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Wiep van Bunge and Hans Bots, eds., *Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), Le Philosophe de Rotterdam: Philosophy, Religion, and Reception. Selected Papers of the Tercentenary Conference held at Rotterdam, 7-8 December 2006*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. Viii + 280 pp. Index. \$144.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-90-04-16536-6.

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2006 marked the tercentenary of the death of Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), and the small but vigorous community of Bayle scholars did not miss the occasion. Having founded in 2005 an Association Pierre Bayle with a mission to “favoriser les études concernant la vie de Pierre Bayle, son influence et son œuvre en general,” the Bayle community launched three commemorative conferences in 2006 designed to reflect on the life and legacy of the “philosophe de Rotterdam.”[1] The first, held in Foix and La Carla Bayle, France, Bayle’s birthplace, focused on his correspondence. A second event, held in Paris, placed the monumental *Dictionnaire historique et critique* under scrutiny. The finale, held in Rotterdam, brought the program together by uniting the leading figures in Bayle studies for a two-day examination of his overall historical significance.

Conscious of the role played in 1956 by the first international Bayle conference in launching the renaissance of Bayle scholarship that has occurred over the last half century, the organizers further emulated their predecessors by producing a book that would carry the message of the three conferences to the wider public. Paul Dibon’s edited collection, *Pierre Bayle, Le philosophe de Rotterdam. Études et documents*, published in 1959, disseminated the scholarly insights of the first Bayle conclave, including the work of such pioneering twentieth-century Bayle scholars as Élisabeth Labrousse, Richard Popkin, and Walter Rex.[2] The editors of this volume, each a founding board member of the Association Pierre Bayle, propose their collection as a renovation of Dibon’s foundational compendium. Containing a representative selection of fifteen papers presented at the Rotterdam conference, the book offers a richly documented survey of contemporary scholarly thought about Bayle’s life and legacy. As such, it also gives readers a convenient point of reference for assessing the place of Bayle, or at least Bayle scholarship, within the broader historiography of the European Enlightenment.

Pierre Bayle was a prolific writer whose formal works fill nine folio volumes and his epistolary commerce another eight. Yet to measure the man and his influence from his written work alone is to miss crucial aspects of his historical legacy.[3] Born in 1647 to a Protestant clerical family residing in a small French village in the foothills of the Pyrenees, Bayle’s youth combined intellectual stimulation with material deprivation. Initially educated by his minister father, Bayle’s adult life began in 1668 when he left the poverty of his home and enrolled, without parental support, at the Jesuit college at Toulouse. A conversion to Catholicism followed soon after, one sincere enough to produce a student thesis dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Yet while Bayle earned a masters degree for his work at Toulouse, within eighteenth months of his conversion he was back at home with his family and recommitted to the Reformed faith. With his parents’ blessings, he then left home for good, traveling first to Switzerland, where he found

work as a tutor in Geneva, and then to northern France where in 1675 he was appointed to a chair in philosophy at the Protestant Academy in Sedan.

During these years the French crown was ramping up the repression of French Protestantism that would culminate in the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the subsequent Huguenot diaspora throughout Europe. Bayle's life moved slightly ahead of this wave of repression. He was already in exile in Holland when the French authorities suppressed the Protestant Academy in Sedan in 1681, and by 1685, when he was joined there by numerous Huguenot exiles fleeing French persecution, he was an established citizen of Rotterdam with a supportive Dutch patron and a teaching post at the local college, the *École Illustre*. Bayle's move to Holland also marked his debut as a public critic and author. *Pensées divers sur la comète*, his widely read and influential critique of religious superstition and priestly authority, appeared in 1682, and this was followed the next year by his fiery pro-Huguenot tract *Critique générale de l'histoire du calvinisme de M. Maimbourg*.^[4] The latter earned condemnation by the Catholic authorities in France and a public immolation in the place de Grève in Paris. Further critical tracts poured from Bayle's pen throughout the 1680s and 1690s, and in 1684 he also initiated one of his most influential intellectual endeavors, launching his learned periodical *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*. Learned journalism was in its infancy when Bayle launched his *Nouvelles*, but over the next two decades it would explode into one of the most prolific and transformative vehicles for intellectual change. Bayle was in the vanguard of the new intellectual currents that made learned journalism so potent and influential.

When Louis XIV decreed Protestant worship illegal in France in 1685, Bayle, already a seasoned Huguenot exile, found a new focus for his critical esprit. His 1686 *Commentaire philosophique* responded directly to the Revocation, and the text raised concerns among Protestant and Catholic theologians alike through its exploration of the principles of religious tolerance outside of the constraints of confessional commitment.^[5] Bayle also directed critical tracts against the religious views of Protestants he disagreed with, creating controversies in all directions. Bayle's views were challenged by Jesuits in Paris but also by Dutch Huguenot exiles such as Pierre Jurieu, an orthodox Protestant theologian, and Jean Le Clerc, a fellow francophone journalist. These controversies reached one climax in 1693 when Jurieu persuaded the civic authorities in Rotterdam to remove Bayle from his teaching post because of his heterodox views. Bayle responded by accepting professional exile, passing what would be the final decade of his life in intellectual retreat.

