The Atheist’s Bible: Diderot and the Éléments de physiologie

Caroline Warman

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 wittily 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 publication of Diderot’s Éléments, long before its official publication date of 1875.

The Atheist’s Bible constitutes a major contribution to the field of Diderot studies, and is of further interest to scholars and students of materialist natural philosophy in the Age of Enlightenment and beyond.
With Jacques-André Naigeon’s *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de Denis Diderot*, there is no need to make a case for the presence of the *Éléments de physiologie*, because he quotes about a thousand lines from it, completely reorganised and meshed in with about 420 lines from the *Rêve de d’Alembert*. This the interested reader will see when consulting the digital edition of Naigeon’s *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques* which accompanies this monograph.¹ This is the book Naigeon had been working on so assiduously in 1792 when he wrote his article on ‘Diderot’, and then again in 1798 when preparing the *Œuvres de Diderot*, and each time, as we may remember, he repeatedly alludes to it, clearly planning its imminent publication, fervently advertising it, and alerting readers to its importance.² Central to it is his ‘analyse raisonnée de celui de

¹ See https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.htm. In a piece of reinforcing synchronicity, Motoichi Terada has also reproduced these pages from Naigeon’s *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques* in his edition of the *Éléments de physiologie*, see ‘Annexe’ in Denis Diderot, *Éléments de physiologie*, ed. by Motoichi Terada (Paris: Éditions Matériologiques, 2019), pp. 513–93 [hereafter MT]. His edition was published in June 2019, when plans for this monograph’s connected digital edition were already far advanced. Our digital edition allows the reader to interact with and visualise Naigeon’s mosaic rewriting in a rather different way, and also restores the passages which the Brière editors censored; this is on the basis of a comparison between the printed version and the original manuscript (ms cote 2127, Bibliothèque Carnegie de Reims).

² See above.
ces ouvrages qui m’a paru le plus profond’ [an analytical account of the particular work of his that I thought most profound].³ Given that one hundred pages of Naigeon’s Mémoires historiques et philosophiques are given over to the presentation of Diderot’s philosophy of the ‘opérations de l’entendement humain’ [operations of the human understanding]⁴, and that of these one hundred pages no fewer than seventy-eight are made of an intricate mosaic of quotation from the Éléments de physiologie and the Rêve de d’Alembert, and that no other of Diderot’s works is treated in an even remotely similar manner, there is no room to question that this is indeed ‘celui de ces ouvrages qui m’a paru le plus profond’ [the particular work of his that I thought most profound]. Before examining what this intricate mosaic actually looks like, let alone why Naigeon presents it as a single work rather than two separate texts, though, a rapid sketch of the Mémoires historiques et philosophiques as a whole is required.

Firstly, composition dates.

In Naigeon’s article on ‘Diderot’ in the Encyclopédie méthodique, he states he gave over the six months following Diderot’s death to the composition of the Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, and early in the text itself he dates that particular moment of writing to October 1784.⁵ So, he started in 1784, and he was still working on it in 1792 and in 1798, when he was obliged to interrupt writing to bring out his edition (and selection) of the Œuvres de Diderot in order to counter both the damaging mis-attribution of Étienne-Gabriel Morelly’s Code de la nature and to correct the unauthorised editions of, amongst others, Jacques le fataliste, La Religieuse, and the Supplément au voyage de Bougainville, which all came out in 1796.⁶ This means it had an on-off

⁶ Naigeon lambasts the edition of the first two in the Œuvres, discussed above. He savages the editor of the Opuscules philosophiques et littéraires, l’abbé Bourlet de Vauxcelles, in which the Supplément au voyage de Bougainville appeared, in the Mémoires, calling him ‘un de ces écrivains obscurs, ignorés dans la république des
composition period of at least fourteen years, and almost certainly a bit more. Scholar Rudolf Brummer’s careful comparison of dates and mentions leads him to surmise that it was probably finished shortly before 1800, given that in the *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, Naigeon refers to the *Œuvres* that he had recently published. It has been suggested that the *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques* were in fact never finished, but the evidence of the text and its underlying manuscript does not support such a claim.

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7 *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, p. 414; Rudolf Brummer, *Studien zur Französischen Auflärungsliteratur im Anschluss an J.-A. Naigeon*, Romanische Philologie (Breslau: Friebatsch’s Buchandlung, 1932), p. 27. Interestingly, on this same page of the *Mémoires*, their publisher Brière provides a footnote (signed ‘B’) saying that the *Mémoires* were finished in 1795. This is contradicted by mention of the 1798 *Œuvres* only a few lines later, as well as discussion of Vauxcelles’s ‘Recueil’ of 1796, see the previous note, and *Mémoires*, p. 377. It’s not clear whether the editors have decided to fix on 1795 as the date of completion for some unknown reason or association, or whether this date is the result of an oversight.

8 It appears to be librarian and bibliographer (and the same person who was accused of atheism at the École normale, see above) Antoine-Alexandre Barbier’s entry on ‘Diderot’ in his *Examen critique et complément des dictionnaires historiques les plus répandus* (Paris: Rey et Gravier ; Baudouin frères, 1820), t. 1, p. 256 which leads scholars Emmanuel Boussuge and Françoise Launay to think this. Barbier, who knew the whereabouts of the manuscript before it was published, does indeed say ‘Il est bon d’observer que l’ouvrage de M. Naigeon n’est pas terminé’ [it is right to observe that Mr Naigeon’s work is not finished], although he doesn’t substantiate his ‘observation’. The preface of the Brière edition of the *Mémoires* does not state that is incomplete, but rather, that *without it*, the edition of Diderot’s works and knowledge of his life would be incomplete: ‘C’est cet ouvrage […] qui laissait incomplètes et les *Œuvres* et l’histoire de la vie de celui qui éleva le monument encyclopédique’ [it is this work (...) which left the *Œuvres* and the story of the life of the man who built the monument of the Encyclopedia incomplete] (p. v). The version that was published was, as Maurice Tourneux observed and we show in the digital edition [https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/files/main/msmvod.htm], lightly censored by the editors of the Brière edition in order to avoid post-publication difficulties (which came anyway) and was therefore itself not complete. The fact that a censored version was published does not mean that the work itself was left unfinished. The manuscript is, as Boussuge and Launay helpfully tell us, in the Bibliothèque Carnegie de Reims. See Emmanuel Boussuge and Françoise Launay, ‘Du nouveau sur Jacques André Naigeon (1735–1810) et sur ses livres et manuscrits’, RDE, 53.1 (2018), 145–92, https://doi.org/10.4000/rde.5698.
Secondly, why was it not published during Naigeon’s lifetime? He appears to have planned to publish it on completion—he repeatedly refers the reader to it, as we have seen. However, as we know, he did not publish it, and he died in 1810 with it still unpublished. We probably do not have to search far for reasons: already by 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte’s censorship régime was firming up; in March 1801, the new illustrated edition of Sade’s novels *Justine* and *Juliette* would be entirely destroyed; in April 1802, Naigeon’s publisher Pierre Didot cut the anti-clerical
preface to his edition of the Bordeaux copy of Montaigne’s *Essais*; in 1805, Napoleon commanded that eminent astronomer Jérôme Lalande should no longer be allowed to publish, his atheism having become too strident. Yet, it is not as if Naigeon’s *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques* were censored (or not at this point); to be subject to censorship it would have needed to be published, and it did not even get that far. Why would Naigeon not even *try* to publish something so important to him, something for which he had gone to such lengths to prepare an expectant space in the minds of those who read his utterances on Diderot? Rudolf Brummer, whose rather amazing research was published in 1932, shows us how indigent Naigeon was at this time. He was reliant on the French state for accommodation—granted to him as a member of the Institut national from its creation in 1795—and was provided with free rooms overlooking the Louvre in the ‘maison d’Angevilliers’ (probably the Hôtel d’Angivillier or Angiviller, knocked down in the 1850s).

In 1802, as a ‘philosophe sans fortune’, he was given the sum of 1,200 francs, in an order signed by Napoleon himself. He did not receive any more such grants, and sold his collection of precious books to the publisher Didot in 1808, who set aside half of this amount to provide Naigeon with an annual income. When Naigeon died in late February 1810, he was living with his sister, Mme Dufour de Villeneuve, in a flat on the Rue du Bac. In sum, he could not afford to publish the *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*; his financial situation was too precarious,

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9 For Lalande, see Boussuge and Launay, ‘Du nouveau sur Jacques André Naigeon’, p. 166. In 1805, Lalande published a supplement to Sylvain Maréchal’s *Dictionnaire des athées* which we have already had occasion to mention in connection to Sade, see above.

10 Of course, when they were finally published in 1823, they were immediately banned (David Adams, *Bibliographie des œuvres de Diderot, 1739–1900*, 2 vols (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre international d’étude du XVIIIe siècle, 2000), vol. 2, p. 141).

