 or 4; original italics).
the Revolutionary government’s official philosophers brush the notion of liberty aside in such a cursory fashion. He immediately softens his sharpness by following up with an argument about how ‘les vérités politiques’ require ‘us’ to try to ensure that each other’s desires harm others as little as possible and are directed to the fulfilment of the desires of all. Despite this political caveat, it remains a rather striking statement. Thus, as well as expressing philosophical and physiological views which, as we have shown, are tightly allied to similar views expressed by Diderot, Destutt de Tracy may well also be signalling a shift in the political weather of the Directorate, away from unconditional espousal of the notion of liberty, towards something more qualified. Garat would soon publish his article in favour of coups d’état in *Le conservateur*.

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When we review the very real proximity between the *Éléments de physiologie* and these lectures given in 1796–98 by Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy at the Institut national, and subsequently published, not only in the *Mémoires de l’Institut* (1798–1801) but then in their own separate editions (and re-editions), we cannot but be struck by their success. The institution protected, framed, and authorised their efforts, in a way that the fraught structures of the École normale had completely failed to do in the case of Garat. Their lectures were given the status of ‘[des] travaux scientifiques et littéraires qui auront pour objet l’utilité générale et la gloire de la république’ [scientific and literary work whose purpose is the general utility of all and the glory of the republic] as quoted above, and decreed in the Loi Daunou of 3 Brumaire an IV (25 October 1795), Section Four, Article One. Cabanis influenced the thinking of medical

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81 Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*, pp. 104–05 (Part II, §v, lecture 3 or 4).
83 See above.
luminaries such as Bichat (1771–1802), the ground-breaking anatomist and founder of histology (the study of human tissue).\textsuperscript{84} Cabanis was also thought to be an authority by the physician Anthelme Richerand, who helped him turn the lectures into a book, and who dedicated the fifth edition of his own extremely successful \textit{Nouveaux élémens de physiologie}, first published in 1801, to the memory of Cabanis.\textsuperscript{85} (Richerand has already had a walk-on part in the chapter on physiology, and would later edit the medical writings of Diderot’s friend, the Montpellier vitalist Théophile de Bordeu.)\textsuperscript{86} And, as Jean Starobinski points out, Cabanis will remain a reference point up to and including Sigmund Freud, who refers to him in connection with dreams and mental illness in the \textit{Interpretation of Dreams}.\textsuperscript{87} The point, however, is not to discuss the reception of Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy (who also had great impact) in any depth, but simply to indicate that their work, whether considered separately or under their joint banner of ‘Idéologie’, had official status, was recognised as important, and did feed without delay into contemporaneous discussions of the brain-mind as an organ of the body. As Cabanis put it, or rather, as Destutt de Tracy made explicit, ‘le moment est favorable’.\textsuperscript{88} And in this case, unlike Naigeon, who, as we saw, also thought times were propitious, they were both right.\textsuperscript{89} And

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Xavier Bichat is discussed in Chapter 4; he seems to be alluding to Cabanis in his \textit{Traité d’anatomie descriptive}, 5 vols (Paris: Brosson, Babon, 1801–03), vol. 1, p. xxiv; Cabanis complains about those who use his work without acknowledging him, and refers to Bichat, \textit{Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme}, vol. 1, pp. xxii–xxiii (Preface; the reference tying these remarks to Bichat is in the footnote [p. xxiii] recording his death). Martin Staum considers that Bichat distanced himself from Cabanis to some extent (\textit{Cabanis: Enlightenment and Medical Philosophy in the French Revolution} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 256).
  \item \textsuperscript{85} Anthelme Richerand, \textit{Nouveaux élémens de physiologie}, 5th edn (Paris: Caille et Ravier, 1811), opening page. (He also dedicates this edition to the memory of Fourcroy, who has also died since the fourth edition of 1807; Cabanis in 1808 and Fourcroy in 1810. The fourth edition had been dedicated just to Fourcroy.) Cabanis had acknowledged their relationship, thanking Richerand for his precious help, \textit{Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme}, vol. 1, p. xxxix (Preface).
  \item \textsuperscript{86} See Chapter 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Destutt de Tracy, ‘Table analytique’, in Cabanis, \textit{Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme}, vol. 1, pp. xxxii–liv (p. xxxii).
  \item \textsuperscript{89} As discussed in Chapter 5 (Naigeon chastises Helvétius for choosing the wrong moment, and praises himself for knowing that the right time has come, wrongly as it emerges).
\end{itemize}
yet, as we see from the time lag between Cabanis’s first printed preface in 1802 and its second outing in 1805, by which time it has acquired Destutt de Tracy’s concise summary along with its terse expression that ‘le moment est favorable’, they proceed with caution. In 1796, when giving the first in the series of lectures which will find their way into print in the Mémoires de l’Institut, there is no preface, and no statement, however verbose, convoluted or in need of translation by his friend, that ‘le moment est favorable’. At that point neither he nor Destutt de Tracy were quite sure whether the time was right or not, and there are many indications of nervy caution, of which the slow emergence into publication is only one.