In 1697 Bayle released the fruits of this professional isolation: the first edition of his monumental *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. This work enjoyed a wide readership in eighteenth-century Europe and has since come to exemplify Bayle's critical philosophical spirit. Public reaction to the *Dictionnaire*, offered in treatises, pamphlets, and essays in learned periodicals, was also vigorous, and it prompted Bayle to publish a second, expanded edition of the work in 1702.^[6] In 1705, he provoked further controversy with his *Continuation des pensées diverses*, a book that argued for the impossibility of answering the atheist challenge to Christian theology on either moral or rational terms.^[7] Throughout his adult life Bayle also engaged in an active correspondence, clarifying and debating points in person and in private that were at the same moment generating general contention in the wider public sphere.

Bayle died suddenly in December 1706 in the full flush of his intellectual vitality, but his influence reverberated for decades after his death thanks to citations from and republications of his copious writings. More than one scholar has seen in Bayle the first fully-fledged figure of the European Enlightenment, and for many he was the *philosophe* who taught all other eighteenth-century aspirants to that title what the role entailed. To return to Bayle's life and legacy now, as this collection of essays invites us to do, is therefore to pose again the question of how Bayle's

life and writings should be understood in relation to the current thinking about European intellectual history and especially the history of the European Enlightenment.

The editors organize their presentation in three parts. The first contains essays by Leny van Lieshout, Theo Verbeek, Todd Ryan, and Eric Jornik that “attempt to locate Bayle within the context of his Dutch surroundings” (p. 2). The second section deals with Bayle’s religious commitments and includes essays by Hans Bots on Bayle and Catholicism, Hubert Bost on Bayle and the Reformed tradition, Adam Sutcliffe on Bayle and Judaism, and Gianni Paganini on the philosophical foundations of Bayle’s theology. The third and largest part of the book is devoted to the reception of Bayle’s writings. This section includes essays by Jonathan Israel, Marie-Hélène Quéval, Justin Champion, and Wiep van Bunge that each respectively pursues the place of Bayle in the French, German, British, and Dutch Enlightenments. Essays by Jan de Vet, Rob van de Schoor, and Antony McKenna complete the book by examining, in order, Bayle’s reception in the later eighteenth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth centuries. Given the erudition and expertise of the authors, it is no surprise that each of the essays in this collection is a successful and insightful piece of work. For those seeking further edification, each article also includes copious references pointing to other, relevant scholarly literature. The collection is also flawlessly edited, and it includes a convenient name index that allows for easy referencing of the key actors.

In sum, the book gives readers a scrupulously reliable and often insightful introduction to Bayle’s life and thought. But is the image of Bayle found in its pages the most illuminating available with respect to the broader currents of recent Enlightenment historiography? The decision to include so little broader contextual analysis of Bayle’s place in the political and social history of Europe is the first framework to question. References to Bayle’s life appear throughout every essay, and it would be erroneous to say that the Bayle presented in these pages is a disembodied mind detached from his existence as a Huguenot exile and French expatriate pursuing the life of a *homme de lettres* in late seventeenth-century Holland. Yet when compared to other frames that might have been chosen for organizing a general reflection on Bayle’s life and legacy, the one adopted here, with its strong emphasis on a traditional history of ideas approach, is not very conducive to linking Bayle with recent Enlightenment historiography despite the obvious resonances between Bayle’s life and work and this scholarship.

Relegating the question of Bayle’s relation to his social and political context to the first group of essays, and framing even these discussions around the role that his Dutch residence played in shaping his philosophical thought, the volume offers us frustratingly little access to the wider social, political, and cultural currents that clearly fed into making Bayle who he was. Leny van Lieshout’s opening assessment of Bayle’s place in the cultural life of Rotterdam is, in fact, richly suggestive of the different insights that a broader contextualization of Bayle’s life and work would reveal. She has interesting things to say about Bayle’s first and primary patron in Rotterdam, Adriaen Paets, and about his editor and printer, Reinier Leers. The intellectual sociability that linked Paets, Leers, and Bayle to merchants, clerics, and civic leaders in Rotterdam and to libraries, academies, and print shops in the city is also alluded to suggestively. Struggling for attention in the fifteen pages allotted to this discussion, however, is the broader history of emergent European civil society within the Republic of Letters, its connection to political developments such as absolutist religious persecution in France and the Glorious Revolution in England, and the emergence of Holland as a hub of global commerce and empire and a crossroads for actors involved in these social and political upheavals. Also glimpsed in the background are the corresponding changes in writing, print culture, and intellectual media, ranging from critical pamphleteering, learned journalism, clandestine book selling and manuscript circulation to public intellectual sociability in academies, book shops, salons, and

coffee houses that were entangled with all of these social and political transformations. Van Lieshout does an admirable job introducing these contexts as frames for thinking about Bayle, and other essays in the volume mime these gestures by making similar references to this nexus when discussing Bayle's writings and thought. But taken as a whole, these suggestive glimpses at what a broader contextual understanding of Bayle's life and work would look like only throw into clear relief the text- and author-centered history of ideas approach to Bayle that is offered in this collection.

Indeed, despite the editors' claim that the first four essays work to situate Bayle in his Dutch context, only van Lieshout's contribution can really be described as realizing that agenda in an institutional and cultural way. Theo Verbeek, a distinguished historian of Cartesian philosophy in the Low Countries, draws on his vast erudition to situate Bayle's thought, especially as found in the relevant articles of his *Dictionnaire*, in relation to the philosophical history of Dutch Cartesianism. Todd Ryan continues this analysis by exploring Bayle's relationship to Malebranche and to the occasionalist strand of Cartesianism that the French Oratorian exemplified. His approach centers on reconstructing the logic of Malebranche's occasionalist arguments and then assessing the logic of Bayle's alternatives to them. Eric Jorink, the last author in this section, offers a refreshing departure from the abstract philosophical unities of the previous two essays by situating Bayle's *Pensées* about the comet of 1680 neither in terms of the broad divide between Cartesian rationalism and religious superstition, nor the eternally vexed question of Bayle's ultimate religious convictions (more on that soon), but in relation to an obscure Dutch theological debate and the textual ephemera that it produced. The result is a suggestive account of how Bayle's immersion in the public intellectual culture of seventeenth-century Holland fed into his motivations when writing one of his most widely read philosophical tracts.

