

A portrait of a man with long, dark, wavy hair, wearing a dark coat with a white collar and a white cuff. He is holding a book with a decorative spine. The background is dark and textured.

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Bayle, Jurieu, and the  
*Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*

Mara van der Lugt

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Frontispiece: Portrait of Pierre Jurieu. Photo Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht.



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*Dictionnaire Historique  
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MARA VAN DER LUGT

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Mara van der Lugt

Rotterdam, May 2015



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## *Bibliographical Note*

All French spelling has been modernized. However, to stay as close as possible to the original text, Bayle's capitalization has been retained throughout, as has the hyphen in the formulation 'très+[adjective]'—for example, 'très-puissant'.

All quotations from the *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* are taken from its fifth edition (Amsterdam, Leiden, The Hague, Utrecht 1740), unless otherwise stated. All quotations have been compared between editions, and I consistently indicate whether a certain passage was first included in the first, second, or third edition, using the following notation in my footnotes:

- The article name is underlined and followed by a capitalized letter, which refers to a 'Remarque' or footnote, or by 'ϕ', which refers to the main article.
- The small numbers '123' refer to the edition in which the quoted passage first appeared: 1) the first edition of 1696; 2) the second edition of 1702; 3) the third edition of 1720, published posthumously yet based on material found in Bayle's papers.

For instance:

- Pauliciens<sub>1</sub>.ϕ: Article 'Pauliciens', main article, passage present in the first edition.
- Zuerius<sub>3</sub>.P: Article 'Zuerius', Remark P, passage added in the third edition.

Note that the ordering of Remarks, cross-references, and notes differs between editions: I use the ordering of the 1740 edition.

Throughout the text I will be referring to a wide array of authors and thinkers, some of whom will not be familiar to the reader. To avoid interrupting the text to introduce each of Bayle's 'voices' individually, I refer you to Appendix I—*Dramatis personae*. Likewise, see Appendix II for brief descriptions of various sects, schools, and heresies.



## Abbreviations

DHC	Bayle, <i>Dictionnaire Historique et Critique</i> (1740).
OD	Bayle, <i>Ceuvres Diverses de Mr Pierre Bayle</i> (1737).
ODL	Bayle, <i>Ceuvres Diverses</i> , ed. Labrousse (1982).
NRL	Bayle, <i>Nouvelles de la République des Lettres</i> (1684–7).
EC	Bayle, <i>Éclaircissements sur certaines choses...</i> (1702).
RQP	Bayle, <i>Réponse aux Questions d'un Provincial</i> (1703–07).
CPD	Bayle, <i>Continuation des Pensées Diverses</i> (1704).
EMT	Bayle, <i>Entretiens de Maxime et de Thémiste</i> (1707).
Diss.Lib.	Bayle, 'Dissertation sur les Libelles Diffamatoires'.
<i>Correspondance</i>	Bayle, <i>Correspondance de Pierre Bayle</i> , ed. Labrousse et al. (1999–2015).
<i>Selections</i>	Bayle, <i>Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections</i> , ed. Popkin (1991).
HOS	Beauval et al., <i>Histoire des Ouvrages des Savants</i> (1687–1709).
BUH	Le Clerc et al., <i>Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique</i> (1686–93).
JMR	Jurieu, <i>Jugement sur les Méthodes Rigides et Relâchées</i> (1686).
Labrousse I	Labrousse, <i>Pierre Bayle</i> , vol. I: <i>Du Pays de Foix à la cité d'Érasme</i> (1963).
Labrousse II	Labrousse, <i>Pierre Bayle</i> , vol. I: <i>Hétérodoxie et rigorisme</i> (1964/1996).



## Introduction

### *The Dictionnaire and the Twice-entombed*



**Figure 0.1.** Detail of Bayle, Jurieu, and Brandt's tombstone at the Crooswijkse Begraafplaats, Rotterdam. Photo Mara van der Lugt.

It is one of history's better ironies. After the demolition of the Wallonian Church in Rotterdam in 1922, the remains of those buried in its graveyard were transported and reburied in a single tomb in the Crooswijk cemetery. Among them were the Dutch historian Geeraert Brandt, the French philosopher Pierre Bayle, and the French theologian Pierre Jurieu, whose names were duly listed on the tombstone (see Figure 0.1). Nothing worth mentioning, perhaps, were it not for the fact that the two 'Pierres', once friends, had spent the better part of their lives as the bitterest of

enemies, and are destined to spend the rest of their deaths buried in the same tomb.