They are very both careful to situate their lectures within the space from which they speak—‘le lieu d’où l’on parle’, as Starobinski put it—and those references to the space and to the original orality of their texts are retained through the various iterations. Thus, Cabanis evokes the saying ‘know thyself’, quoting it in the original Greek and thereby establishing his own credentials as a learned person, stating that it ‘est très-digne de servir d’inscription à cette salle, aussi bien qu’au temple de Delphes’ [entirely worthy to serve as an inscription for this room, as well as for the temple in Delphi]. This is a neat piece of echo-chamber flattery, whereby Cabanis flatters his own venue while also making Antiquity relevant and current, and annexing the authority of both for himself. Furthermore, his insistence on where exactly he is speaking from is made explicit in his own footnote, asterisked to ‘cette salle’: ‘Celle de l’institut national’ [Institut national’s meeting room]. Destutt de Tracy, for his part, alludes to critics, ‘hors de cette enceinte’ [beyond the enclosure of these walls] and how to prevent them blocking his progress, thereby turning the Institut national into a sort of protected circle. He further evokes place and audience when, one page later, he approvingly quotes ‘un membre de cette assemblée’ [a member of this

90 Jean Starobinski, ‘La Chaire, la tribune, le barreau’, p. 481, quoted above.
93 Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 65 (Introduction to part 2, i.e. lecture 2).
assembly].\(^\text{94}\) Both ceremoniously address the ‘citoyens’ who listen to them in an allusion to and invocation of the desired listener, one who follows the etiquette of courteous Republican reciprocity and attention.\(^\text{95}\) Destutt de Tracy explicitly tells his listeners/readers that he is doing what they asked him to do, binding both sides in a contract which he claims his lecture fulfills.\(^\text{96}\) This of course is a way of diverting criticism, and perhaps we would not draw attention to this feature, brushing it aside as a piece of rhetoric, both habitual and innocuous, were it not for a context which we already know to be hostile to materialist thinking, and for other markers of anxiety within these texts. Both allude to the danger or difficulty specifically of navigating around these fraught subjects.

Cabanis evokes his efforts to bring together anatomy and physiology on the one hand, and ‘l’analyse philosophique’ on the other, appealing to his audience in exactly the way alluded to above, while advertising his severe self-imposed discipline:

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\text{[...]} \text{ je vais surtout m’efforcer de remplir les lacunes qui séparent encore les observations de l’anatomie ou de la physiologie, et les résultats incontestables de l’analyse philosophique. Vous sentez, citoyens, que dans des matières si nouvelles, où le plus léger faux-pas peut conduire aux conséquences les plus erronées, il faut s’imposer une grande précision, une grande sévérité de language } [\text{...}]\(^\text{97}\)
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I will make a particular effort to fill in the gaps that separate the observations of anatomy or physiology from the incontestable results of philosophical analysis. You will realise, citizens, that in the case of subjects which are so new, the slightest mis-step may lead to the most

\(^{94}\) Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 66 (Introduction to part 2, i.e. lecture 2).

\(^{95}\) Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, pp. 37, 49, 133; Dissertation sur quelques questions d’idéologie, p. 183; Cabanis, Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme, vol. 1, pp. 6, 22, 82, 113, 121, 159, etc. In the Idéologie proprement dite, on the other hand, Destutt addresses readers rather than listeners, and they are conceptualised as ‘jeunes gens’ [young people] or ‘mes jeunes amis’ [my young friends], see pp. 77, 83, 176, 185, 193, 249.