11 Naigeon was made a member of the Institut national, Classe des Sciences morales et politiques, but the section he was invited to be part of was ‘Morale’. See above.

12 See https://bibliotheques-specialisees.paris.fr/ark:/73873/pf0001771897/0025. The Hôtel d’Angiviller seems to have been on the now also non-existent Place de l’Oratoire, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_de_l%27Oratoire_(Paris); Brummer, *Studien*, p. 12; Brummer references the *Archives nationales*, AF III, 582, 3981, p. 64.

13 Brummer, *Studien*, p. 12; Brummer references the *Archives nationales*, AF IV, plaquette 389.


and he was personally indebted to Napoleon, as well as known by the Emperor to be a critic of his régime, Napoleon himself being one of the owners of the eight remaining copies of the censored Montaigne preface. How the Mémoires historiques et philosophiques actually emerged into the world of print thirteen years later, in 1823, as the last volume in the Brière edition, is another slightly anxiety-inducing story to which we will come in due course.

As the editors of the Brière edition themselves announce in their ‘Avertissement des Éditeurs’, the Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur
la vie et les ouvrages de Denis Diderot does two main things in the course of its 416 pages. Firstly, it gives ‘l’histoire des ouvrages connus pour être de Diderot’ [the history of the works known to be by Diderot] and secondly, it provides ‘une analyse exacte de tous les manuscrits non publiés’ [an accurate analysis of all his unpublished manuscripts]. In sum, it is a cross between an intellectual biography and an annotated bibliography, and its author repeatedly appeals to the ‘lecteur philosophe’ [philosopher reader] (pp. 164, 410), while lambasting the ‘lecteurs superficiels, inattentifs et paresseux’ [superficial, inattentive, and lazy readers] (p. 43), as well as those persecutors of Diderot who are as stupid as they are malevolent (p. 165). This differentiation between the philosophical and the superficial reader is one we have seen Naigeon make consistently.17 What he does not do very much is communicate personal details about Diderot the man, as the ‘Avertissement des éditeurs’ also points out, and they therefore append Jacques-Henri Meister’s short piece ‘A la mémoire de Diderot’ (1786).18 They do not mention that they also include a three-page note in tiny font ‘Extrait d’un manuscrit de M. de Vandeuil Diderot’ [sic] which contains various sentimental details about his imprisonment at Vincennes, his difficulties with the Encyclopédie, the support he received from Catherine II of Russia, his death, what his autopsy revealed, and how Langres wished to celebrate its most famous son. This information is presumably drawn from the memoir written by Angélique Diderot, Mme de Vandeul, not by her husband; nor does his surname, Vandeul, contain the word ‘deuil’, grief, mourning, even if, in the context, the mis-spelling has a certain symbolic resonance.19

Naigeon, however, focuses on the writings, and discusses them chronologically, starting therefore with Diderot’s first translation commission, of L’Histoire de Grèce, de Temple Stanyan, on page 30, to end, four hundred pages later with an almost throwaway, almost arrogant

17 See above.
19 Jules Assézat and Maurice Tourneux state that the Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de Diderot par Mme de Vandeul, sa fille were circulating from 1787. They were first published in 1830, in the Mémoires, correspondance et ouvrages inédites de Diderot, publiés d’après les manuscrits confiés en mourant par l’auteur à Grimm, also known as the Œuvres inédites de Diderot, 4 vols (Paris: Paulin, 1830), vol. 1, pp. 1–64. See Denis Diderot, Œuvres complètes, ed. by Jules Assézat and Maurice Tourneux (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1875–77), vol. 1 (1875), p. xxvi.
flourish: ‘Voilà, en général, ce que j’avais à dire des manuscrits de Diderot’ [That, in general, is what I had to say about Diderot’s manuscripts], regretting the lack of a Pierre Bayle to assess the value of the Œuvres de Diderot he has brought out, and closing with a line from Montaigne.\textsuperscript{20}

The Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, then, appears to be the third part of Naigeon’s strategy for the publication of Diderot’s works. The first part consists of the dictionary article on Diderot from 1792, in which he discussed the Pensées philosophiques, the Lettre sur les aveugles and the Lettre sur les sourds et muets, the Pensées sur l’interprétation de la nature, all works which had been published long before and were known to be by Diderot, while also publishing the Principes philosophiques sur la matière et le mouvement for the first time.\textsuperscript{21} This is Diderot the philosopher, the emitter of wise aphorisms, the condensed and somewhat gnomic thinker. Secondly, in 1798, the Œuvres de Diderot in fifteen volumes, which presents the weighty and multi-faceted genius who is primarily a philosopher (vols 1–3), but also a dramatist (vol. 4), a historian of philosophy and encyclopedist (vols 5–6), an ancient historian and moralist (8–9), a novelist (vols 10–12), and a profound thinker about art (vols 13–15). As we see, the writer of fiction is sandwiched towards the back end of this panoply of production, detracting, so far as Naigeon is concerned, from the image he wishes to present to the (wary) public of Diderot as a serious philosopher, a virtuous moralist, someone who ponders the sublime, and is by no means the immoral monster or threat to the state whom Gracchus Babeuf and others (including Naigeon himself) had contributed to constructing.\textsuperscript{22} Part three, then, is what we find in the Mémoires. Here, within the framework of the chronological account of the more-or-less virtuous and serious works Naigeon has already edited, he ever so carefully weaves in some of Diderot’s unknown works and manuscripts.

Here he brings into the fold works that he had not previously mentioned: the Promenade du Sceptique (not published until 1830), the Apologie de l’Abbé de Prades (published in 1752, but often supposed to

\textsuperscript{20} Naigeon mentions Diderot’s manuscripts: Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, p. 414; Bayle: p. 415; Montaigne: p. 416.

\textsuperscript{21} See above.

\textsuperscript{22} See above in Chapters 9 for Babeuf, and 10 for Naigeon’s emphasis on Diderot the philosopher.
have been by the Abbé de Prades himself), the Plan d’une Université pour le gouvernement de Russie (first published, like Naigeon’s Mémoires, in the Brière edition of 1821–23). These all appear as separate entries, all capitalised, in the table of contents, as indeed are all the other known and previously published works that appear there. Of the twenty-five headings, however, five are given in a little lower-case clump, separated only by the ELOGE DE RICHARDSON, and together they make up 126 pages, or more than a quarter of the book. Of these 126 pages, 100 are given over to the mesh of the Éléments de physiologie (which is not named) and the Rêve de d’Alembert (which is). The given titles of these lower-case sections are as follows: the Suppression de l’Encyclopédie; Divers petits papiers; Danger imminent auquel Diderot se trouve exposé; Suite d’un entretien philosophique supposé, entre d’Alembert et Diderot; Le Rêve de d’Alembert. In the first and third of these sections, Naigeon discusses the suppression of the Encyclopédie and the risk Diderot ran by not leaving Paris after the chevalier de la Barre’s execution in 1766 when tensions ran high.23 The second section, the ‘Divers petits papiers’ [various short papers], on which Naigeon bestows the grand total of three pages, refer to a trio of short pieces, the first two of which Naigeon had published in his Œuvres: ‘Les Réflexions sur Térence’ (now known as ‘De Térence’), ‘L’Histoire et le secret de la peinture en cire’ [History and secret of painting in wax] and a ‘Mémoire’ [Memo] which Diderot wrote to defend the publishers of the Encyclopédie from the accusation—brought by Pierre-Joseph Luneau de Boisjermain (1731–1801)—that they had not fulfilled the promises laid out in their original prospectus in a lawsuit.24 The final two of the modest lower-case headings, the Suite d’un entretien philosophique supposé, entre d’Alembert et Diderot and Le Rêve de d’Alembert, contain the core of the

23 François-Jean de la Barre, aged twenty, had been accused and convicted of blasphemy, impiety, and sacrilege, for having allegedly profaned a crucifix, failed to take his hat off when a religious procession passed, and owned infamous books, including Voltaire’s Dictionnaire philosophique, a copy of which was nailed to his headless body and burned with him. Voltaire was safe in his château of Ferney on the Swiss border, but Diderot was within the instant grasp of the authorities, had they wished to seize him.