Jorink's approach is refreshing because it eschews reading Bayle in terms of an allegedly determinative, although abstract, matrix of philosophical and religious "isms" and instead looks at the material reality of textual production, circulation, and reception in turn-of-the-seventeenth-century Europe. From this point of view, Jorink offers an interesting revision to existing understandings by arguing that critical history, as developed within seventeenth-century Biblical scholarship, was more important to Bayle's thought than secular philosophical rationalism. Jorink also shows that one does not have to make a choice between history of ideas and contextualized cultural history, even if the latter means reading Bayle more fully in terms of the contingent and often locally specific struggles that provoked his writings.

The question of Bayle's ultimate faith commitments, which has dominated Bayle commentary for over three centuries, would benefit from a reconsideration according to the terms of this more contextualized scholarly perspective. That the question still poses central dilemmas for contemporary Bayle scholars is made clear by this volume. But nothing marks the mismatch between the approach taken in this volume overall and the one prevalent in contemporary Enlightenment historiography than the book's pre-occupation with this time worn chestnut of Bayle studies. In a nutshell (pun intended), the problem involves determining from the evidence of Bayle's often elusive and elliptical writings what his core religious convictions were. Opinions range from those who see in Bayle a man of faith, whose attacks on religious superstition and clerical authority were a call for further reform within the church, to those who see an atheistic wolf hiding in Bayle's writings, one who uses professions of faith to clothe himself in a suit of orthodoxy so as to allow his texts to escape censure and circulate subversively in the wider public sphere. Central to this debate is the question of how to interpret Bayle's professed skepticism. Those committed to a radical interpretation of Bayle see a skeptic through and through whose most important contribution to European thought is his insistence upon critical doubt as the cornerstone of philosophical and political liberty. Against this view stand those,

such as Richard Popkin most famously, who see a “fideistic” foundation underlying Bayle’s pursuit of Pyrrhonian doubt. For the “fideists,” Bayle’s critical skepticism demonstrates the absurdities and inevitable contradictions of human reason while positioning critical thinkers to see the true faith commitments that must be made for any rational consensus to obtain.

It is the exceptional essay in this volume that does not touch in one way or another on this classic conundrum in Bayle studies, and while the editors note that no new consensus was reached at the commemorative conferences, they nevertheless suggest that the question of Bayle’s ultimate faith commitments remains central to Bayle scholarship. The middle group of essays, devoted to Bayle’s relationship to the different European faith traditions, in fact serves as a systematic survey of the issues bound up in the larger question of Bayle’s religious beliefs. Hans Bots’ essay on Bayle’s Catholicism, which explores both his early connections with the Jesuits and his relation to the Erasmian tradition of Catholic humanism, argues a version of the fideist thesis by stressing Bayle’s connection to those strands of Catholicism that advocated an anti-dogmatic approach to theology and worried about the links between religious mystery and the excesses of clerical authority. Gianni Paganini finds a similar Bayle in his reading of the theological debates that linked him with thinkers such as Le Clerc, Malebranche, Leibniz, and Antoine Arnauld. As he sums up, “on retrouve chez Bayle le développement d’un projet humaniste qui se fonde, de manière paradoxale, non sur les instruments de la théologie rationnelle, ... mais sur l’apport du scepticisme à l’égard de toute théologie possible” (p. 120).

Hubert Bost likewise finds in Bayle a “Protestant compliqué,” one who manifests a “plasticité des postures” (p. 100). Bost traces Bayle’s flexibility to the interplay of three distinct forms of Protestantism present in his life. Protestantism, argues Bost, was first a matter of biography for Bayle, especially family history, but it was also a site of politics, one that Bayle was compelled to negotiate by the circumstances of his historical situation. Protestantism was thirdly a particular set of theological, epistemological, and moral claims that constituted one locus of contestation in the broader philosophical discussion of the period. Bost’s suggestive point is that perhaps the question of Bayle’s ultimate religious convictions, like the question of his Protestantism, remains clouded because of a failure to recognize the multiple and often incommensurable ways that religion functioned in early modern Europe. Adam Sutcliffe’s examination of Bayle and Judaism pursues a similar theme, stressing the “unsurprisingly paradoxical” (p. 121) character of Bayle’s relation to the Jews and the Jewish faith. An exile who underwent multiple conversions before ultimately settling on a multi-perspectival and cosmopolitan viewpoint, Bayle’s life, Sutcliffe contends, was in many respects very “Jew-like,” and even “Jew-ish,” if the point of reference for Judaism is the Sephardic Marranos who, like Baruch Spinoza, escaped Iberian persecution by removing themselves to Holland (p. 134). Bayle, however, was, like Spinoza, anything but a philo-Semite, and he subjected the Jews to frequent criticism, and even ridicule, in his writings, using the sacred link between the letter of scripture and Jewish religious practice to epitomize irrational and prejudicial religion. So if Bayle was Jewish in some respects, Sutcliffe contends, he was not, as some have implied, a Jewish philosopher.