\(^{96}\) He writes: ‘Mais une preuve que vous voulez examiner ces mêmes facultés [de l’entendement de l’homme] sous tous les aspects, c’est que vous avez composé votre première section d’analystes et de physiologistes’ [but one proof that you do want to examine these same faculties (of human understanding) in all their aspects is that you have filled your first section with analysts and physiologists] (Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, pp. 72–73, part 2, i.e. lecture 2).

erroneous consequences, and that we must impose the greatest precision on ourselves and be as severe as possible in our use of language.

These allusions, on the one hand to the efforts he will be making to connect physiology and philosophical analysis, and on the other to the ‘totally erroneous consequences’ that might ensue from making ‘the slightest mis-step’, with the appeal he makes to his audience of ‘citizens’ who feel, he claims, the importance of getting it right, given this very new subject, display the writer’s anxiety and caution very clearly. He will make the same sort of moves when evoking how ‘l’analyse philosophique’ had previously separated off ‘les observations embarrassantes qui regardent l’instinct’ [troublesome observations about instinct], given that instinct has not been viewed as arising directly from sensation as such, and how these observations had been therefore regarded as ‘comme erronées ou dangereuses dans leurs conséquences’ [as erroneous or dangerous in their consequences].

Troublesome, erroneous, and dangerous are strong words. He does not explain why these observations were held to be all these things, and perhaps he does not need to, or rather, perhaps he needs not to. Cabanis carefully goes so far as to say that ‘it is something perhaps’ to have been able to show that the instinct is properly part of the ‘l’analyse philosophique’. Destutt de Tracy says it is no wonder that knowledge of and opinions about human understanding vary so much, as ‘il y a eu jusqu’à présent si peu de discussions libres sur ces sujets’ [there have been so few free discussions on these subjects until now]. This is an interesting admission, given the ubiquitous allusions to the influence of the eminent and mostly unproblematic Condillac. Tracy’s remark suggests that, counter to the much-repeated view that Condillac provides the modern impetus to advances in knowledge of the processes of human understanding, in fact, there have been very few free discussions about it; Condillac is what is left after the censorship.

In the Idéologie proprement dite, where, as we have suggested, Destutt de Tracy is a little less tentative, he begins to discuss the ‘natural state of matter’ which, he says, is ‘movement’, and he goes on to elaborate:

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99 Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 131 (II.6, i.e. lecture 4 or 5).
[...] si je n’avais craint de trop choquer les idées reçues, j’aurais mis l’activité à la tête des propriétés des corps.¹⁰⁰

if I were not afraid to offend received ideas, I would have put activity at the head of the properties of bodies.

Of course, in stating his fears, he is also stating what he states he is afraid to say, that is, that activity is the most fundamental property of particles of matter (‘corps’ should be understood in this way, rather than as specifying human bodies). So, while he is not too afraid to make such a claim about the properties of matter, he still frames it tentatively, conditionally, and in connection to fear. And we know enough now to see that the seemingly simply polite formula of fearing to offend received opinion is not just a form of words: as Cabanis had put it, these ‘observations embarrassantes’ might be ‘erronées ou dangereuses dans leurs conséquences’; they could ‘tout brouiller de nouveau’ [mess everything up again].¹⁰¹ For all their care, their ceremonious verbiage, and the protection of their elevated and official position, it would not take much to bring them down.

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In these years of 1796, 1797, and 1798, when Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy were giving the first versions or first parts of what would later be published in separate editions, neither materialism nor Diderot’s name were becoming any less polemical.¹⁰² This is owing at least in part to the publications of the highly visible Jacobin Gracchus Babeuf, arrested for supposedly plotting to overthrow the state in May 1796, and whose