24 Naigeon, Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, pp. 194–95. For more on this suit, see Kate E. Tunstall, ‘La fabrique du Diderot-philosophe, 1765-1782’, Les Dossiers du Grihl, 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.4000/dossiersgrihl.6793, especially paragraphs 25–26, as discussed above.
book, and the titles would lead us to suppose that they discuss the first two parts of what we now know as *Le Rêve de d’Alembert*. *Le Rêve* would be published with all three parts in 1830. 25 As I will argue, their appearance in Naigeon’s *Mémoires* constitutes the first print publication of both the *Rêve de d’Alembert* and the *Éléments de physiologie*, although as I will also show, both are considerably abridged and deformed. To consider why this is will also be my task, but no doubt the answer is partly that Naigeon is taking immense care to shepherd a very particular Diderot into the public arena, one that he hopes will survive unscathed, untainted by accusations of immorality. The anti-clerical atheist is not the Diderot Naigeon wishes to let go of; on the contrary. But he wishes to present his anti-clerical atheist as a virtuous hero of sublime nobility and seriousness. He can be atheist but not smutty or low, let alone debauched or immoral. Hence, presumably, his downplaying of Diderot the author of *Jacques le fataliste*. 26 Hence, also, one assumes, his non-inclusion of the *Neveu de Rameau*, which he only mentions in passing in a couple of sub-clauses as ‘une excellente satire’ (and not as anything more problematic than that); the *Paradoxe sur le comédien* is only alluded to and not even named. 27 Hence, furthermore, as we shall see, the removal from the *Rêve de d’Alembert* of all its racy aspects and its transformation into teacherly prose.

Naigeon’s tripartite plan is consistent, so much so, that we should not be surprised to see a passage from the *Adresse à l’Assemblée nationale* we dwelt on at some length in an earlier section reappear at the very end of the *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, the part that says so forthrightly, ‘quand on a quelque chose de bon à dire, il faut se presser’ [when you have something good to say, you must hurry up and say it]: that entire passage is repeated here verbatim. 28 Perhaps he wrote it for the *Mémoires* first, and then re-used it in the *Adresse*. We cannot know, and it probably does not matter; the point is that what he published in

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26 See above.

27 Naigeon mentions the *Le Neveu de Rameau in Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, p. 316; *Le Paradoxe sur le comédien and implicitly Neveu de Rameau* also: pp. 173–74.

28 See above; *Adresse à l’Assemblée nationale sur la liberté des opinions, sur celle de la presse*, etc. (Paris: Volland, 1790), pp. 9–10, re-used from *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, p. 413.
1790 and what he writes in the Mémoires, whether before or after, is all part of the same thing, part of the same approach, with a consistent conceptualisation and constant broadcasting of Diderot as a weighty moral atheist. The repeated cross-references across his various Diderot texts, not just forward to the unpublished and much heralded Mémoires but also back from them to his edition of the Œuvres, underscore the fact that this is a single grand design, a single weave, however complex, with repeating patterns or motifs.

Such a scheme is not surprising perhaps, given that Naigeon had been a contributor to the original Encyclopédie, with its extraordinary architecture of cross-references.29 And yet the impact and very presence of the French Revolution, and the concomitant scattering and deferral of the dates of composition, completion, and publication of these different texts and editions, have made Naigeon’s design rather hard to discern. However, the presence of the cross-references and the connections they make between the different parts shed some light, and in the various remarks Naigeon makes about editing in general and editing Diderot in particular, we find more. We have lifted these out for inspection wherever we have found them; it may be useful now to recall them.

In the censored Montaigne preface, Naigeon makes his most explicit statements about what an editor can and should do, perfecting the writing an author has produced, tidying the style, removing bumps that interrupt the harmony (literally harmonising it), and using his superior taste—his finer sense of beauty and of the proprieties—to add value to the resulting text. In his general preface to the Œuvres de Diderot and also in the individual introductions to Jacques le fataliste and La Religieuse, he explains what he would have removed from both of these novels, had he been the first to publish them and therefore had control over the text that appeared.30 He returns to this theme in the Mémoires, and reiterates that La Religieuse, although an important novel, should have been shorn of some revolting and potentially morally dangerous scenes before


30 See above.
publication, and that *Jacques le fataliste* is too long by half, being digressive and affected, often licentious and therefore (supposedly) insipid and cold.\footnote{Naigeon, *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, pp. 311–13.} It does not matter here whether Naigeon is demonstrating that he completely lacks any sense of humour or understanding of Diderot’s depiction of bodies driven by desire, or whether he simply considers that such depictions are unwise given the generally hostile climate, and therefore unlikely to facilitate the acceptance of Diderot’s works. His stated and restated view is that there are two Diderot tones, the sublime philosophical one which is excellent, and the low and informal one which is bad.\footnote{Naigeon, *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, p. 206.} His duty, as he states it with great pride and emotion when publishing Diderot’s letter to him, is to take on ‘le soin d’arranger, de revoir et de publier tout ce qui lui paraîtra ne devoir nuire ni à ma mémoire, ni à la tranquillité de personne’ [the duty to organize, review and publish anything which he considers will not do any damage to my memory or to anyone’s security].\footnote{Naigeon, ‘Préface de l’éditeur’, in Diderot, *Œuvres* (Paris: Desray et Déterville, 1798), vol. 1, p. xxxii (for full quote, see above); Denis Diderot, *Correspondance*, ed. by Georges Roth and Jean Varloot, 15 vols (Paris: Minuit, 1955–70), vol. 12, p. 231 (3 June 1773).} Thus, Naigeon presents himself as authorised to intervene as he sees fit, both by his general calling as an editor and also by Diderot’s expressed wishes. And we can see that the likelihood is that he will suppress anything he perceives as being in bad taste, and that he may make innumerable small changes to ‘harmonise’ it. This much we can infer, but when it comes to his ‘analyse raisonnée de celui de ces ouvrages qui m’a paru le plus profond’ we also have his specific comments and framing.

Taking the specific comments first, he tells us how impossible it is to publish the substantial portfolio of manuscripts Diderot was writing between 1765 and 1779 (p. 205). This is for reasons to do with circumstances that ‘il n’est point en [s]on pouvoir de changer’ [it is not in [his] power to change] and which mean that ‘l’épreuve pénible et dangereuse de l’impression’ [the painful and dangerous ordeal of printing] cannot be thought of (p. 205). And thus he warns ‘les dépositaires de ces manuscrits’ [those who hold the manuscripts] not to publish these works in their entirety, because, however pure their intentions, it would damage Diderot’s reputation to do so (p. 206).
Here, of course, Naigeon is explicitly recalling the wording of Diderot’s letter. Instead, Naigeon proposes that what is needed is ‘éditeur qui joigne à des connaissances profondes sur divers objets, un esprit juste, et surtout un goût très-sévère’ [an editor who combines profound knowledge across diverse subjects, a clear and accurate mind, and above all taste of the most rigorous kind] (p. 205). This knowledgeable and judicious editor with very severe tastes is, we divine, Naigeon himself. We know already that he will amend and cut where he sees fit, and so he says: he will be giving the reader ‘une idée très-exacte’ [an entirely accurate idea] of these works (p. 205), excising wherever required
‘une expression, une ligne de mauvais goût’ [an expression or a line in bad taste] specifically, he explains, to avoid provoking the hostility of women and high-society people, who, while being completely unoriginal themselves, are very hard to please and very contemptuous (p. 206). The idea of women as critics or arbiters of anything provokes almost as much of a venomous reaction in Naigeon as do priests, as his censored preface to the Montaigne edition makes rantingly explicit. It is not therefore surprising that in the lines from the Rêve de d’Alembert in the following pages, the prominent role played by Julie de Lespinasse in the dialogue is removed, as is anything which fails to meet the ‘very severe’ standards of propriety whose necessity Naigeon has decreed.

These comments give us some general indication of what we can expect. Naigeon also frames the presentation of the texts quite carefully, clearly indicating start and finish, specifying what he will be focusing on at the beginning, and explaining how he has modified the texts at the end. Thus, he will particularly be looking at ‘la morale’ and ‘la philosophie rationnelle’ (p. 207). Under the heading ‘Suite d’un entretien philosophique supposé, entre d’Alembert et Diderot’, which is very close to the title of the first dialogue in what is now known as the Rêve de d’Alembert, Naigeon explains that Diderot considered Locke and Condillac’s writings on the workings of human understanding to be incomplete and often rather vague (p. 207). Diderot had therefore decided, Naigeon says, to:

traiter ce sujet avec plus de précision, de philosopher sur des principes très-différents de ceux qui sont communément reçus, et de donner en quelque sorte une formule générale pour résoudre facilement toutes les questions qui concernent le phénomène identique de la sensation et de la pensée.