So what ultimately were Bayle’s core religious views? Each of the authors here offers a rich survey of the state of current thinking, but each does so while also deploying descriptions such as “plastic,” “mutable,” “multifaceted,” “unstable,” “contradictory,” and “paradoxical” to characterize the complexities of Bayle’s thought. Bayle, these articles show, was a man of faith who in many ways defended the value of traditional religion and its foundations. But he was also, they further contend, a rational critic and skeptic who eagerly sought to dissolve foundational pieties and the mysteries of traditional belief. Bayle’s writings, these articles make clear, entered vigorously into the classic Western dialectic that opposed faith with reason. But, these articles also show, his texts pursued these questions while remaining consistent in their refusal to side unequivocally with one or the other side in these debates. In short, Bayle was

neither a rigorous man of faith nor a skeptical man of reason in any clear and unified way; he was, rather, one of European history's most vigorous wrestlers with the dialectical struggle between faith and reason itself.

So why the persistent search among scholars for a resolution of these contradictions? And why the continued scholarly pursuit of the holy grail of a squared interpretive circle regarding Bayle's core beliefs, one that would remove the aporia in his writings and reveal his true and unequivocal convictions? Everyone agrees, as is amply evinced here, that the goal will never be realized. So is it not therefore time to ask whether the question of Bayle's core religious convictions is perhaps a *question mal posé*?

In a pregnant accident of textual organization, one of the most powerful forces thwarting any move in this new interpretive direction appears in this volume at precisely the moment when his entry onto the stage has been most prepared. Having concluded the survey of Bayle's relationship to established religion, the volume turns to its third and longest section devoted to Bayle's reception and posthumous legacy. Effecting the transition, at the literal center of the book, is Jonathan Israel, who assesses Bayle's place in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment by wrestling with the contradictory interpretations of him extant in the half-century after his death. "A stark dualism is evident in [Bayle's] status in European thought," Israel asserts in a pronouncement of his core analytical axis. On the one hand were those "for whom Bayle seemed an entirely pernicious and 'atheistic' influence to be condemned and segregated from the proper, worthy, and permissible Enlightenment." On the other were "Anglo-Dutch Republicans" such as Bernard de Mandeville and "English Deists" such as Anthony Collins for whom "Bayle's writings appear to have been the single most important intellectual and literary influence." In between were a range of conflicted readers caught between these two poles. These included the "Catholic" abbé Claude-François Houteville, who was "hostile to the liberal Protestant theology of Bayle's '*rationaux*' opponents" but also at pains to decide "whether Bayle ought to be celebrated as a genuine 'fideist' or generally denounced as a crypto-atheist" (p. 135). Overall, Israel writes in summary, "...there were two distinct, sharply divergent, and bitterly rival interpretations of Bayle ceaselessly in strife with each other throughout the middle decades of the Enlightenment." Remarkably, he adds, "these rival interpretations ... exactly parallel the dispute going on among historians today about whether Bayle was genuinely a 'fideist,' or, on the other hand, a profoundly subversive and radical thinker conspiring against the existing order under the cover of 'fideism'" (p. 136).

This perceived mirroring of eighteenth-century history in Bayle scholarship is not so much an authentic echo from the archive as an illusion produced by the lenses used to generate this reflection. Israel's analysis in this article takes for granted the terms of his monumental re-interpretation of the Enlightenment, revealed so far in two volumes of a proposed trilogy, and in a synoptic abridgement published in 2009.[8] Israel's history of Enlightenment looms large throughout this collection over and beyond its presence in this individual contribution. It therefore warrants special attention when assessing the overall message of the book. I have analyzed "Israel's Enlightenment" elsewhere, and my reviews have joined into the chorus critical of Israel's approach to intellectual history and the conception of the Enlightenment that follows from it.[9] In the context of this review, the point to draw from these other discussions is how the weaknesses of this volume's understanding of Bayle illustrate well the problems of permitting Israel's approach to intellectual history and the history of Enlightenment to shape our understanding of the thinkers and movements that constitute this topic.

Summarized briefly, the problems with intellectual history à la Israel is its assumption that the core convictions of supposedly unified author-thinkers can be plumbed through reductive readings of their published texts. In practice, what this assumption produces is an approach to

intellectual history that involves first reading texts in search of the single, core position they are said to defend and then linking together these reductive and wooden textual interpretations into general accounts of the period's thought. Central to these general accounts are author names, which stand always for coherent intellectual positions, and a taxonomy of available "isms"—Cartesianism, Spinozism, Catholicism, Socianism, Deism, Fideism, Atheism, and so on—that work to link authors into unified intellectual camps that are then reified into philosophical parties alleged to be engaged in partisan philosophical battle with one another. "Israel's Enlightenment" is built upon this methodological scaffolding, for according to him the core doctrines of an inevitably triumphant European Enlightenment are brought into the world through the writings of Spinoza, generating in turn an Enlightenment movement conceived as the progressive advance of "Spinozism" (the shorthand for this template of doctrines) and the gradual defeat of its enemies, both moderate and extreme.