¹⁰⁰ Destutt de Tracy, Idéologie proprement dite, p. 167.
¹⁰² Diderot’s poem ‘Les Eleuthéromanes’, with its incendiary reference to strangling kings with the guts of priests, was first published and then rapidly re-published in September and November 1796; as we discussed before, this image is lifted from Meslier in Voltaire’s version and was not original to Diderot. This did not stop it causing damage, and it was already associated with him thanks to Mercier, see above, and Naigeon had quoted snippets from it in his Adresse à l’Assemblée nationale of 1790. It was published in the Décade philosophique on 30 Fructidor an IV (16 September 1796) and in Roederer’s Journal d’économie politique on 20 Brumaire an V (10 November 1796). Why these two journals, both friendly to Diderot and the cause of the ‘philosophes’, chose to publish it at this time, given its political sensitivity, and the fact that the Babeuf affair was already underway, is not clear.
trial, lasting from February to May 1797, would, as René Tarin puts it, place ‘Diderot sous les feux de l’actualité’ [in the firing line of current events]. As such, it affects our story directly. We now turn to Babeuf in order to understand what was at stake, what happened, and how Diderot was involved, not least because there are some grounds for thinking that this renewed negative publicity may have triggered Destutt’s decision to create a new name for their school of thought.

Babeuf was not cautious, and he antagonised the government directly by using his journal the *Tribun du peuple* to campaign for the enactment of the never-enacted constitution of 1793. This constitution, ratified but suspended for the duration of the Terror and now replaced by Daunou’s new drafting of 1795 establishing the Directorate, had legislated for greater equality and redistribution of wealth. Babeuf was particularly virulent about the great evil of property, and he systematically, approvingly and lengthily quotes a work called the *Code de la nature* written by the now little-known philosopher Étienne-Gabriel Morelly (1717–78) which had initially been published in 1755 and which proposes that human laws should be modelled on nature. Here’s the rub: Babeuf did not know that it was written by Morelly; he thought it had been written by Diderot, and he thought this because it had appeared in an unauthorised edition of Diderot’s works in 1772. In fact, Diderot had nothing to do with it. Unaware, Babeuf firmly annexes Diderot to his cause, exhorting his readers: ‘écoute[r] Diderot, il ne vous laissera pas plus d’équivoque sur le secret du véritable et seul système de sociabilité conforme à la justice’ [listen to Diderot, he will leave you in no doubt as to the

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104 Laura Mason considers Babeuf’s inability to follow a cautious line in her brilliant analysis of the trial, see *The Last Revolutionaries: The Trial of Gracchus Babeuf and the Equals*, ch. 9, pp. 191–93 (of Mason’s typescript: submitted for publication; details forthcoming). With grateful thanks to Laura Mason for so generously sharing her work.

105 Diderot, *Œuvres philosophiques de Mr D***, 6 vols (Amsterdam: Marc-Michel Rey, 1772). The *Code de la nature* appears in volume 1. See Adams, *Bibliographie des œuvres de Diderot, 1739–1900*, 2 vols (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d’étude du XVIIIe siècle, 2000), vol. 1, p. 85. Adams explains that the claim that the famous publisher Marc-Michel Rey had anything to do with it was also false, p. 90.
The secret of the true and only just system for society].

In March–April 1796, Babeuf stepped up the pressure on the government, writing a summary of his doctrine in fifteen principles and flyposting it around Paris. Here, he invoked nature (articles 1–3), stated that the Revolution was unfinished (article 11), and that the constitution of 1793 was the true law of the French (article 12), and that ‘every citizen is expected to re-establish and defend in the Constitution of 1793 the wishes and the happiness of the people’ (article 13). This went down badly with the authorities, and the Directoire responded with the laws of 27–28 Germinal an IV (16–17 April 1796) which decreed the death penalty for attempting by word or in writing to overthrow the established authority or re-establish the constitution of 1793. Babeuf riposted on 5 Floréal (just three days after Tracy had given his first lecture on the ‘faculté de penser’), stating that ‘il n’est plus permis de se parler; il n’est plus permis de lire; il n’est plus permis de penser’ [we are no longer permitted to speak to each other; we are no longer permitted to read; we are no longer permitted to think]. Just over a fortnight later, on 21 Floréal an IV (10 May), Babeuf and ‘les Egaux’ (the Equals), as they were known, were pre-emptively arrested on the basis of preventing an alleged coup d’état; renewed anti-Jacobin repression followed.