The history of their enmity is a complex one. Born in the shadow of the Pyrenees, Bayle was raised in a small Calvinist community, but had to flee the region to avoid persecution as a relapsed heretic, since, as a young man, he had abjured Catholicism after a two-year conversion.<sup>1</sup> Following six years at the Protestant Academy of Sedan, which was suppressed in 1681 by Louis XIV's government, Bayle joined Jurieu and other Huguenot refugees in the city of Rotterdam, in the Dutch Republic, where they both took up chairs at the newly founded *École Illustre*, Jurieu to teach theology and Bayle philosophy. Henceforth, the former would be known as Rotterdam's Theologian, the latter as 'le Philosophe de Rotterdam'.

It was in Sedan that Bayle had befriended Jurieu, who probably helped him secure a position at the *École*, yet it was in Rotterdam that their friendship grew sour, and turned to enmity in 1691. By this time Jurieu had become known to the Republic of Letters as one of the spiritual leaders of Protestant Europe, whose political voice was gaining strength through his connections with William of Orange, while Bayle had begun to publish various controversial books that made his name one of the most famous, and infamous, of early modern Europe. These included the *Pensées Diverses sur la Comète* of 1682, which battled idolatry and superstition while claiming that atheists could be virtuous; the *Commentaire Philosophique* of 1686, which pre-empted Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* by one year and went significantly further in its defence of religious toleration; and various writings against 'la France toute Catholique' under Louis XIV, whose intolerant politics escalated in a crescendo of anti-Protestant measures that had included the death of Bayle's own brother Jacob.<sup>2</sup> Widespread sympathy and admiration was gained among Catholics as well as Protestants when Bayle founded the scholarly journal *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1684–7), but it was the publication of his magnum opus in 1696 that secured his name as philosopher, historian, and provocateur for centuries to come.

<sup>1</sup> Bayle converted to Catholicism while studying philosophy at the Jesuit college of Toulouse in 1668; he abjured at Mazères in 1670, after which he went first to Geneva to study theology, later becoming a private teacher in Geneva, Coppet, and Paris. See Bost, *Pierre Bayle*, esp. 40–52; Labrousse I, 50–73.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob was arrested and imprisoned a few months before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1685, probably because the authorities were exasperated by Bayle's criticism of Louis XIV and could not get to Bayle himself. Jacob was probably tortured, which broke his health: he died in prison in November 1685. See Bost, *Pierre Bayle*, 277–84, Labrousse I, 198–200.

Unprecedented in its capricious combination of scholarly erudition with heresy, obscenity, and philosophy, the *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* evoked strong and contradictory feelings among its first readers, many of whom, though admiring its scholarship, were confused or dismayed by its open exposition of heretical opinions, which they did not know how to relate to Bayle himself. Consequently, as long as there have existed texts by Bayle, there have been debates on how to read them. The same can casually be said of a variety of early modern philosophers and controversialists, but it is more meaningfully and more spectacularly true in the case of Bayle, whose writings seem to be designed to keep the reader suspended at the tipping point between conflicting interpretations. To some extent, this is due to the multifarious form and style of Bayle's oeuvre. Not only did Bayle move in and out of different disciplines, taking on a variety of authorial voices and personae in the process, but he also played with different genres: the epistolary form, the book review, the dialogue, the essay, the encyclopaedic entry—and, of course, the footnote.

Yet it is equally owing to the argumentative content of Bayle's writings that reading him poses such a challenge. This is especially the case in the *Dictionnaire*, where Bayle introduces a wide variety of heretical voices that stop at nothing to discredit and refute the traditional apologetic arguments for Christianity. At the same time, these encounters between Christians and heretics usually end in the muted submission of reason to revelation: reason is defeated by reason, says Bayle, in order to point the way towards a non-rationalistic ground for faith. However, religious sentiment in Bayle is as good as absent, and so the same questions have haunted his readers for centuries: is this faithful moment authentic? Does it cover up a deeper sense of unbelief and irreligion? In other words: how to read Pierre Bayle?