34 See above. See also Naigeon, Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, p. 410.
35 See https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/files/main/mvod.htm#page207.
36 Naigeon, Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, p. 207, and https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/files/main/mvod.htm#page207.
It seems worth drawing out how specific and yet wide-reaching this statement of Naigeon’s is, even at the risk of simply paraphrasing it: Diderot planned to base his philosophy on different principles, to be much more precise, and to give some sort of general formula; this formula would henceforth resolve all questions relating to the sensation and thought, which in any case are the same thing. Naigeon’s presentation of Diderot’s plan seems strategically rather prudent: Locke and Condillac with the gaps filled in, plus some new and different principles (unspecified) to work from. This will make sense to the general educated reader of the time as well as to the ‘lecteur philosophe’ [philosopher reader], and be more or less unproblematic, and although we remember Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin’s outrage that Condillac’s theories should be deemed acceptable, it is clear from the publications of the Revolutionary government (the École normale, the Institut national) that Locke and Condillac’s theories of thought were indeed widely accepted. What follows over the next three pages is not exactly what Naigeon will subsequently call ‘le précis analytique’ [analytical summary] of this imagined conversation between d’Alembert and Diderot, although with a few differences ‘dans l’ordre et l’enchaînement des idées’ [in the order and connection of the ideas] (p. 210). It is not a summary written by Naigeon. It is instead his selection of sentences and propositions from Diderot’s text imported into this one, along with a few connectives, as consultation of the connected digital edition of these pages will demonstrate.37 This is the first appearance of the opening section of the Rêve de d’Alembert in print, somewhere between a synopsis and a very harsh abridgement.38 Naigeon does not in fact re-write the original; he cuts and he reorders. In it we find a few brief lines on sensibility as a property of matter, but the greater part of the quotation fixes on the repeated motif of the human as a musical instrument, whether as a philosophical one, as a feeling harpsichord or, different again, as merely an animal, also presented as a sensitive instrument whose strings can also be played or plucked.

He then starts working up to ‘le second Dialogue’, which he announces as being ‘beaucoup plus varié et plus profond que le premier’ [much

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37 See https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/files/main/mvod.htm#page207.

38 Naigeon, Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, pp. 207–10. See https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/files/main/mvod.htm#page207.
more varied and more profound than the first] (p. 213); it is on this page, in a footnote, that he commences the quotation from the *Éléments de physiologie*. He continues to assert that the text is a dialogue, that it is called *Le Rêve de d’Alembert* (p. 213) and that what he is providing is ‘une analyse’ that is more or less exact (p. 219). Seventy pages later, he signals the end of his analysis of the ‘second Dialogue’ with a paragraph detailing his techniques and the negative consequences they may have had on the original. This is worth quoting in full, given how accurately he describes his editing technique (while concealing or disguising other aspects):

Telle est, autant que ma mémoire et le secours de quelques extraits très-succints faits autrefois sur l’original, pour ma propre utilité, peuvent m’en assurer, l’analyse de ce second Dialogue. Si n’ayant aucune copie de ces deux manuscrits de Diderot, il m’est arrivé quelquefois, comme cela est assez vraisemblable, de changer l’ordre et l’enchaînement des idées de l’auteur, c’est qu’indépendamment de cette raison qui explique et justifie assez ce renversement, cet ordre n’est pas le même pour celui qui compose, et pour celui qui veut, pour ainsi dire, embrasser d’un coup d’œil l’ensemble d’un ouvrage, et indiquer rapidement les grands anneaux de la chaîne, sans les lier entre eux par les idées intermédiaires. Je sens néanmoins que les raisonnements de Diderot, ainsi abrégés, transposés, détachés du système dont il font partie, et presque toujours séparés de leurs principes généraux, ou des faits qui les éclairent et qui les confirment, ne peuvent pas avoir pour ceux qui n’ont pas lu son Dialogue, le même degré de force et d’évidence qu’ils ont pour moi.\footnote{Naigeon, *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, pp. 290–91 (my emphasis). See https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/files/main/mvod.htm#page290.}

That, insofar as my memory and the help of a few extremely short passages copied long ago from the original for my personal use confirm, is the analysis of this second Dialogue. If, having no copy of these two manuscripts of Diderot’s, it has sometimes occurred, as seems highly likely, that I changed the order and connections of the author’s ideas, this is because, independently from this reason which is explanation and justification enough, the order is not the same for the person who composes it as it is for the person who wishes, so to speak, to embrace in a single glance the work as a whole, and rapidly indicate the main links in the chain without providing the intermediary ones. I sense nonetheless that Diderot’s arguments, abridged, transposed, detached
from the system they were part of, and almost always separated from
the general principles and from the examples which illustrate and
prove them, cannot have for those who have not read his Dialogue, the
same degree of force and evidence that they have for me.

Taking these statements in order, let us start by dismissing the claim
that ‘quelques extraits très-succints’ could have supplied the range of
quotation we find, either from the second part of the Rêve de d’Alembert
or from the Éléments de physiologie. The 420 lines from the former and
1000 lines from the latter are from all over each text, and intricately
woven together. Although the mesh of the two texts together is
indisputably shorter than the two in their separate entirety, it is not
made from a few very short extracts, and even less so from memory.
It is implausible that he could have done this work without access to
both in their manuscript form whether these were copies he himself
had made, ones from the Fonds Vandeul, or yet others. The likelihood
is that it is this specific piece of work that took him so many years to
complete, and the term that is accurate is the plural noun ‘extracts’, not
the misleading qualifiers.

Calling it ‘ce second Dialogue’, and therefore, in context, referring
specifically to the text of which he has given an ‘analysis’ from page 213
to 290, he then claims to have no copy of either of the two manuscripts.
This tells us that he is working not just with one source text but two,
which is, as we know, the exact truth.

The third crucial element of this passage regards the description of
his technique, which is to change the order of the author’s ideas and
the way they are linked together; he returns to this aspect to describe it
again, stating that Diderot’s arguments had been ‘abrégés, transposés,
détachés’ [abridged, transposed, detached], and from what? From the
system of which they were part, from their general principles, and
from the ‘facts’ (or examples) which explain and demonstrate them.
All these statements appear to be substantiated by the reworked text he
gives us, which indeed is devoid of the starker materialist explication
we find in Diderot, does explain things in a different order, and does
give many fewer examples and cases. This is true whether we are
talking here about the Rêve de d’Alembert or the Éléments de physiologie.
Naigeon is right to fear that he has weakened the impact of the source
text (or texts), but really, this is not about judging (or condemning)
what he has done, but about noticing what he says: he states in perfect honesty that his version is less good than the source text (or texts), and in so doing signals the existence of the latter. Yet he also justifies his approach, thereby exemplifying his view of the editor’s contribution: ‘the person who composes’ (the author) is not the same as ‘the person who wants to see at a glance the entirety of a work and rapidly explain the main links in the chain’ (the editor); we see also how ‘the person who composes’ is presented without any amplifying description, whereas the other (the editor) has a series of complex listed aims. The differentiation of authorial and editorial roles which we see in the censored Montaigne preface is therefore confirmed here, despite Naigeon’s apologetic remarks about his account having less impact and being less persuasive.

It is at this point in the Mémoires that Naigeon begins to talk about fragments and scattered materials; in Chapter 2, we looked at how this passage repeats the opening ‘Avertissement’ of the Éléments, and how this particular mystification about its fragmentary and incomplete nature has been turned into the received story about it. I will not therefore return to that issue, but instead attempt to describe the version he gives us. He himself suggests, as we saw above, that what he has done is to give an overview such that the reader can see the whole at a glance, while also grasping the main links. However, as we already indicated, this is not quite right: it is not a summary of the whole of the Éléments and the whole of the second part of the Rêve de d’Alembert, also called the ‘Rêve de d’Alembert’; it is a mosaic made from the two texts, and as a mosaic, it is not even very representative of its source texts. It focuses on various themes, broadly summarisable under the headings of sensation and human understanding, according to which it organises all the different Diderotian utterances. It is rather repetitive.

Before going further into our description, we should at this point remind ourselves of the different manuscript variants of the Éléments de physiologie, of which there are two still in existence, and one (which may or may not differ from the others) which is now lost. These are, firstly, the early draft that went with the collection of Diderot’s manuscripts to Catherine II in Russia and is now in St Petersburg, secondly, the mature version that is part of the Fonds Vandeul in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, and thirdly, the copy recorded by Hippolyte Walferdin in 1837,
along with its dedicatory letter to the Comité d’instruction publique dated 24 March 1794, and whose whereabouts are now unknown. We do not know whether Naigeon was using the early incomplete draft, the mature text, an intermediary or simply a different one. We could make arguments for all these to be the case, as there is evidence to support each supposition.\footnote{We will look at this later, and also at that point discuss Terada’s view.} Without getting involved in the nitty-gritty of this particular issue at this stage, let us simply say that the most plausible solution is to suppose he had access to both the St Petersburg and the Vandeul versions, and maybe to the third (or another) one too, and that this would account for the presence of passages from each that are not in the other, and for some passages which follow the order of one manuscript, and others which follow the order of the other. This solution would also accommodate the fact that Naigeon draws on the ‘Avertissement’ which we find only in the mature Vandeul version.