Now, Destutt de Tracy announced his new name for ‘la science de la pensée’ not in the first installment of his lectures on la faculté de penser but in the second. One might have expected a new investigation into the faculty of thought that was going to introduce a new name for itself to do so at the beginning. Tracy did not even allude to this issue in his first ‘Mémoire’ which took place on the 2 Floréal an IV (21 April 1796), the second being given on 2 Messidor an IV (20 June 1796). In between

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those two sessions, Babeuf and associates were arrested. As we have seen, Babeuf’s support for Diderot was very public, irrespective of the fact that he was really talking about Morelly. Destutt de Tracy would have known that this was a false attribution (Naigeon dealt with it with his usual outraged ferocity in the introduction to his Œuvres de Diderot of 1798), but it was very damaging nonetheless, and we can see why it might have been crucial for the continuation of the project on the analysis of sensations and ideas—an area which was strongly associated with Diderot however little his name ever appeared in connection to it—to maintain and indeed increase distance from the newly disreputable thinker, now tightly associated with someone designated as a traitor. This gives a new context to how Destutt de Tracy introduces his neologism, ideology. Here is the passage in full:

It remains the case that the science of thought does not yet have a name. We could perhaps call it psychology. Condillac seemed willing to do that. But this word, which means science of the soul, seems to require knowledge of this being which you surely do not claim to possess; and it would also have the disadvantage of making it seem that you are occupied with vague research on primary causes, when the aim of your work is the knowledge of effects and their practical consequences.

109 Destutt de Tracy, Mémoire sur la faculté de penser, p. 71 (Part II, ch. 1, i.e. lecture 2, author’s own italics).
I would much prefer therefore that we adopted the term ideology, or science of ideas.

It is very judicious, as it does not imply anything doubtful or unknown; it does not carry any reminder of any idea to do with causes.

Its sense is very clear for everyone, if one just thinks about the French word idea, as everyone knows what they mean by an idea, although few people really know what it is.

Everyone would be absolutely accurate in their hypothesis, for ideology is the literal translation science of ideas.

Très-sage: very wise or very sensible? Both! Tracy’s explicit aim is to distance himself from discussions of the soul, but we can see that he also wants to avoid any association with doubt or with the past: he wants this science to look forward, to come from nowhere, to have ‘aucune idée de cause’, and not to incite doubt. Attempting to avoid association either with discourses of the soul or with philosophical doubt, Tracy has a tricky path to tread. ‘Douteux’: we have already seen the baggage that doubt carries: it is the term Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin used to attack Garat with. ‘Aucune idée de cause’ is also interesting: it avoids the issue of creation and God of course, and it also avoids nearer causes or influences. It cuts ties with Diderot very efficiently. And, as we know, Destutt de Tracy’s Mémoire sur la faculté de penser would later be republished with the grander title, Idéologie proprement dite. To found a branch of knowledge is indeed to erase the idea that this knowledge pre-existed its foundation. What a brilliant strategy! And thus work that we know Diderot had been engaged in and which we have some compelling evidence for saying was directly influential for these philosophers henceforth known as ‘idéologues’ or ‘idéologistes’ after their newly-identified field, is taken further, and in fact the virtuous halls of learning of the new Republic gain credit for encouraging this new science or branch of learning, while the danger or repression that lies behind is completely hidden as is any affiliation with Diderot. Très-sage indeed.

Just how wise a move it was, whether strategic or strangely fortuitous, to create this distance between the ‘idéologues’ and Diderot, becomes even clearer when we consider Babeuf’s trial. It lasted from February to May 1797, was a cause célèbre, much reported, and indeed the state itself anxiously published stenographed proceedings which
were immediately disputed and rival proceedings published.\textsuperscript{110} Babeuf’s defence speech was very lengthy and detailed, and it started with a thorough consideration of his intellectual debts. The longest, most detailed, and most enthusiastic tribute is to ‘Diderot’ (that is, Morelly). There are seven pages of ‘Diderot’ tribute of which this is a typical sample:

\begin{quote}
Il me reste à citer une grande autorité en garantie contre l’accusation de provocation [\ldots]. Cette garantie imposante, c’est Diderot. C’est bien le plus déterminé, le plus intrépide, j’ai presque dit le plus fougueux athlète [sic] du système.\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

It still remains for me to cite a great authority as protection against the charge of provocation [\ldots]. This imposing protector is Diderot. He is the most determined, the most intrepid, I am tempted to say the most passionate athlete of this system.