## FIRST POSITIONS

Jurieu was not among those bemused by Bayle's ambiguities. To him, it was clear that the *Dictionnaire* was deliberately harmful to religion, and that Bayle's profound atheism was hidden beneath the surface of a religious doctrine that, ironically and hypocritically, was modelled on Jurieu's own.<sup>3</sup> This, in a nutshell, is also the 'traditional' interpretation of Bayle, which, in the course of the eighteenth century, was silently canonized by Voltaire and other frontrunners of the Enlightenment, who read Bayle with Parisian eyes and saw him as a sceptical and

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 4, and Conclusion.

irreligious free-thinker, libertine, destroyer of religion, ‘grand précurseur du siècle des Lumières’.<sup>4</sup> Even in the first half of the twentieth century, when a surge of interest in Bayle led to various new publications on his philosophical thought, these did not challenge the traditional framework that presented Bayle’s writings as the productions of a fundamentally irreligious mind.<sup>5</sup>

It was not until the landmark publication in 1959 of a collection of essays edited by Paul Dibon that authors joined hands in a combined effort to question the legitimacy of this framework itself, by analysing Bayle from within the context of his own time.<sup>6</sup> The frontrunner in this debate was Élisabeth Labrousse, who, in her ground-breaking two-volume study of Bayle’s life and writings,<sup>7</sup> confidently rejects the traditional retrospective reading of Bayle as a precursor of the Enlightenment, and proposes instead to read Bayle’s oeuvre ‘pour elle-même, en oubliant l’avenir qui l’attend’.<sup>8</sup> Her methodological starting point is twofold: first, to prioritize Bayle’s explicit statements over his supposedly radical implications,<sup>9</sup> and second, to read his texts within the specific historical context of the Dutch Refuge. Her conclusion, briefly, is that Bayle’s was a limited scepticism, which did not lead to irreligion: it was always in the name of true Christianity that he criticized its derivatives. Above all, Bayle was firmly rooted in the intellectual tradition of seventeenth-century Calvinism, and his ‘fidéisme’, though strange, hesitant, and ‘désespéré’, was nevertheless sincere.<sup>10</sup>

A similar point was made by Walter Rex, who, at around the same time as Labrousse, argued that the eighteenth-century *philosophes* had ‘transferred Bayle into their own context’, and one must reread Bayle to find that ‘he is indeed a seventeenth-century author, and that his thought is defined directly in relation to the intellectual developments of his century and the concerns of his age’.<sup>11</sup> Following an intense contextual reading of especially Bayle’s early works, Rex argues that the traditions informing them ‘are neither sceptical nor atheist nor libertine: they are Calvinist’.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Rétat, *Le Dictionnaire de Bayle*, 7; Labrousse, ‘Reading Pierre Bayle in Paris’.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Delvolvé, *Religion, critique et philosophie positive* (1906); Robinson, *Bayle the Sceptic* (1931); Pintard, *Le Libertinage érudit* (1943), esp. 573–6.

<sup>6</sup> Dibon (ed.), *Pierre Bayle, le philosophe de Rotterdam* (1959). See also Serrurier, *Pierre Bayle en Hollande* (1912), 207: ‘à mes yeux, il est un calviniste froid, mais sincère’.

<sup>7</sup> Labrousse I (on Bayle’s life) and II (on Bayle’s works).

<sup>8</sup> Labrousse II, ‘Avant-propos’, x.

<sup>9</sup> Labrousse II, 136n., 345; cf. Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 28n.

<sup>10</sup> Labrousse II, 345; also 592–610. Note, however, the subtlety in many of Labrousse’s characterizations of Bayle, and her lifelong willingness to (re)adjust her reading of his works.

<sup>11</sup> Rex, *Essays on Pierre Bayle and Religious Controversy*, xi.

<sup>12</sup> Rex, *Essays*, xii.

Together, Rex and Labrousse, as well as the other ‘revisionists’<sup>13</sup> who followed in their wake, such as Craig Brush, Karl Sandberg, Jacques Solé, and Richard Popkin, permanently changed the terms of engagement in the historical debate.<sup>14</sup> Labrousse’s works especially have become a classic point of reference for Bayle scholarship to date: indeed, her reading of Bayle was held forth by Quentin Skinner, in his seminal 1969 article ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, as an example of a wider reorientation towards Skinnerian hermeneutics.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, a counter-current of (mostly Italian) traditionalists or, one might say, ‘counter-revisionists’, rose in opposition to the revisionist reading—such as Gianfranco Cantelli, who, by a detailed reconstruction of Bayle’s philosophical argumentation, attempts to reinstate the image of ‘un Bayle miscredente e ateo’, who was primarily ‘un distruttore’, an atheist in a negative sense, employing theological premises to support an anti-theological conclusion.<sup>16</sup>