To list the areas that Naigeon covers in the order that he covers them allows us to describe or characterise what he does while also serving to reveal the aspects he emphasises or repeats. I will not at this point look systematically at what comes from which text or version thereof, but will nonetheless signal some of the major switches between them. So, Naigeon’s quotation from Diderot starts with a text from the Éléments de physiologie planted in a footnote on the brain (p. 213n), then gives a very condensed indication of the contents of the introduction and first two chapters (‘Végéto-animal’ and ‘Animal’, pp. 217–18), appends a note from the third chapter, ‘Homme’ (p. 218n), and then gives further quotation from this chapter, from the subsection on the soul (p. 221). He then has a couple of pages on organs and sensibility (pp. 222–23). On the following page comes the explicit heading of Le Rêve de d’Alembert, although in fact he continues with the meshed quotation from the Éléments de physiologie (there has been none from the ‘Rêve de d’Alembert’ to this point),\footnote{We use the italicised Rêve de d’Alembert to indicate the title of the work as a whole (with its three dialogues) and ‘Le Rêve de d’Alembert’ when we are talking about the second of these three dialogues. Naigeon only draws from this middle dialogue in these pages (Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, pp. 213–90), the ‘Suite d’un entretien philosophique supposé, entre d’Alembert et Diderot’ (the first part), having been dealt with earlier (pp. 207–10), and the third part, the ‘Suite de l’entretien précédent’ not even being mentioned.} pursuing aspects dealt
with in the first section of the *Éléments*, and looking at the question of the sensitive molecule (p. 224). He moves from here to the nerve fibre as a combination of other fibres and of the animal as a bundle of fibres, to the properties of life, sensitivity and irritation being common to all life-forms (p. 225). He then turns to movement and its laws (pp. 225–26), to the ceaseless change of forms, and to how the brain and cerebellum and nerves are the first rudiments of the animal. The relationship between nerves and sensation, the health of nerves and the effect thereof on sensation follow (p. 227), along with the well-worn route from sensation to impression (p. 228), from impression to memory and thence to imagination (p. 229), to the perfecting or improvement of the senses (p. 230), and thereafter to the physiological characteristics of the nerves (p. 231). Nervous illnesses and the effects of compression on either the brain or the nerves are then mentioned (p. 232), as well as inflammation, and why pain is more intense than pleasure (p. 233). Muscle movement is discussed (p. 234) and then the different sorts of life, at the level of the molecule, the organ, and the animal as a whole; here we read about the increasingly unsociable dried-up old tendon, and learn that ‘l’homme est d’abord fluide’ [man is initially fluid] (p. 235).

Discussion of the organ continues, in terms of its development, aging, and relationship to the rest of the body, and we come across a further definition of man: ‘l’homme est un assemblage d’animaux’ [man is an assemblage of animals] (p. 236). The next few pages are given over to reproduction: these are some of the relatively few passages in which Naigeon draws on part 2 of the *Éléments de physiologie*, the ‘Éléments et parties du corps humain’. This moves into a general theme of growth and transformation: ‘un œil se fait comme une anémone […] un homme se fait comme un œil’ [an eye grows like an anemone (…) a man grows like an eye] (p. 239). This theme continues (pp. 240–41), and Naigeon quotes from the ‘Rêve de d’Alembert’ for the first time; he then places passages on the relationship of part to whole, and here we meet the famous ‘grappe d’abeilles’ [cluster of bees] (p. 240). He returns to the *Éléments de physiologie* for further development of the relationship of part to whole; this is about the ligature of limbs and the capacity

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42 In contradistinction to the ‘Suite de l’entretien’ which he quoted from in an earlier named section (Naigeon, *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, pp. 208–10).
of body parts to live separate from the whole (pp. 242–47): here we read that ‘chaque organe a son plaisir et sa douleur particulières’ [sic] [Each organ has its particular pleasure and pain] (p. 242), and that ‘sur le champ de bataille les membres séparés s’agitent comme autant d’animaux’ [on the field of battle, detached limbs move about like as many animals] (p. 246).

This leads to passages on the sense of self from the ‘Rêve de d’Alembert’ (p. 247), and we begin to see Naigeon’s technique more clearly: he removes the to-and-fro of the speakers’ exchange, while continuing to retain a certain oral quality; there is however, only one speaker, and that is ‘Bordeu, ou Diderot dont il est ici l’interprète’ [Bordeu, or rather Diderot whose mouthpiece he is] (p. 248). What is particularly striking about this is how Lespinasse is written out: this ‘Bordeu, ou Diderot’ is given one of her most famous passages, where she proposes the spider in its web as a way of understanding the relationship between the consciousness and the different body parts. Bordeu continues with her lines and his own, imperceptibly processed into smooth uninterrupted prose, as he considers the growth and development of the sensory organs (p. 249).

A new paragraph returns to the Éléments de physiologie to contemplate (again) ‘la molécule sensible’ [the sensitive molecule] (p. 249) and the infinite possibilities of sensation, in an oyster or a finger (p. 250). This shifts into a consideration (from ‘Le Rêve’) of how each strand (‘brin’) of living matter can be formed or deformed; these pages bring together passages from ‘Le Rêve’ and the Éléments on ‘monsters’, not considered as monstrous, or in later terms, as abnormalities, but as perfectly natural, part of the endless variation and production of nature, of which species themselves are part (pp. 251–52). Naigeon follows this up with sustained quotation from the bravura passages on the endless variant imperfection of human beings and on the absurdity of supposing a master craftsman could have created them, given how imperfect they are (pp. 253–54); this is from the conclusion of the Éléments (in the mature Vandeul version, that is).
This passage ends with an ellipsis of no fewer than five dots, and suddenly diverts into the theatricalised dialogue of Le Rêve, but with an extra twist: Naigeon introduces some rustling curtains. Thus Lespinasse and Bordeu do not just hear d’Alembert making an unspecified noise and fall quiet, as they do in Diderot’s version(s); they hear him rustling the curtains round his bed. And so commences d’Alembert’s grand dream monologue on shifting selfhood: ‘Pourquoi suis-je tel? c’est qu’il a fallu que je fusse tel...’ [Why am I this way? Because I had to be this way] (p. 255), much but not all of which is included although lightly reordered and intercut with thematically-related sentences from the Éléments. This is where d’Alembert contemplates change and the relationship of part to whole, concluding that flux is perpetual, and that the notion of the
individual is meaningless, because not only does nothing ever stay the same, but also everything is an indivisible part of something bigger (p. 256), and furthermore that the species are also in flux (pp. 257–58). These are the pages (pp. 256–57) that Herbert Dieckmann’s article of 1938 examined, when he first brought to light the presence of extensive quotation from the Réve de d’Alembert and the Éléments de physiologie, which he at that point only knew in the incomplete early draft from St Petersburg which Assézat and Tourneux had published in 1875.43

Here Naigeon briefly emerges from the quotation mesh into overt commentary to declare that these ideas, merely ‘systématiques’ or abstract at this point in human knowledge, will come to be proven in the future, a claim which time has shown to be true, at least to some extent.44 More locally, Naigeon also claims that d’Alembert’s dreaming ‘excursions’ or ‘trips’, are very carefully placed within the system as a whole, that they are ‘placées avec beaucoup d’art et de sobriété’ [placed with great skill and sobriety] (p. 259). Sobriety? This seems almost comical for anyone who knows exactly what d’Alembert’s trippy reveries involve. Not a chance, for example, that Naigeon will be mentioning d’Alembert’s wet dream, let alone the third part of the Réve de d’Alembert, the ‘Suite de l’entretien précédent’, where Lespinasse gives Bordeu a glass of malaga, and then asks him to tell her about miscegenation, overtly associating alcohol with dangerous freedom of thought.45 The very mention of sobriety is like a flag signaling the opposite.

Soberly, in any case, Naigeon brings us back to theme of monsters, already touched on, and to the organisation of the organs (pp. 259–60); these sections are predominantly from the Éléments de physiologie, with just a few lively inserts from the ‘Rêve’, including Lespinasse’s quip (non-attributed) on how man is the monstrous version of the woman and vice versa. The presentation of monstrosity becomes a discussion of different needs producing different organs, of how pain and pleasure

drive us, and of how our vices and virtues are reliant on what our organs, understood as including the sensory organs and the imagination, are like; this then moves onto the topic of the perfectibility of organs (pp. 260–62). This organ-related material seems thematically connected, despite the fact that it is brought together from six different sections of the Éléments (this is the case for both draft versions), but Naigeon then, after only a semi-colon, shifts to what seems like a new topic, that of not being able to think when experiencing intense feeling (p. 262). He then returns to the brain and to Lespinasse’s (unattributed) analogy of the spider (p. 263), and thence to the sense of self that arises from memory (p. 264); he meshes this with the notion that what characterises humans is their brain, returning to the previous strands on sensation without thought and on the potential faults in perception, on how a brain can misinterpret sensation (p. 265). This is developed into a political analogy (from the ‘Rêve’) about what happens when one or another part of the body becomes stronger than the rest (p. 266). He returns to the relationship between sensation, nerves, and thought in the brain, to the importance of memory particularly in connection to the self, to the result of imbalance and the types of character or profession produced by the various imbalances (again from the ‘Rêve’, pp. 267–68). He then looks at sleep and dreaming (pp. 270–71); this section draws its passages from both source texts, although the Éléments predominates. Then considering the sense of self during sleep, he introduces the theme of freedom or the will, or rather, in Diderot’s deterministic account, the extent and influence of involuntary actions (pp. 272–73). Naigeon then provides a long counter-example, showing how instinct can misdirect. This is Diderot’s proof (from the Éléments) that if you happen to find yourself in an out-of-control carriage, you should throw yourself out over the back wheel not the front one, because otherwise the back wheel will run you over. In a footnote, Naigeon explains how Diderot first presented this idea in a conversation with high-society people in St Petersburg, and how the mathematician Leonhard Euler, who was present, failed to back him up while knowing perfectly well that Diderot was right (pp. 274–76; the abundantly detailed footnote continues for a further couple of pages).
Fig. 12.5 Diderot’s proof about which side of a carriage to throw yourself out of, Bibliothèque Carnegie de Reims, MS 2127, f. 153, Jacques-André Naigeon (copyist probably his brother Charles-Claude), 1798-1800, Pen and paper, MS of Jacques-André Naigeon, Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de Denis Diderot, Bibliothèque Carnegie de Reims, CC-BY