So, Diderot’s reputation as a ferocious extremist will not be in any way toned down by being called ‘a determined intrepid fiery athlete of anti-propertarianism’ and by being called that approvingly by someone on trial for plotting to overthrow the state. Babeuf even claims that his plans are softened versions of Diderot’s more hardcore texts, and seems to think that if he shows the court that who they are really accusing is Diderot, then they will yield to Diderot’s intellectual authority, and also see that Babeuf is not really at fault himself.\textsuperscript{112} He was wrong on both counts. Babeuf was sentenced to death on 26 May 1797 and guillotined the following day. Diderot was not in favour. As Tarin describes, ‘La réaction s’acharne alors sur ce philosophe. Jugé responsable de tous les excès de

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\textsuperscript{112} In the course of his defence, Babeuf says: ‘Aux yeux des mêmes accusateurs, Diderot doit paraître le chef suprême de tous les conjurés’ [In the eyes of these same accusers, Diderot must seem like the leader in chief of all the plotters] (Advielle, \textit{Histoire de Gracchus Babeuf et du babouvisme}, vol. 2, p. 59).
\end{flushright}
la Révolution, le “héros des athées” sera présenté comme l’apôtre de la subversion’ [reactionary factions then set upon the philosopher. Judged responsible for all the excesses of the Revolution, the ‘atheists’ hero’ was represented as the apostle of subversion]. Jean-François de La Harpe (lecturer at the Institut like the Idéologues and l’Abbé Augustin Barruel are just two of those whose fanatical excoriation of Diderot Tarin cites.

And who else was lending themselves to the cause of materialism in these years? Shall we mention Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade? I think we should. Sade’s was a powerful voice, and it did not go unheard. His Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu (published anonymously in 1791) was well-known, and (unsurprisingly) caused apoplexy. The seemingly pious Aline et Valcour and the utterly brazen Philosophie dans le boudoir both come out in 1795 (the former under Sade’s name; the latter, anonymously). And then out come La Nouvelle Justine (1799) and L’Histoire de Juliette (1801). They each contained long disquisitions on materialism. These works were extremely popular and sold out rapidly. A luxury illustrated edition in preparation when Sade was arrested on 6 March 1801 was impounded and destroyed. Sade’s extremely transgressive writings certainly contributed to the sensitivity around materialism and its alleged indecency, even if he probably also wrote them in reaction to that same sensitivity and with a view to provoking it. In 1805, famed astronomer (and founder of the Loge des Neuf Sœurs), Jérôme Lalande, publishing his supplement to Sylvain Maréchal’s Dictionnaire des athées anciens et modernes (1800), will wistfully say: ‘Je voudrais bien pouvoir citer M. de Sade; il a bien assez d’esprit, de raisonnement, d’érudition; mais ses infâmes romans de Justine et de Juliette, le font rejeter d’une secte où l’on ne parle que de vertu’ [I

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113 Tarin, Diderot et la Révolution française, p. 107; his footnote tells us that ‘le héros des athées’ [the atheists’ hero] was one of the sarcastic terms used by l’abbé Augustin Barruel to lambast Diderot in his Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du Jacobinisme (Hamburg: Fauche, 1798–99), t. 1, ch. 16, p. 335.

114 Tarin, Diderot et la Révolution française, pp. 107, 143 (La Harpe also lambasts Babeuf, p. 115).

115 The dating is complex because of false dates being published on the title pages. L’Histoire de Juliette was falsely dated to 1797, but in fact came out in 1801. See Michel Delon, ‘Note sur le texte [de la Nouvelle Justine]’, in Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade, Œuvres, ed. by Michel Delon (Paris: Gallimard Pléiade, 1995), vol. 2, p. 1271.

would very much like to include M. de Sade; he has more than enough intelligence, reason and erudition; but his disgraceful novels, Justine and Juliette, mean he must be excluded from a sect in which virtue is the only topic of discussion].

So Sade’s simultaneous membership (how qualified he is! and Lalande says so from the vantage point of being one of the pre-eminent scientists in the land) and exclusion (how infamous his novels are!) give a sense of what an embarrassing case he was. Even more embarrassing, it seems as if Sade may have been affiliated in some way to the Loge des Neuf Sœurs that Lalande himself had founded, and of which Garat, Cabanis, and Destutt de Tracy were all members.