The culmination of this new trend in Bayle studies, presenting the strongest challenge to the Labroussian reading to date, is Gianluca Mori’s *Bayle philosophe* of 1999,<sup>17</sup> which argues that ‘[l]’écriture de Bayle est une écriture codée’,<sup>18</sup> and that it is precisely by reading Bayle in his cultural context that one may see ‘l’effet de la censure, de l’ostracisme, de la persécution plus ou moins violente, de la contrainte exercée par les règles de la morale, mais aussi par celles de la bienséance, sur les modalités de production des textes philosophiques’.<sup>19</sup> To break through these layers of concealment, Mori employs the same hermeneutical strategy that was used by Leo Strauss in the case of Spinoza: namely, to read Bayle according to his own exegetical instruments, ‘lire Bayle avec Bayle’.<sup>20</sup> If one delves deeply into Bayle’s writings, says Mori, one will dig up many hints and comments on how to read dissimulating authors: the basic elements of a proto-Straussian hermeneutical theory. Like Strauss, Bayle seems to suggest that one can uncover the true meaning of a dissimulating

<sup>13</sup> The term ‘revisionists’ comes from Popkin, who counts himself among them; see his 1969 review of Sandberg, 93.

<sup>14</sup> Brush, *Montaigne and Bayle*, esp. 250–305; Sandberg, *At the Crossroads of Faith and Reason*; Solé, esp. ‘Religion et conception du monde’; Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, esp. 283–302, and *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*. See also Mori’s bibliography of twentieth-century ‘études bayliennes’ in *Bayle philosophe*, 359–96.

<sup>15</sup> Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, esp. 33–5.

<sup>16</sup> Cantelli, *Teologia e ateismo*, 225, 369–70, *et passim*. More nuanced is Paganini’s *Analisi della fede*.

<sup>17</sup> See also Mori’s article ‘Persécution et art d’écrire’. For other counter-revisionists, see Chapter 1, this volume, ‘Interpretative Games’.

<sup>18</sup> Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Mori, ‘Persécution’, 216.

<sup>20</sup> Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 25. See also Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, esp. ch. 5.

text through an intense analysis of its internal coherence, combined with an alertness for possible defensive strategies.<sup>21</sup> This hermeneutical perspective allows Mori to attempt a new reading of Bayle, one that focuses on Bayle's philosophical positions, whether explicit or implicit, as the cornerstone of his thought.<sup>22</sup> From Bayle's earliest works onward, Mori sees him constructing a cogent argument for atheism as a coherent philosophical position, together with a denunciation of 'fideism' as an absurd opinion with appalling implications. In the course of his writing career, Bayle appears to be leading the reader via the philosophical options of Malebranchism and Spinozism, via his intricate theodicean discussions, towards a system of critical atheism, which Bayle dubs 'Stratonism' but is in fact his own original invention.<sup>23</sup> Hence, while accepting that the question of the sincerity of Bayle's 'fidéisme' is 'indécidable, quoique absolument légitime',<sup>24</sup> Mori argues that, if we judge Bayle by his own principles, it is hard to accept his religious stance as Labrousse does.<sup>25</sup> As Mori states in an assertion that has become a controversial classic in all quarters of Bayle's scholarship: 'Tous les chemins de la réflexion philosophique de Bayle mènent à l'athéisme.'<sup>26</sup>

There will be other occasions for discussing the advantages and disadvantages of these various methods of reading Bayle. For now, suffice it to say that, just as Labrousse's work made it impossible to go back to the traditional reading of Bayle as an *obviously* irreligious free-thinker, so has Mori's work been perceived as marking 'a point of no return, making it impossible to go back to a previous phase of scholarship in which Bayle was a fideist and a Huguenot, *presque sans problèmes*'.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, most studies of Bayle published in the twenty-first century begin or end with a restatement of the hermeneutical dilemma, and with some kind of *prise de position*: despite several halting attempts at a compromise between the two main options, the debate remains polarized.<sup>28</sup> The only consensus that is gradually emerging among Bayle scholars is a sense of resignation: an acceptance of the fact that Bayle can be read in two ways, and that the

<sup>21</sup> Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 25–7; 'Persécution', 199–201.

<sup>22</sup> Mori, 'Persécution', 213.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 1, this volume, 'Interpretative games'.

<sup>24</sup> Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 48–9.