The main text then returns again to the question of the relative balance and operation of the different organs, and introduces the theme of genius (from the ‘Rêve’). Naigeon then, in his own voice, paraphrases Diderot’s views on the deleterious effect of excessive study, following this with a brief but intense rant about Jean-Jacques Rousseau who said something similar in the *Discours sur l’inégalité*; Naigeon calls this seminal text ‘une espèce de roman métaphysique’ [a sort of metaphysical novel] (pp. 278–79). Post-rant, he resumes his quotation mosaic to pursue the topic of the ill-health of the studious person, signalling the switch with a ‘quoi qu’il en soit, voici l’observation de Bordeu’ [in any case, this is the observation Bordeu makes], although what follows is in fact from the *Éléments.*

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He comes out of his quotation mosaic again to comment that because Bordeu is being harried both by the doubts or objections of d’Alembert and also by ‘les questions de mademoiselle Delesspinasse’ [Mlle de Lespinasse’s questions], he is not always as thorough as he might be. This is an interesting mark of Naigeon’s hostility to the dialogue format which he systematically erases from actual quotation of the ‘Rêve’, while nonetheless retaining its nominal presence in the form of the frequently mentioned title, the ‘second dialogue’, and as part of his own framing—for example, ‘voici l’observation de Bordeu’ [this is the observation Bordeu makes]. Despite these claims about d’Alembert and Lespinasse, the passages that Naigeon is here introducing and excusing are taken from the Éléments, and what he is specifically apologising for or justifying is a certain rapidity: ‘c’est ainsi qu’il explique en peu de mots, mais avec une singulièrè précision, les divers phénomènes du jugement, du raisonnement, de la formation des langues’ [this is how he explains in few words but with striking precision, the diverse phenomena of judgement, reasoning, and the formation of languages] (p. 280). And this introduces pages of quotation, in more sustained and less re-ordered chunks than usual, from the chapter on ‘Entendement’ [the Understanding]: we move from sensation to idea and thence to language (pp. 280–82) and to the imagination: here the complex meshing patterns return, drawing from different parts of the Éléments (in either version) and also from the ‘Rêve’, although in smaller quantity (pp. 283–84). Naigeon then returns to the question of sensation and its functioning, and how sensation leads to judgement (p. 285). This makes way for a new topic, that of only being able to focus on one thing at a time, already implicit in the previous discussion of not being able to think when experiencing intense feeling. This also allows Naigeon to score a point against Condillac, who supposedly did not notice this aspect (p. 286); Naigeon will return to Condillac later to conduct a very thorough assault on his work (pp. 292–307). Meanwhile, he switches to the question of abstraction, using an extensive passage from the ‘Rêve’ that argues that ‘toute abstraction n’est qu’un signe vide d’idées’ [any abstraction is only ever a sign devoid of ideas] (p. 287). He has almost reached the end of the quotation mesh here, and he begins to conclude, praising ‘ce profond Dialogue’ [this profound Dialogue] for the way in which Diderot develops all the different parts of his system, how
well it all hangs together, how enlightening it is about the operations of the human understanding, the perfecting of which, he says, can only be found in the works of those who follow the route laid out in ‘these dialogues’ and base their philosophy on Diderot’s principles (p. 288). This claim that there are people who do follow the route laid out in ‘these dialogues’ is one we will return to in a few paragraphs.

Meanwhile, he gives one last passage from the Éléments, internally uncut, on the way in which an eye senses a tree and the soul gets an idea of it (pp. 289–90); by way of an introduction, he remarks again that Condillac failed to think of this issue (p. 288); he is beginning to prepare the way for his attack on Condillac. Placing an ‘etc’ to indicate the end of the quotation, Naigeon then commences his retrospective overview: ‘Telle est, autant que la mémoire et le secours de quelques extraits très-succints faits autrefois sur l’original, pour ma propre utilité, peuvent m’en assurer, l’analyse de ce second Dialogue’ [That, insofar as my memory and the help of a few extremely short passages copied long ago from the original for my personal use confirm, is the analysis of this second Dialogue] (p. 290): we analysed this passage earlier.47

The attack on Condillac, running for many pages, is a crucial part of the presentation of the quotation mesh from the ‘Rêve’ and from the Éléments de physiologie. It is not merely a violent critique of Condillac but more importantly a comparison of Condillac’s and Diderot’s theories of human understanding which aims to sweep aside Condillac and give Diderot his place and prestige. His final swipe, not just at Condillac but Rousseau too, both of whom he derisively calls the ‘saints du jour’ [saints of the day], is also targeted at all the ‘petits profonds’ [tiny thinkers] who content themselves with rehearsing Condillac’s views (pp. 306–07).

The nineteenth-century philosopher and historian of philosophy, Jean-Filibert Damiron (1794–1862), in his Mémoire sur Naigeon (1857), asks who these ‘petits profonds’ could be, saying that ‘Je ne vois guère à citer que Gurat [sic], qui ne l’aimait pas, et auquel sans doute il le rendait’ [I cannot see who to cite other than Gurat who disliked him, and whom he no doubt also disliked].48 ‘Gurat’, one supposes, is a typo for Dominique-Joseph Garat. But I wonder whether Naigeon really is

47 See above.
targeting Garat or the Ideologues more generally here; it seems unlikely given their own insistent criticism of Condillac and also the presence we have traced within their work of the *Éléments de physiologie*: the particular aspects of their discussion of human understanding which I have argued came from the *Éléments* are also present in Naigeon’s *Mémoires*, whether we are talking about sensation-based thought, the importance of the imagination, or the potential for the perfecting of the senses. Naigeon would have recognised these aspects when he heard or read their work, even if he had not himself been party to communicating Diderot’s theories to them in the first place. Furthermore, in the *Mémoires historiques et philosophiques*, Naigeon twice mentions Diderot’s ‘idées mères’ [*mother ideas*], these highly fertile ideas of his, that were
so influential and whose phrasing is so recognisable (pp. 168, 412). It seems more likely that when he says that some of these ‘idées mères’ ‘se retrouvent plus ou moins développées dans plusieurs ouvrages publiés de son temps, et dans quelques autres qui ont paru depuis, et qu’on a même beaucoup loués dans certains journaux’ [can be found, more or less developed, in many works of his time and in some that have been published since, and which have received much praise in certain newspapers] (p. 412), and when he praises ‘ceux qui suivent en général la route tracée de ces deux dialogues, et qui philosophent sur les principes de l’auteur’ [those who in general follow in the path laid out by these two dialogues and who philosophise according to the author’s principles] (p. 288), he is alluding to Garat, Cabanis, and Destutt de Tracy, and that therefore, when he attacks the disciples of Condillac, he is not targetting the Ideologues. However, this is what, via Damiron, has generally been supposed.

It is important, moreover, not to lose sight of what Naigeon claims here, that ‘la route tracée de ces deux dialogues’ [the path laid out by these two dialogues] is being followed by others. This is a crucial confirmatory claim for this study, that is, that the Éléments de physiologie were known, and were influencing the work of others. He does not say who he means, and we cannot know for sure. But it seems likely, given the common emphasis on human understanding that all these works share, that he is alluding to the work of the Ideologues. It is also possible, given the prominent position given to Bordeu, that Naigeon is thinking of vitalist doctors, such as Paul-Joseph Barthez and Paul-Victor de Sèze, both of whom he mentions as worthy of ‘toute l’attention des philosophes’ [all the attention of the philosophers].49 However, it remains more likely, given the common focus on the human understanding, that he is referring primarily to the Ideologues.