So there is some quite dangerous proximity here. Thus, Sade was no help at all to anyone wishing to pursue materialist research from within the authorised spaces of the government. He only further confirmed the view that materialist tracts were immoral, obscene, and deranged.

With Babeuf on one side, trumpeting the wonders of ‘Diderot’s’ ideas on social revolution, and Sade on the other, giving extended monologues on materialist theory to his most vicious characters, it is really no surprise that Destutt de Tracy evokes the safe space of the Institut national, ‘cette enceinte’ outside which critical voices persist and must be ignored. His coining of the neologism ‘idéologie’ establishes, in my view, a further layer of protection.

We have said that Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy were successful in their distancing and publication strategies (which include the reinforcing effect of their duet), and also in seeing their view of the inter-relation of

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118 Daniel Kerjan, in his entry on this Loge, states that ‘Il est désormais établi que Mirabeau et Sade y furent affiliés’ [it is henceforth accepted that Mirabeau and Sade were affiliated to it]: *Dictionnaire du grand orient de France au XVIIIe siècle: les cadres et les loges*, ed. by Daniel Kerjan, Alain le Bihan, and Pierre Mollier (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012), [p. x]. I have not been able to establish what the evidence for this claim is.

119 I explore what seem to be allusions to Sade in Garat’s *Mémoires sur Suard* in my article: Caroline Warman, “‘A Little Short Fat Man, Thirty-five Years of Age, Inconceivably Vigorous, and Hairy as a Bear”: The Figure of the Philosopher in Sade’, in *Sade’s Sensibilities*, ed. by Kate Parker and Norbert Sclippa (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015), pp. 103–17 (pp. 112–14).

120 Sade, imprisoned (again) in 1801, was interned in Charenton mental asylum in 1803 and died there in 1814.
body and mind influence the thinking of others. But they were not so successful as to avoid their section of the Institut national being closed down on the orders of Napoleon on 23 Jan 1803/3 pluviôse an XI, on the basis of his dislike for their criticism of his régime.\textsuperscript{121} In fact, they had been key supporters of his in the Coup du 18 Brumaire (9 November 1799) which raised Napoleon to Consul; Cabanis had presented \textit{Projet d’adresse au peuple français} to the Conseil des cinq-cents, printed at Saint-Cloud on 19 Brumaire (10 November), and on 25 frimaire an VIII (15 December 1799), he published his pro-Napoleonic \textit{Quelques considérations sur l’organisation sociale et particulièrement sur la nouvelle constitution}.\textsuperscript{122} He, Garat, and Destutt de Tracy were all made senators, which gave them an annual income of 25,000 Francs, and therefore brought financial security and ease.\textsuperscript{123} However, the ‘dictature sans dictateur’ [dictatorship without a dictator]\textsuperscript{124} that Cabanis had praised and argued for in his \textit{Quelques considérations} did not, of course, prove to be quite so dictator-free as he had supposed, and they fell under the displeasure of the Premier Consul, who, with his dynastic then religious and imperial ambitions was inevitably moving away from those who might have reminded him of how he came to power, and furthermore, might have held him to account. His irritation with them even when they were trying to please him is evident in his alleged remark after a three-hour speech Garat had given in praise of his victory at Marengo: ‘conçois-tu un animal comme Garat? Quelle enfilade de mots! J’ai été obligé de l’écouter pendant trois heures’ [have you ever seen an animal like Garat? What a string of words! I was forced to listen to him for three hours straight].\textsuperscript{125} Whether Napoleon did say this or not, it is attested (by the Oxford English Dictionary, no less) that it was he who started the re-definition of ‘idéologie’, which the OED describes as ‘abstract speculation; impractical or visionary theorizing’. As we saw, Tracy himself had gone to some pains to establish that his neologism was not abstract or impractical. Politically therefore, from 1803 if not earlier,


\textsuperscript{122} Yves Pouliquen discusses the role of the Ideologues in the Coup du 18 Brumaire in some detail. Pouliquen, \textit{Cabanis, un idéologue}, pp. 152–56.

\textsuperscript{123} Pouliquen, \textit{Cabanis, un idéologue}, p. 163.