Bayle figures centrally in Israel's Enlightenment, serving as perhaps the key figure who pushes the radical edge of the seventeenth-century Spinozist movement across the threshold of the eighteenth century. To sustain his thesis, Israel sides emphatically with the radical atheist reading of Bayle while offering a renewed assault upon the moderate, "fideist" interpretation of his work. He also massages Bayle's complex and elusive article on "Spinoza" in the *Dictionnaire* into an allegedly coherent statement of radical Spinozism—this despite the many moments when Bayle appears critical of Spinoza's thought. He further insists on a unified and monolithic Bayle who unequivocally advances the Spinozist march despite all of the manifest and widely acknowledged philosophical ellipses in Bayle's writings.[10] Israel's article in this volume offers a snapshot of his method and his larger thesis, and since his overall approach in his wider work conforms to the history of ideas approach in general evidence throughout the essays of this volume, each echoes and reinforces the assumptions and theses of the other. "Israel's Enlightenment," and especially the arguments about Bayle that anchor it, are also important points of reference for many of the articles in this collection. When referenced, Israel's interpretations are also invariably introduced as salutary interventions, while the criticisms of "Israel's Enlightenment," so prevalent elsewhere, are nowhere to be found in these pages. A strong confluence between Israel's work and contemporary Bayle studies is thus manifest in this collection, yet this alliance, I would contend, is less a herald of scholarly progress than a snare that is keeping Bayle scholarship trapped in old interpretive cul-de-sacs from which it should be trying to escape.

The final group of articles, devoted to Bayle's posthumous reception and legacy, illustrate well the limitations of letting "Israel's Enlightenment" define the terms of contemporary Bayle studies. Within the rigid "every author a unified system of belief" taxonomy that anchors Israel's work, Bayle stands for the advance of secularism through radical skepticism and critical rationalism and as the steadfast opponent of Christian belief, clerical authority, and the claim that morality and social order are anchored in religious faith. Bayle's famous and controversial argument that a society of virtuous atheists would be as morally upright as a Christian society offers support to Israel's categorization, but to reduce Bayle to this one moment in his thought, as Israel's taxonomy demands, is to evacuate from his historical identity all of the nuances that made Bayle the profoundly influential and controversial thinker that he was. Some of the final articles of this volume make a similar attempt to read Bayle's legacy in Israel's terms by assuming a battle between radical secularizers and an opposing "party of faith" as the primary context into which all of Bayle's writings should be set. Others point to the limitations that follow from framing Bayle's agendas too rigidly in only these terms. Yet whichever the approach, Israel's categories are everywhere in play, and taken as a whole this makes the final part of this collection an illustrative example of the problems that follow when Israel's Enlightenment is operationalized into a broader historiographical program.

Marie-Hélène Quéval traces Bayle's eighteenth-century German reception by looking at the thought of Johann Christoph Gottsched, the German translator of Bayle's *Dictionnaire*. Situating Gottsched in terms of the religious controversies that dominated German thought c. 1750, and locating his translation project within the institutional space that brought him together with university professors, clerics, journalists, book sellers, and a nascent print- and sociability-based intellectual culture, Quéval creates a context for understanding how Bayle's writing intervened in this characteristic Enlightenment milieu. Yet by framing this cultural space in terms of a battle between "les penseurs orthodoxes et hétérodoxes" (pp. 154-55), she is led to find in Gottsched an "expert du double langage" (p. 171), one who worked both sides of these supposed battle lines in elusive ways. Gottsched's approach to the slippery Bayle was, therefore, similarly slippery, Quéval shows, and we are left with an image of Bayle and his readers that complicates rather than clarifies the Enlightenment they are supposed to exemplify. In particular, since Quéval's analysis takes for granted that a fundamental divide existed in eighteenth-century Germany between secularizers and orthodox believers, an assumption that she shares with Israel, her interpretation of Gottsched and his relationship to Bayle operates by making this assumption the guiding lens through which she reads the texts in question. Yet given the play across this supposed divide in Gottsched's work, a play documented in the article, and given also the German's particular attraction to Bayle precisely because of his equally complicated and often ambiguous stance with respect to the reason and faith entanglement, might not the divide between orthodox believers and radical secularizers assumed in this essay be better described as an a priori analytical assumption privileged by the historian? If so, then Quéval's account of Gottsched, Bayle, and their place in the German Enlightenment does not demonstrate the contingent historical details of their participation in this movement so much as show their status as actors in an Enlightenment drama conceived according to retrospective assumptions about what this movement is supposed to entail (i.e. the progress of secularization and the defeat of religion and its authority in all forms).

Such is the essential method and logic of Enlightenment historiography à la Israel, and Jan de Vet's analysis of Bayle as seen through the lens of two eighteenth-century periodicals comes to similarly over-determined conclusions. Elie Fréron's *Année Littéraire* was launched in 1754 as an organ of militant opposition to the *Encyclopédie*, Voltaire, and the "*philosophe*" movement in France. The *Journal Encyclopédique*, by contrast, was a judicious organ of learned commentary with no explicit polemical agenda. The first, de Vet shows, remained militantly opposed to Bayle throughout its four decade run, a fact that he attributes to the editor's "militant Catholicism" (p. 230). The second journal, however, never developed a clear position on Bayle, joining with critics of his skepticism in reviews in the 1750s but also calling him an "illustre écrivain" in reviews three decades later. De Vet reads these shifts as evidence of the changing balance of power between faith and reason in the eighteenth century, but might they not stand just as well as evidence of the complex journalistic culture of the period and its influence on philosophical discourse?