Let us also linger for a moment on the title that Naigeon consistently uses, Les deux dialogues. These two dialogues, according to Naigeon’s own internal subtitles, are the ‘Suite d’un entretien philosophique supposé, entre D’Alembert et Diderot’ (p. 207) and ‘Le Rêve de d’Alembert’ (p. 224), and as we have seen, the first is an accurate title,

49 Naigeon, Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, p. 223n for both Barthez and de Sèze; see also 233n and 245n for further extensive reference to (and quotation from) Barthez.
whereas the second is accurate to some extent, in that it does indeed introduce considerable quotation from ‘Le Rêve’, but also, as we know, contains concealed quotation from another, more substantial source. In fact the title of Les deux dialogues is not particularly mysterious. It was the title that Diderot himself gave Le Rêve de d’Alembert when it was freshly written; there are two instances of him referring to it by that name in his letters to Grimm from November 1769, as Georges Dulac tells us.\footnote{Georges Dulac in DPV 17, p. 76. See Denis Diderot, Correspondance, ed. by Roth and Varloot, vol. 9, pp. 190, 207.} Les deux dialogues is also the title of a version which Diderot had copied for Catherine II in St Petersburg in 1774, with different names given for the interlocutors, and which has an opening letter to her in which he also uses a story of broken fragments.\footnote{See Dulac, ‘Établissement du texte’, Le Rêve de d’Alembert, DPV 17, p. 76 (this manuscript is known as ‘MD’).} This letter, however, is not quite the same as the one he will later use as the ‘Avertissement’ of the Éléments de physiologie; we have mentioned this piece, and where it fits in the narrative of the fragments, in an earlier chapter.\footnote{See Chapter 2, ‘From Elements to Fragments’.} Emphasising the importance of the fragment motif, at the end of this copy of Les deux dialogues we find the Fragments dont on n’a pu retrouver la véritable place, the very first draft of the Éléments de physiologie.\footnote{DPV 17, p. 225. Le manuscrit de Pétersbourg/1774/Avertissement des deux dialogues/ Fragments dont on n’a pu trouver la véritable place, ed. by George Dulac, DPV 17, pp. 213–60.} Naigeon knew of the Rêve de d’Alembert from its very earliest versions and made a copy of it at that time, and it, along with a copy made much later, are now used to track the different draft levels of the Rêve.\footnote{See Dulac, ‘Établissement du texte’, Le Rêve de d’Alembert, DPV 17, p. 75 (N¹): 80 (N²).} So he would have known it, if not exclusively, by that title.

We have already sketched out a few suggestions for why Naigeon should have wished to mask the existence of this separate work on physiology, which are broadly that he is presenting a particular version of Diderot as the weighty philosopher of human understanding who has corrected and overtaken Locke and Condillac. Thus he minimises some of the more overt statements of materialism (they become implicit rather than explicit) and also removes anything which runs the risk of being labelled immoral. And yet, as we know, he did not completely hide this separate work. Instead, he gave it a sort of potential existence,
as a series of letters which Diderot planned to address to Naigeon and in which he was to give ‘à sa manière, une nouvelle théorie, ou plutôt une histoire naturelle et expérimentale de l’homme’ [in his manner, a new theory or rather a natural and experimental history of man], but which, sadly, he never got round to, leaving only disordered fragments (p. 291). This is the already-alluded-to re-evocation of the ‘Avertissement’ to the Éléments de physiologie. So he did not hide it completely.

It has also been our consistent view that Naigeon’s version of this ‘Second dialogue’ is indeed his version, and not the reproduction of a further text by Diderot himself. There are a number of reasons to support this view, starting with the commonsensical one that there exist many manuscript copies of the Rêve de d’Alembert (Dulac uses twelve principle ones in his DPV edition), and two extant known copies of the Éléments de physiologie, while there is not a single manuscript from Diderot’s lifetime that meshes them. Secondly, we have Naigeon’s repeated remarks on the editorial role in general, as well as his own views of what needs to be done with respect to Diderot’s manuscripts and the Deux dialogues in particular, and indeed what he has done, reorganising and transposing Diderot’s ‘raisonsnements’ (arguments). What he claims to have done is borne out exactly by our own work tracking these reorganised and transposed arguments. Furthermore, we have a precious trace of Naigeon’s technique in a piece of marginalia in his copy of the Rêve: next to Bordeu’s remark on the persistence of pain in a limb that is no longer there, Naigeon adds a passage from the Éléments, which he annotates as being from the ‘Physiologie de Diderot’; these two passages are then sewn together in the Mémoires (p. 265), with the passage from the Éléments following the Saint Petersburg manuscript word for word (although the Vandeul version is also very close).

55 Terada also holds this view, calling it instead ‘une réécriture totale’ [a complete rewriting] (MT 64–65). I would simply add that it’s a re-ordering, not a rewriting.

56 Dulac, while dismissing the Mémoires as a useful variant text of the Rêve, clearly holds the same view. He writes that ‘Ce ne sont cependant que des morceaux combinés dans un nouvel ensemble et il nous a pas paru possible d’en tenir compte dans l’apparat critique’ [they are however nothing other than snippets of text arranged in a new order and it did not seem possible to us to include them in the critical apparatus] (Dulac, ‘Etablissement du texte’, Le Rêve de d’Alembert, DPV 17, p. 84). He refers the reader to Dieckmann’s 1938 article on Naigeon: Dieckmann, ‘J.-A. Naigeon’s Analysis of Diderot’s Rêve de d’Alembert’.

57 This information comes from Jean Varloot and Georges Dulac’s edition. The section from Le Rêve is: ‘on sent du mal à un membre qu’on n’a plus’ [we feel pain in a
The question that remains is thus which manuscript version he was using, the early draft held in St Petersburg (hereafter SP), and published in the Assézat and Tourneux edition, or the mature draft held in the Fonds Vandeul (hereafter V) in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, as edited by Jean Mayer in DPV and subsequently by Paolo Quintili and Motoichi Terada. We said earlier that it seems most likely that he had access to both of the versions of the Éléments de physiologie we still have, and probably also to a third version that we no longer have access to.\(^58\) I am not assessing which particular manuscript or manuscripts of the Rêve de d’Alembert Naigeon was using.) I would now like to add some detail to this proposition, while avoiding cumbersome text comparison and commentary. The different layers and sources of the text can be instantaneously visualised in the digital edition, and I refer the reader to it for the nitty-gritty.\(^59\) Here I want to bring together a few clear examples to show that Naigeon was using both extant manuscripts of the Éléments, and sometimes prefers one, sometimes the other. Starting with the mundane, I will look at a few single word variants; I will then look at the order in which Naigeon quotes chunks from the source texts to see whether we can establish which one he is following, the two

\(^58\) Motoichi Terada, whose edition of the Éléments de physiologie includes an appendix with the relevant pages from Naigeon’s Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, with footnotes giving the source passages in the Rêve de d’Alembert and the Éléments de physiologie, considers that Naigeon was using SP (MT 57). He accounts for those elements in the Mémoires that seem closer to V by suggesting that Naigeon was developing his own analysis, one that seems to have coincidentally moved in the same direction as V (MT 66, 68).

\(^59\) See https://naigeons-diderot.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.htm.
manuscripts being organised completely differently, and I will also note the distribution of quoted passages according to the source chapters or sections; I will subsequently note where passages which are only in one of the versions of the *Éléments* are quoted by Naigeon in the *Mémoires*, and I will finally point to a passage that is to be found in neither of these extant versions, and may therefore point to a further manuscript variant. In each case, following chronological order of composition, I will take SP first and V second.

So, the words: in the *Mémoires*, we read about how the organs can be arranged in the wrong order ‘depuis l’orifice de l’œsophage jusqu’à l’extrémité du canal intestinal’ [from the orifice of the oesophagus to the very end of the intestinal canal] (p. 260): the word *orifice* is in SP, whereas V corrects this to *origine*.\(^{60}\) This suggests that SP is the source text. However, in a passage on dreams, Naigeon mentions the disconnected dream which ‘suscite une image’ [provokes an image] (p. 270); *suscite* is in V, whereas SP has *surexcite* [over-excites].\(^{61}\) Furthermore, when Naigeon is quoting passages about the dangers of excessive study, he writes that: ‘l’homme de la nature est fait pour penser peu et agir beaucoup; la science, au contraire, pense beaucoup et se remue peu’ [natural man is made to think only a little and act a lot; knowledge on the other hand thinks a lot and moves only a little] (p. 279): SP had had *l’homme de la nature* [natural man] matched by its equivalent *l’homme de la science* [the scholarly man, the mean of learning], whereas Naigeon and V miss out *l’homme de*, and simply say *la science*: this seems like a mistake, and it is common to both.\(^{62}\) Thus it looks as if the particular phrasing (and probably mistake) of V is replicated in Naigeon’s *Mémoires*.