\textsuperscript{124} Quoted in Pouliquen, \textit{Cabanis, un idéologue}, p. 152.

their influence was much reduced. However, maybe even in Napoleon’s
derisive redefinition of ‘idéologie’ as abstract theorising, we can see a
mark of their success. If it is abstract theorising, then there is nothing for
the censors to worry about, and indeed there is no sense that Cabanis’s or
Destutt de Tracy’s publication plans met with any obstacles, unlike Sade
(the luxury illustrated edition of whose Nouvelle Justine and Histoire de
Juliette being destroyed down to the very last copy) or indeed Naigeon,
whose introduction to his edition of the Bordeaux copy of Montaigne’s
Essais would be suppressed (by its own publisher, Pierre Didot) because
of the direct appeal it contained to Napoleon to continue to control priests,
this introduction being dated 15 Germinal, an X (5 April 1802), and thus
due to appear three days before the ratification of the Concordat between
Napoleon and the Pope on Easter Sunday 1802 (8 April 1802).126 So we
can see that there was active censorship and real political sensitivities to
negotiate, and therefore measure the extent of Cabanis and Destutt de
Tracy’s success. The one possibly problematic text that Cabanis wrote,
his Lettre à Fauriel, would not be published until 1824, sixteen years after
his death, despite it having supposedly circulated in manuscript very
freely.127 It contains a more concise and more forthright statement of his
materialist thinking than the Rapports, but is otherwise rather similar
to it.128 And nonetheless it attracted accusations of militant atheism, so
much so that Cabanis’s widow protested that the edition was inaccurate

126 As we discuss below. Philippe Desan, ““Cette espèce de manuscrit des Essais”: l’édition Naigeon de 1802 et son “Avertissement” censuré’, Montaigne Studies, 10 (Oct 1998), 7–34 (pp. 19, 33n). See also H. Mazel, ‘La Fameuse Préface de Naigeon’, Bulletin de la société des amis de Montaigne, 2.4 (1938), 28–29. Mazel states that, ‘il ne reste de cette édition 1802 avec préface que huit exemplaires, ayant appartenu au Premier Consul, à ses hauts fonctionnaires, et à Didot’ [of this 1802 edition with preface there are only eight copies left, having belonged to the First Consul, his high-ranking functionaries, and to the publisher, Didot], p. 29.


128 See for example his discussion of the: ‘Connaissance approfondie de l’organisation humaine’, ‘[ses] besoins’ (p. 260); ‘l’être sensible doué d’imagination’ (p. 265); ‘la sensibilité’ (p. 266); ‘l’ouvrage du jeu des organes’ (p. 267); ‘les organes de l’homme’ (p. 272); memory (p. 272); ‘la percussion’ or ‘collision mutuelle des corps’ (pp.
and that it traduced the image of her virtuous husband. It was not inaccurate, it was just that atheism and materialism were still tightly associated, still publicly unavowable, and still subject to censorship. We alluded to Naigeon coming a-cropper in 1802; earlier we mentioned his outraged denial of Diderot’s authorship of Morelly’s *Code de la nature* in the introduction to his edition of Diderot’s *Œuvres* of 1798. It is time to return to Naigeon and to these two introductions, each embattled for different reasons, before we reach the final installment of this story with Garat’s *Mémoires sur le XVIIIe siècle et sur M. Suard* (1820) and Naigeon’s *Mémoires sur la vie et les ouvrages de M. Diderot*, whose publication date is advertised on the title page as 1821, but which in fact came out in 1823 (and was banned in December of that year).

Let us however close this chapter by returning to Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy to state that, without there being a signed and sworn affidavit as to their knowledge of Diderot’s *Éléments de physiologie*, there is nonetheless considerable cumulative textual evidence that they did indeed know it, and furthermore, that they were influenced by its hypotheses and are attempting to pursue the lines of research it lays out. The strength of the argument is perhaps best shown when we turn it round: is it plausible, given their general position with respect to physiological determinism, and the multiple moments of textual synchronicity, that they had never read it and were not using it?

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274, 280); ‘le perfectionnement’ (p. 295); materialist tableau (pp. 276–77); advice to avoid words ‘athéisme’ and ‘matérialisme’ (pp. 268, 271).