Wiep van Bunge knowingly, if un-polemically, takes a different tack, wrestling with the way that the assumptions of Israel's Enlightenment skews our conception of the Dutch Enlightenment and Bayle's place within it. Positioning his remarks against Wijnand Mijnhardt's contention that Bayle did not matter to the Dutch in the eighteenth century because the Enlightenment that he is said to exemplify—namely the struggle to liberate faith from reason—did not matter to eighteenth-century Dutchmen, van Bunge asks whether we have really studied the Dutch Enlightenment in sufficient detail to know what its characteristic features were and what role Bayle may have played in it.[11] He notes, for example, how Dutch natural science, which had a European-wide influence in the eighteenth century, gets eclipsed whenever Enlightenment is defined too narrowly in terms of a battle between religious faith and

secular reason. He further points to figures like Willem 'sGravesande, a major Dutch Newtonian experimental natural philosopher with a broad European audience, as exemplary of a Dutch Enlightenment that does not fit into Israel's taxonomy. He also scrutinizes the conception of Holland in much Enlightenment historiography, a conception that reduces the Low Countries to little more than a hollow shell that in Mijnhardt's terms served the Republic of Letters primarily as "a sanctuary, an employer, [and] a printshop" (p. 200). Basic work on the intellectual history of eighteenth-century Holland and on the Dutch reception of such foundational European thinkers as Leibniz, Hume, and Diderot remains to be done, van Bunge contends, and this ignorance makes any full understanding of either the Dutch Enlightenment or Bayle's place in it impossible. "Lame as it may sound," van Bunge concludes, "I'm afraid we cannot escape the conclusion that very much more detailed research into Bayle's eighteenth-century receptions in the Netherlands is called for" (p. 215). Yet rather than encouraging these more locally specific and historically contingent investigations, van Bunge implies, the Israel-esque assumptions about Enlightenment in evidence in current Bayle scholarship are instead producing a recirculation of old interpretive assumptions.

Justin Champion's account of Bayle in the English Enlightenment points to the kind of scholarship that van Bunge would like to see, and it is scholarship that pursues a very different kind of intellectual history than that practiced by Israel. Champion starts by noting the quantitatively large presence of Bayle's books in English library inventories of the period, a sign that his writings had a wide circulation in Britain. Noting that clerical libraries were as well stocked with Bayle titles as those of learned laymen, Champion then proposes the refreshing suggestion that we need more research "on the impact of this reading experience" on those who engaged with Bayle's texts (p. 180). Such an approach means reading the readers of Bayle in terms of the contingent historical categories that mattered to them, not Israel's master Enlightenment template, and he offers an example of such an approach by following the strands of Bayle's influence on the members of Benjamin Furly's Lantern Club, a paradigmatic nexus of Enlightenment sociability that included Anthony Ashley, the Third Earl of Shaftsbury, John Locke, John Toland, Anthony Collins, and "most importantly Pierre Desmaizeaux, whose editorial and publishing activities were, in one sense, to create the literary infrastructure of the English Enlightenment." "It was in this world of the study, of print, and of erudition," Champion writes, "that Pierre Bayle was master" (p. 181), and Champion traces this influence by showing how Toland used Bayle's work, and even more his examples, to create his own particular radical identity and philosophical program. In contrast to Israel, Champion's Toland is not an intellectual clone of Bayle, possessed of a common set of core beliefs or an identical intellectual viewpoint. He is instead a fellow purveyor of radical Enlightenment because of his shared devotion to a common set of scholarly, sociable, and intellectual-political practices.

When Bayle influences Toland, Champion shows, it is by giving him a model of intellectual libertinism to emulate and by offering him a critical style and a fount of erudition and argumentation that he can draw upon when creating his own original intellectual persona. By focusing on the networks of social and political alliance, intellectual sociability, and textual practice that joined Bayle with Toland, Champion also suggests an image of Bayle's role in the radical Enlightenment sustained not through Israel's reified unities of philosophical belief but through a historically contingent assemblage of social networks and intellectual practices. Disruptive of Israel's approach in similar ways is Rob van de Schoor's account of Bayle's presence in the discourse of Dutch freethinking and Freemason periodicals in the nineteenth century. Israel's Enlightenment assumes the existence of a coherent belief-system called Spinozism that is born of Spinoza's writings and then exists afterward as a coherent body of historical thought, one that is also its own agent of progressive historical change. In Israel's conception, the internal logic of "Spinozism" produces the progressive advance of radical Enlightenment itself, generating in its wake a historical unfolding that is then revealed in

Israel's voluminous narrations. Yet following Sieb Thiessen's understanding of Spinozism, which treats it not as a teleologically driven doctrinal system but as "a community of discourse: a network of more or less closely organized circles of thinkers influenced by Spinoza," (231, n. 4), van de Schoor finds in the self-conscious and self-professed Spinozism of nineteenth-century Dutch radicals an outlook beholden to a very different historical perspective. [12]

Conscious, for example, of Bayle's identity as an early pioneer of radical libertinism and free thought, nineteenth-century Dutch radicals often invoked Bayle in their writings as a precursory figure in the history of their own radical movement. But aware as well of the historical gap that separated Bayle's ancien regime concerns with their own early industrial and post-revolutionary predicaments, these same commentators also stressed the differences that separated Bayle's pre-modern radicalism from their own. This was especially true with respect to the influence of Spinoza, for since Bayle was neither a straightforward Spinozist nor an unequivocal champion as they were of radical secularism and atheism, these radical journalists very often distanced their Spinozism from the early modern emanations of it found in writers such as Bayle. Especially noteworthy to them were the criticisms of Spinoza found in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, criticisms that made Bayle in their mind, and pace Israel, anything but a rigorous Spinozist. Israel's reified, teleological account of the development of radical Spinozism collapses these complexities into a single narrative of predetermined philosophical progress. It also erases the ambiguities present in Bayle's radicalism by making them the immature first steps in an inexorable philosophic march that leads directly to the radical philosophy of these nineteenth-century freemasons and journalists. These nineteenth-century "Spinozists," however, viewed their own historical origins very differently, and the power of van der Schoor's different historical approach is to show how Bayle's relation to the later history of philosophical radicalism, like that of countless other actors caught in Israel's taxonomic net, is better understood through the local and temporally specific interactions that occurred between Bayle's texts and their readers and the context-specific allegiances that transformed these encounters into contingent historical outcomes.