<sup>26</sup> Mori, *Bayle philosophe*, 189. For a similar approach, see Cavaillé, 'Libertinage et dissimulation', and 'L'art d'écrire des philosophes'.

<sup>27</sup> Paganini, remarking on Mori as well as Lennon and Brogi, in 'Towards a "Critical" Bayle', 520.

<sup>28</sup> Such attempts include Lennon, *Reading Bayle*, and Brogi, *Teologia senza verità*. On Lennon, see Chapter 1, this volume, 'Bayle and Bakhtin'.

question of interpretation will probably remain undecided.<sup>29</sup> So where to go from here?

## NEXT STEPS

The past decades have seen a vast expansion of the body of research on Bayle, the output of which ranges from articles, conference papers, monographs, and a new comprehensive biography to new editions of Bayle's work, including the unprecedented complete edition of his correspondence, of which the twelfth volume has just been published.<sup>30</sup> Following publications by Jonathan Israel, John Robertson, and others, it is now generally agreed that Bayle is a key figure in the history of the early Enlightenment, even if the precise character of his role is still a matter of controversy.<sup>31</sup> However, despite this intensification of Bayle studies, gaps and confusions remain, especially with regard to the *Dictionnaire*, a work often deemed too copious and complex to study as a whole. As a result, there are many books on Bayle, but few books on the *Dictionnaire* itself. The greatest exception is Lenie van Lieshout's book on the 'making of' the *Dictionnaire*, but however impressive and useful her discussion of the form, structure, and production of the work, she does not provide much analysis of the way in which the contents and structure are intertwined; where the contents are discussed, it is only in a very general, even statistical way.<sup>32</sup> This is understandable, considering that the *Dictionnaire* contains around six million words.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, most scholars who study the contents of the *Dictionnaire* tend to concentrate their efforts on a specific theme. For instance, Ruth Whelan focuses on Bayle's writings on history; Barbara Sher Tinsley on 'Bayle's Reformation'; Jean-Pierre Jossua on the problem of evil; Jean-Jacques Bouchardy on nature and the 'nature of

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. De Robert, 'Présentation', 6; Stricker, *Die maskierte Theologie von Pierre Bayle*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Labrousse, McKenna et al. (eds.), *Correspondance de Pierre Bayle* (Oxford 1999–2015).

<sup>31</sup> See Israel's controversial *Radical Enlightenment* and *Enlightenment Contested*: the latter leans heavily on the publications of the Italian counter-revisionists. Also Robertson, *The Case for The Enlightenment*, esp. ch. 5. For earlier works stressing the importance of Bayle's place in the history of the Enlightenment, see Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne*, 90–105; Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, 161ff, 202ff; Gay, *The Enlightenment*, vol. 1, 290–5.

<sup>32</sup> Van Lieshout, *The Making of Bayle's Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*.

<sup>33</sup> I thank Glenn Roe for this estimate, which is based on the ARTFL database, and, though still approximate, is more realistic than earlier estimates of seven to ten million words; see e.g. Popkin, *High Road*, 504; O'Cathasaigh, 'Bayle's *Commentaire philosophique*', 159.

things'; Todd Ryan on Cartesian metaphysics.<sup>34</sup> To some extent, this treatment is appropriate, since the only way to make sense of a work such as the *Dictionnaire* is, perhaps, to break it up in bits and pieces. But it comes at a price. The result is a body of literature spectacularly informed on a limited number of 'seminal' articles and issues, while mostly neglecting the substance of the 'rest' of the *Dictionnaire*, thereby gaining a better view of the parts, but lacking a clear and cohesive view of the work as a whole.

Such an imbalance is not easily adjusted, and it is not *quite* the purpose of this book to adjust it. In fact, for a large part I will be discussing precisely those articles that have been discussed so many times already, from the eighteenth century to the present day. What I hope to offer is a new way of reading the *Dictionnaire*, which demonstrates the significance of its innovative design for understanding its major and minor themes, the eclectic coherence of certain discussions throughout the work, and the way in which separate articles relate to the projected meaning of the dictionary as a whole, while taking into account its situatedness in a very specific historical and political context: what does it mean for a Huguenot exile to write this dictionary in the Dutch Refuge shortly after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes?