Next, the order of texts: Naigeon reproduces a long passage on how violent sensation is incompatible with thought (p. 262) which we find in exactly the same form in SP (p. 356) but which is cut into two in V and placed into sections which are far apart (pp. 294, 146). Furthermore, two pages (pp. 372–73) from the section in SP entitled ‘Entendement’ are quoted verbatim in Naigeon (pp. 280–83), whereas

\(^{60}\) SP 420; V: Diderot, *Éléments de physiologie*, ed. by Jean Mayer, *Œuvres complètes*, DPV (Paris: Hermann, 1987), vol. 17, pp. 261–574 (p. 445) [hereafter DPV]/PQ 266/ MT 261. SP refers to the early draft now held in St Petersburg; V stands for Vandeul, the archive holding the mature version.

\(^{61}\) SP 362; V: DPV 482/PQ 312/MT 297.

\(^{62}\) SP 273; V: DPV 511/PQ 353/MT 324.
this passage is divided in V and placed in two chapters, ‘Entendement’ and ‘Imagination’ (pp. 288–89; 303–04). So this is strong evidence of SP’s presence. In favour of V, we have a more complex case to present, whereby we find the source texts for a page of quotation on sensations and their variety in Naigeon in two pages from the same chapter and sub-section in V (pp. 285–86), although they are somewhat chopped about and re-ordered. However, when we look at SP, we find these same sections drawn from six pages and four different sub-sections of SP (in order of quotation: p. 358 ['Sensations: Effet Bizarre'], p. 356 ['Sensations'], pp. 355–56 ['Sensations'], p. 349 ['Sens internes: Sens en général'], pp. 350–51 ['Sens internes: sensations'], and as the parentheses hopefully show, from two separate main headings ('Sens internes' and 'Sensations'), which have their own sub-sections, one of which is, confusingly, 'sensations'). This seems to show that the reworked text, V, is being followed here, rather than the obviously messy and repetitive SP. Yet the picture is not clear, and one phrase we find in SP and Naigeon does not make its way into V. This is why it seems likely Naigeon was consulting both draft versions, and possibly a third one as well.

There are further examples of quotation from passages we can source to only one of the versions, and again this leads us to both of them. Naigeon quotes SP on healthy nerves and free communication between the nerve and the brain (N 227; SP 311), as well as a paragraph on seminal fluid which Diderot describes as a ‘folie conjecturale’ [conjectural madness] (N 238; SP 403); the first statement can be found reworded in V, but the ‘folie conjecturale’ is not included at all. However, the story Naigeon tells about Diderot’s ‘système particulier de physiologie’ (p. 291) draws, as we have already shown, on the ‘Avertissement’ to V, so again, we have evidence of the presence of both draft versions. Although not conclusive, it may also be worth noting that when we plot Naigeon’s quotation against the table of contents of the Vandeul version, we find that he quotes from every chapter in the first and third parts (‘Des Êtres’ and ‘Phénomènes du cerveau’ respectively), and from only seven of the twenty-five chapters from

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63 ‘L’impression naît du dedans ou du dehors, selon l’organe affecté. L’impression est ou goût, ou odorat, ou vision, ou son, ou toucher’ [the impression arises from inside or outside, depending on the affected organ]. Naigeon, Mémoires historiques et philosophiques, p. 228; SP 356.

64 DPV 458/PQ 284/MT 274.
the second part (‘Éléments et parties du corps humain’). This shows a clear preference for the introductory first part considering life as an interconnected whole and for the last part focusing on sensation and the workings of the brain, to the partial exclusion of part two, with its technical physiological description, resulting, as Motoichi Terada points out, in a de-Hallerised version of the Éléments de physiologie.\(^{65}\) We have already noted this thematic preference, and that this is also a feature of the works of Garat, Cabanis, and Destutt de Tracy.\(^{66}\) This profile is much clearer to see in V. In SP, any pattern in the quotation is much harder to discern, as SP is not organised into parts, and as we have already seen, some sub-headings in one area are the same as main headings of another; this is part of its early-draft character. Thus, there are forty-seven headed sections (they often have single paragraphs that have their own sub-headings too, but they are not being counted here), and of these forty-seven, Naigeon quotes twenty-eight, with most passages coming from ‘De l’homme’ and ‘Cerveau et cervelet’ (twelve each), ‘Animaux’ (ten), ‘âme’ (eight), and ‘Entendement’ and ‘Mouvement’ (seven each), ‘Organes’ (six), with the following three chapters all equal—‘Sens internes’, ‘Sommeil’ and ‘Nerfs’ (five). Thereafter the instances of quotation are too scattered to be helpful to record.

It is difficult to pronounce clearly one way or another when surveying this evidence about the source passages, but the slight preponderance of texts from SP (both with respect to their ordering and the presence of passages absent from V), when considered alongside the relative distribution of the quotation, may suggest that Naigeon was more familiar with SP than V, and plundered it rather than V for preference, but that the re-structured mature version did nonetheless influence his understanding of it; the fact that he quotes from every chapter of the first and final parts of V tends in this direction. In favour of his also having access to a further manuscript version, we might point to a passage which is not to be found in either SP or V, and to a note which

\(^{65}\) MT 59: ‘On peut ainsi constater l’absence presque totale de Haller dans le Précis du Rêve, malgré les nombreuses citations des EP [it can therefore be seen that Haller is almost completely absent from the Summary of the Dream, despite the numerous quotations from the Elements of Physiology]. Haller as in Albrecht von Haller, pre-eminent physiologist, discussed in Chapter 3.

\(^{66}\) See Chapters 8 and 9.
resembles passages from SP and V in different ways, and seems more likely to have been from a different version than a splicing of the two.\textsuperscript{67} This, then, was what Naigeon had long been referring to, his ‘analyse raisonnée de celui de ces ouvrages qui m’a paru le plus profond’.\textsuperscript{68} We can measure the distance of this piece of work from the ‘quelques extraits très-succints’ [a few extremely short passages] (p. 290) which, he claims, were all he had to work from, or the ‘quelques matériaux épars’ [a few scattered materials] (p. 291) that Diderot had supposedly left; we see how this story is tailored to pick up on and continue Diderot’s claims in the ‘Avertissement’ from V. It is not impossible that Naigeon may even have taken encouragement for his reordering project from this very ‘Avertissement’; we saw in Chapter 10 that he was already poised to operate in that way.\textsuperscript{69}

His \textit{Mémoires historiques et philosophiques sur la vie et les ouvrages de Denis Diderot}, however, were not published during his lifetime. Emmanuel Boussuge and Françoise Launay trace the fate of the manuscript: left to Naigeon’s brother Charles Claude, after his death in 1816, they passed to the third sibling, Mme Dufour de Villeneuve, who wrote to Diderot’s daughter Angélique to offer to sell it to her; Angélique appears to have declined.\textsuperscript{70} After Naigeon’s sister died, her things were sold, and J. L. L. Brière, the publisher, bought it, planning to publish it in his edition, which indeed he did.\textsuperscript{71} Out it came, as the twenty-second volume of that edition, in 1823, and it was banned by the Tribunal correctionnel de la Seine on 23 December 1823.\textsuperscript{72} Decades later, Maurice Tourneux talked of a new edition of it coming out, but nothing

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\item\textsuperscript{67} The passage which is in neither SP or V is here: ‘On peut même dire que les nerfs’ to ‘qu’une même substance’ (N 227); this 7-line insert sits within quotation from SP (276) and V (155). The note (N 284n) resembles SP in that it acknowledges a cut from SP with an ‘etc’ and uses the term ‘r\ésonnances’ as SP does. However, it comes from two separate pages in SP (358; 355), whereas in V it runs on directly (283–84), with no intervening passage. V uses the term ‘ressouvenances’ instead of ‘r\ésonnances’, and its opening clause is slightly different.
\item\textsuperscript{68} Naigeon, ‘Diderot’, \textit{Philosophie ancienne et moderne}, vol. 2, p. 228.
\item\textsuperscript{69} See above.
\item\textsuperscript{70} Boussuge and Launay, ‘Du nouveau sur Jacques André Naigeon’, pp. 173, 181.
\item\textsuperscript{71} Boussuge and Launay, ‘Du nouveau sur Jacques André Naigeon’, p. 189. Its whereabouts had been known, and are mentioned in Barbier’s \textit{Examen critique et complément des dictionnaires historiques les plus répandus}; he incorrectly calls it an ‘ouvrage inachevé’; we have already commented on this aspect, see above, note 8 in this chapter.
\item\textsuperscript{72} Boussuge and Launay, ‘Du nouveau sur Jacques André Naigeon’, p. 189.
\end{enumerate}
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came of it. However, and despite the banning, the book had already been widely bought and read; David Adams tells us it was often bought separately.\footnote{David Adams, \textit{Bibliographie des œuvres de Diderot, 1739–1900}, vol. 2, p. 141 (see Adams’ ‘Commentaire’, n. 3).} Its onward reception, and the reception of Diderot in the nineteenth century generally, is a new story that we do not have space to tell here.\footnote{You will be relieved to hear.}