Stated simply, the fundamental problem with Israel's approach to intellectual history is precisely its inattentiveness to historical contingency of this sort and the instabilities of language, writing, reading, and textually mediated reader reception that contribute to it. In the final essay of this volume, Antony McKenna, perhaps the most eminent of the *éminences grises* on display here, turns his attention precisely to questions of textuality and reading in his discussion of the current state of Bayle scholarship. From the beginning, which is to say since the moment when Bayle's texts appeared, "readers have seized a given formula and brandished it as a guide to the rest of his works," McKenna writes. "Christian philosophy, moral rationalism, religious tolerance, skepticism, fideism"—these are some of the many unities that have been used to fashion Bayle into a coherent repository of a single philosophy (p. 256). To this list should also be added Israel's notion of "Spinozism" and the "radical Enlightenment." Bayle's texts, however, continually resist this reduction, and the result, suggests McKenna, has been three hundred years of inconclusive struggle over the true meaning of his work.

Each participant in these scholarly battles, McKenna points out, claims a privileged vantage point for interpreting the true coherence of Bayle's texts. But perhaps we would do better to recognize, he suggests, that no privileged interpretive viewpoint exists since Bayle's genius as a writer rests precisely in his artful play with textual complexity. Bayle's humor, for example, never finds a seat at the analytical table when discussions of the philosophical meaning of his work are sustained. Yet humor, irony, and the artful deployment of paradox were among the most important features of Bayle's writings. When trying to stabilize the play of his texts so as to discern their singular core meaning, scholars also tend to push aside the willful and knowing manipulation of stated positions and Bayle's other seemingly intentional rhetorical maneuvers

as marginal to the core intellectual content of his work. Yet maybe irony and rhetorical play were the deep messages of Bayle's oeuvre, and if so maybe we should start looking for the meanings found in the surface play of Bayle's texts and start marginalizing the time-worn quest for their underlying philosophical coherencies.

To move in this direction means situating Bayle's writing more fully in terms of the human practices that produced it. McKenna notes the explosion of new work on Bayle's social and historical milieu and the "great leap forward" it has triggered (pp. 260-61). But what has not yet been broached in this new scholarship is the question of how this environment shaped the character of Bayle's written work or the character of his critical *esprit*. Bayle's journalism, for example, along with the practice of learned journalism more generally, remains grossly understudied. Early modern journalism possessed its own discursive principles and rhetorical peculiarities, yet despite its obvious influence upon eighteenth-century philosophical discourse, little has been done to integrate its characteristic discursive features into accounts of the history of Enlightenment philosophy itself. Given that the term philosopher often suggested little more than a libertine and a subversive in the lexicon of the eighteenth century, the historical peculiarities of Bayle's philosophy, including his preferred genres, his favored rhetorical style, and his modalities of writing and argumentation, also need to be historicized more fully than has been done so far. Contemporaries began to call the eighteenth century an age of Enlightenment because of their perception that a new age of philosophy was dawning. But since the terms "philosophy" and "philosopher" suggested to the makers of these pronouncements something quite different than they do to us today, we will only start to understand what the beginning of Enlightenment philosophy entailed once we have reconstituted the historical particularities that made it distinctive in its time and place.[13]

Bayle was without question a pioneering figure of eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy, but as such his influence should perhaps be located as much in how, why, and where he wrote as in the core coherencies of what he said. Indeed, the quest, which has been going on for centuries, to contain Bayle's varied and dynamic discursive output into a single and coherent set of philosophical positions may be missing the point entirely. If so, what we may need is a shift of interpretive perspectives, one that will bring fresh insight into the Enlightenment that Bayle made not through his cogitations but through his many and varied intellectual doings.

Recent scholarship points toward these new possibilities. Jonathan Sheehan locates Enlightenment not in the core beliefs of the eighteenth-century actors he studies, but in the new mediascape that gave intellectual life a new vitality and social function for them after 1700. From this perspective, Sheehan can talk about Enlightenment and Biblical scholarship as partners in a shared intellectual movement to the extent that each met in the new space of translators, commentators, journalists, book dealers, pamphleteers, and learned sociability that marked the new zone of intellectual innovation in the eighteenth century.[14] Darrin McMahon, another new Enlightenment historian, describes the perspective found in Sheehan's work this way: "It was not so much what religious men and women believed ... that marked their participation in Enlightenment, but how they believed it--in public forums, employing state-of-the-art critical methods." [15] McMahon's work on what he calls the Enlightenment and its enemies also shares this outlook, displacing the musty Hegelian reifications of a dying Age of Faith fighting its climactic battles against an emergent Age of Reason through an analysis of the shared media dynamics that gave the battle between the French *philosophes* and their largely clerical opponents its modernizing historical significance.[16] In an incisive essay on new approaches to Enlightenment secularism, Sheehan describes the new vision of Enlightenment that he and McMahon share. "[Enlightenment] practices and institutions might include philosophical argument," Sheehan writes, "but they would also encompass such diverse elements as salons, reading circles, erudition, scholarship and scholarly techniques, translations,

book reviews, academies, new communication tools including journals and newspapers, and so on.”[17]