This, again, is where Jurieu comes in. Through the contextualizing efforts initiated in the 1960s, much more is known about the rich historical context and tense political climate that form the background to Bayle's works, and the rupture of his friendship with Jurieu. In past decades, the latter has himself become the object of several studies and articles, some of which have noted the overwhelming presence of Jurieu in the *Dictionnaire*, and his undeniable influence on some of its central themes.<sup>35</sup> However, most such acknowledgements of the importance of Jurieu for understanding the *Dictionnaire* have remained general and fragmentary: there is as yet no extensive study of Bayle, Jurieu, and the *Dictionnaire*.

It was not initially the object of this book to supply such a study. I intended to study the *Dictionnaire* itself, using a context- and style-oriented methodology, as set forth in Chapter 1. But one of the direct outcomes of this method is that it exposes the central place that Jurieu occupies in the *Dictionnaire*, and in the development of Bayle's thought on religion, politics, and scholarship, which cannot rightly be understood without understanding Jurieu as well, and Bayle's relationship to him. As a

<sup>34</sup> Whelan, *The Anatomy of Superstition*; Tinsley, *Pierre Bayle's Reformation*; Jossua, *Pierre Bayle ou l'obsession du mal*; Bouchardy, *Pierre Bayle: La nature et 'la nature des choses'*; Ryan, *Pierre Bayle's Cartesian Metaphysics* (one of the most recent challenges to Mori's interpretation).

<sup>35</sup> On Jurieu, see esp. Knetsch, *Pierre Jurieu*; also Dodge, *The Political Theory of the Huguenots*, Howells, *Pierre Jurieu*; Haase, *Einführung in die Literatur des Refuge*.

result, this book aims both to present a new way of studying the mechanics of the *Dictionnaire*, and a new interpretation of Jurieu's influence on Bayle, especially with regard to fanaticism and faith. In practice, this means tracing a specific set of themes as they appear in the *Dictionnaire* and in a variety of political, theological, and philosophical debates current at the time, but it also means engaging with the *Dictionnaire* freely and creatively, while resisting the tendency, which may also be a temptation, to opt for either Mori or Labrousse. As will be argued in Chapter 1, it is perhaps best to keep these options open while reading Bayle, and not to commit oneself to any specific interpretative avenue before various roads have been explored.

This, at least, is how I have explored them. I have studied the *Dictionnaire* page by page, though not word for word. I have read enough of each article to know what it says, and how Bayle says it. These various themes and stylistic features I have then catalogued, so that I might return to and study in more depth those articles most relevant to this project. Thus I have attempted to attain a bird's eye view of the work as a whole, while swooping down when necessary to take a closer look at the parts: it has been my constant concern not to lose in depth what I gain in breadth. Admittedly, this method, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1, is far from perfect: I am bound to have missed certain things. Then again, arguably, there is no 'perfect' way of reading Bayle. In looking at the bigger picture, we risk missing Bayle's many detailed ambiguities, just as we risk losing sight of the larger patterns in teasing out the smaller threads. A subtle approach, therefore, is needed: the *Dictionnaire* can only be handled with some stealth. Bayle is a tricky writer, who likes to send his readers in multiple directions, often leading them away from where they want to go. As a result, reading the *Dictionnaire* means going in circles for an important part of the time; it means circling around the question many times, and being happy to do so, since it is in the circling, more often than not, that we will find our answers: circumvention is part and parcel of reading the *Dictionnaire*.

Considering the slippery nature of the object of this book, therefore, its aims must be modest. It can be called an 'essay' in that it attempts to grasp something about the *Dictionnaire* that I sense is missing in other commentaries. At the same time, and more ambitiously, it aims to provide a set of prolegomena for Bayle studies, on which I and other scholars can build our future research.

Hence, there are a few things that this book will *not* do.

First, it will not include a detailed account of Bayle's life and works outside the *Dictionnaire*, except insofar as these are directly relevant for the

discussion at hand. Three biographers have put into words the life of Bayle,<sup>36</sup> and, together with a score of other writers, summarized his works: it is the *Dictionnaire* that requires new commentaries to do justice to its complexity and scope. Second, this book does not pretend to offer a comprehensive exposition of Bayle's philosophical thought. Others have done so, or tried to, but I believe that any reconstruction of Bayle's philosophy *tout court*, however valuable, comes at a definite cost: that of playing down or even neglecting the rich textual background from which these ideas are drawn, especially in the case of the *Dictionnaire*, where a single 'idea' may be linked to a variety of contexts, through the clever application of cross-references.

What this book *will* do is introduce the genesis, style, and structure of the *Dictionnaire*, and examine its most striking oddities and complexities, which is itself already an exercise in interpretation, since understanding the *Dictionnaire* hinges, for reasons that will become clear, on understanding its intelligent design. Hence, Chapter 1 both prepares the ground for reading Bayle, and itself constitutes a reading of Bayle: it is the result of my engagement with the *Dictionnaire* as a whole. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 will continue this inquiry into the dealings of the dictionary by exploring the influence of Bayle's relationship with his arch-friend-turned-enemy Jurieu, especially in relation to the conflict between censorship and free speech in the Republic of Letters and the danger of religious fanaticism fostering intolerance and war. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 will investigate Bayle's treatment of the problem of evil and his changing attitudes to faith and reason in the first and second edition of the *Dictionnaire*: again, it will be argued that Bayle's personal and intellectual relationship with Jurieu is of vital importance for understanding the development of these issues in Bayle's work. The Conclusion will briefly consider Bayle's writings after the *Dictionnaire*, and attempt to answer the question of how Bayle's encounter with Jurieu shaped his thought on not only freedom of speech, fanaticism, and intolerance, but, especially, religion.

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

Before approaching these and other questions, perhaps it is wise to pause and consider whether they are worth asking at all. After all, such questions might seem antiquarian, or even trivial: outside the Bayle debate, what does it matter how Bayle related to Jurieu and to religion? Is such an

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Desmaizeaux, *Vie de Bayle* (1730); Labrousse I; and most recently Bost, *Pierre Bayle*.

inquiry into the master of footnotes itself not a footnote in the history of philosophy?

The answer is no, and for three different reasons; three different ways in which the smaller story of Bayle, Jurieu, and the *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* is intricately connected with the greater themes of history.

### The Republic of Letters

The first concerns the pan-European intellectual community known as the Republic of Letters, which in recent years has received much scholarly attention. As the editor and main contributor of one of the first scholarly journals, the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, Bayle was known as one of the fountainheads of this Republic, a trusted spokesman and defender of the irenic values of its members. However, in the course of his theologico-political encounters with Jurieu, Bayle was led to reflect more deeply on the tension between the Republic's desire for radical freedom of expression and the need for expression to be restricted in certain cases. In the *Dictionnaire* the careful reader may see Bayle performing an in-depth study of the practices of the Republic, while reflecting on the very possibility of a radically free public sphere, and attempting somehow to harmonize the many tensions between the Republic of Letters and the state.

The new perspective on Bayle and the *Dictionnaire* that is presented in this book, and especially in Chapter 2, will serve to warn against any oversimplification of the Republic of Letters as a single stable institution, unified by a set of shared ideals and values. As other scholars too have noted,<sup>37</sup> the reality was much more complex: the real Republic of Letters was in fact multifarious, conflicted, diversified; a battleground of different ideals and values, where even the scholarly code was not universally agreed upon. Furthermore, far from being a coherent and consistent ideal commonly shared by its members, the very concept of a 'Republic of Letters' was open to widely diverse interpretations: for some, the Republic was indeed a pan-confessional sphere of free debate; for others, it was the fertile soil for (a certain take on) Christian truth.<sup>38</sup> It is perhaps important to note the seductive danger of a concept as attractive as that of the unified Republic of Letters, which was designed precisely to tempt scholars into believing it—even nowadays its conceptual appeal threatens to overwhelm

<sup>37</sup> See especially Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, although she questions the correspondence between the Republic's theory and its practice, not the coherence of this theory itself; more critical is Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, esp. 539–40. See Chapter 2, this volume.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Jean Le Clerc; see Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 1, 64.

historians' understanding of its fragmented reality. Yet this concept itself was strongly shaped by the work and influence of authors such as Bayle; hence the importance of understanding what lies behind the formulation of his vision (including his possible self-contradictions).

Finally, even if there did not exist a single common ideal or reality that was 'the' Republic of Letters, there were certainly some who shared the irenic ideal of a pan-confessional realm of free discourse that was to regulate itself. Bayle, as the founder of the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, was perhaps the most important exponent of this view. It is precisely for this reason that his change of perspective with regard to the Republic, and especially the role of war and peace within this sphere of free thought, is so striking—for Bayle's attempt to reformulate the Republic of Letters as a peaceful brotherly domain shared between kindred spirits imploded during his own debate with Jurieu. In the *Dictionnaire* we witness Bayle struggling to come to terms with this reality: that self-regulated peace does not work, will never work, in a world where intolerant spirits roam free. As a result, his thought on the Republic is also connected to his changing ideas on toleration.