With respect to this volume, the frustrating point to be made is the obvious centrality of Bayle’s life and work to the history of Enlightenment defined this new way and the disappointing absence of any real exploration of it in the pages of this collection. Instead of a fresh image of Bayle as a vanguard figure pioneering through innovative forms of writing, textual production, and critical sociability the new program of Enlightenment coming to light in the most recent scholarship, this volume ultimately gives us yet another ride on the creaky old interpretive carousel called “determining Bayle’s core beliefs.” It also suggests that Bayle scholarship remains unproductively focused on the antiquated chase for the elusive “brass interpretation” that will bring this centuries old merry-go-round to a halt. McKenna is right, therefore, that while “the tercentenary celebrations have been the occasion of much new study and stimulating reflection, ... much work remains to be done.” He is also right, however, that “a dynamic new generation of Bayle scholars is now active” (p. 267). It is to be hoped that these new scholars will make any future commemorative Bayle conference, whether held in 2056 or sooner, a showcase for the arrival of new research trajectories into Bayle studies, trajectories that draw upon the new understanding of Enlightenment that other scholars are showing Bayle did so much to initiate.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Lenie van Lieshout, “La vie culturelle à Rotterdam du temps de Bayle”

Theo Verbeek, “Dutch Cartesians in Bayle’s Dictionary”

Todd Ryan, “Bayle and Occasionalism: The Argument from Continuous Creation”

Eric Jorink, “Comets in Context. Some Thoughts on Bayle’s *Pensées diverses*”

Hans Bots, “Pierre Bayle et les catholiques,”

Hubert Bost, “Pierre Bayle, un “protestant compliqué”

Gianni Paganini, “Bayle et les théologies philosophiques de son temps”

Adam Sutcliffe, “Bayle and Judaism”

Jonathan Israel, “Bayle’s Double Image during the Enlightenment”

Marie-Hélène Quéval, “L’édition allemande du *Dictionnaire historique et critique* de Pierre Bayle (1741-1744) par Johann Christoph Gottsched”

Justin Champion, “Bayle in the English Enlightenment”

Wiep van Bunge, “The Presence of Bayle in the Dutch Republic”

Jan de Vet, “Bayle in Two Periodicals of the Late Eighteenth Century: His Presence in *L’année littéraire* and *Journal encyclopédique*”

Rob van der Schoor, “Pierre Bayle and Some of the Figures in His *Dictionnaire* as seen by *De Gids* and a Number of Nineteenth-Century Dutch Freethinker and Freemason Periodicals”

Antony McKenna, "Pierre Bayle in the Twentieth Century"

NOTES

[1] <http://pierre-bayle.univ-st-etienne.fr/Bayle/Accueil.html>

[2] Paul Dibon ed., with the collaboration of R.H. Popkin, *Pierre Bayle, le Philosophe de Rotterdam. Études et documents* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1959).

[3] Two distinguished and authoritative modern biographies of Bayle are currently in print: Élisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle, I: Du Pays de Foix à la cité d'Érasme* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1964) and *Pierre Bayle, II: Hétérodoxie et rigorisme* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1964; Paris: Albin Michel: 1996); and Hubert Bost, *Pierre Bayle* (Paris: Fayard, 2006).

[4] Pierre Bayle, *Pensées diverses écrites à un docteur de Sorbonne à l'occasion de la comète qui parut au mois de décembre 1680* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1682); and idem., *Critique de l'histoire du calvinisme du Père Maimbourg* (Ville-Franche: Pierre le Blanc, 1683).

[5] Pierre Bayle, *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus-Christ: "Contrains-les d'entrer"* (Rotterdam: Fritsch and Böhm, 1685).

[6] Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1697; 2nd ed. rev. and expanded, 1702).

[7] Pierre Bayle, *Continuation des pensées diverses, écrites à un docteur de Sorbonne, à l'occasion de la comète qui parut au mois de Décembre 1680: ou Réponse à plusieurs difficultés que Monsieur *** a proposées à l'auteur* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1705).

[8] Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009). Israel's Wikipedia page promises the release of the final volume of the trilogy, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790*, in August 2011.

[9] J.B. Shank, "Review: Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001)," *H-France Review* vol. 2 (March 2002), no. 26; idem., "Featured Review: Jonathan I. Israel. *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*," *American Historical Review* 113 (April 2008): 441-44; Anthony J. La Vopa, "A New Intellectual History? Jonathan Israel's Enlightenment," *The Historical Journal* 52 (2009): 717-738; Antoine Lilti, "Comment écrit-on l'histoire intellectuelle des Lumières?" *Annales H.S.S.* (January-February, 2009): 171-206; and Samuel Moyn, "Mind The Enlightenment," *The Nation* (May 31, 2010).

[10] See esp. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, pp. 145-54.

[11] Wijnand Mijnhardt, "The Dutch Enlightenment: Humanism, Nationalism, and Decline," in Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt eds., *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment, Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 197-

233.

[12] Siebe Thissen, *De spinozisten. Wijsgerige beweging in Nederland (1850-1907)* (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 2000).

[13] See as one illustration Robert Darnton's classic article showing the semantic link between *livres philosophiques* and pornography. "A Clandestine Bookseller in the Provinces," in *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 122-47.

[14] Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[15] Darrin McMahon, "Review: David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008)," *Journal of Modern History* vol. 82, no. 3 (September 2010): 674.

[16] Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

[17] Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *American Historical Review* vol. 108, no. 4 (October 2003): 1075-6.

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