This part of Bayle's enterprise has remained overlooked by most scholars of Bayle as well as of the Republic of Letters—yet it is as vital for understanding the project of the dictionary as it is for understanding the implicit ethics and politics of the Republic of Letters, and its conflicted relationship to the secular powers of seventeenth-century Europe.

### The Origins of the Enlightenment

The second theme concerns the wider historiographical debate on the origins of the Enlightenment. As I have noted, most contemporary scholars accept that Bayle has played an important role in the history of Enlightenment, yet they continue to debate the scope and, particularly, the character of this role. Thus Jonathan Israel has notoriously fitted the more subversive readings of Bayle into a narrative that places him in the vanguard of the early 'Radical Enlightenment' headed by Spinoza, while John Robertson stresses Bayle's originality and independence from Spinoza, and emphasizes the influence of Bayle's ideas on the nature of man and society (especially with regard to atheism) on thinkers such as Vico and Hume. Other historians, in the wake of Labrousse, continue to read Bayle as the defender of an old Calvinism that was misinterpreted by his eighteenth-century admirers, thereby isolating Bayle from the Enlightenment(s) of Voltaire, Diderot, and Hume.

This book will not itself tackle the tricky issue of influence, but it will attempt to show that Bayle himself allows for multiple readings of his

philosophy of religion, and especially his discussion of the problem of evil. It will suggest, furthermore, that a certain hermeneutical openness to the many different aspects and voices of Bayle can be a helpful antidote against any temptation to fix him too easily in a certain role: whether as crypto-Spinozist provocateur or as neo-Calvinist anomaly. However, it will also argue that, whichever way Bayle is read, there is an indisputable subversive potential in his works that cannot be dismissed as simply coincidental: the *Dictionnaire* was always destined to subvert. Consequently, the attempt to break open the hermeneutical question of reading Bayle is also meant as a way of arguing that Bayle's role in the history of the Enlightenment may be more complex, more important, and more interesting than often imagined—not despite but because of his many ambiguities. It is, after all, entirely possible that Bayle had no fixed place in the history of the Enlightenment; that there are many kinds of Baylean influence, having multiplied with the number of readings of Bayle; that Bayle's role, far from being constant or static, is a layered, complicated, multiform collection—as intrinsically evasive as Bayle himself. This is not to reduce the coherence of Bayle's oeuvre to the many interpretations of it—Bayle was not the only philosopher to have a very discontinuous reception—but to open up a level of sensitivity to the many dimensions that characterize his work.

### The Refuge

Finally, this book ties into a long-standing historical debate on the political perspectives of the Huguenot Refuge in the Dutch Republic. It is sometimes forgotten that Bayle was at least as controversial for his political leanings as he was for his philosophical opinions and literary tastes. Bayle went against the trend of the time by opposing not only the Glorious Revolution, but the possibility of a Protestant war against Louis XIV with unprecedented vehemence: it was only his adamant denial of his authorship of some works that prevented him from ostracizing even his closest friends. Yet, however curious Bayle's political positioning has struck some readers to be, I will argue that it can be traced to a pacifism more principled and uncompromising than that of any others of his age, which, combined with his resolute resistance to religious fanaticism, led him to speak out against the spirit of rebellion that threatened to define the Dutch Refuge in the years following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

In the course of this book I will show that Bayle's role in the three debates that occupied the Refuge at the time of writing the *Dictionnaire* (war, toleration, faith vs reason) is much more complicated than often assumed; that these debates themselves cannot be conflated without losing

sight of something essential in Bayle's political and theological perspective; and that Bayle cannot be read in isolation from others in the Refuge. Although this book will mainly focus on Bayle's confrontation with Jurieu, in the background there will also be room for other voices in conversation with both of them: such as Jacques Basnage, Jean Le Clerc, Élie Saurin, Jacques Bernard, and Isaac Jaquelot.

If these three themes demonstrate the wider significance of reading Bayle, in what follows I will continue to show that Bayle cannot be understood without, to some extent, understanding Jurieu also—and this is why the greater part of this book will be concerned with demonstrating how the story of the *Dictionnaire* is intertwined with the story of Bayle and Jurieu.

I have begun the latter story with a tombstone; I must begin the former with some words in Latin, scribbled in a notebook on 27 October 1689.

# 1

## Bayle's Labyrinth

### *The Genesis, Style, and Structure of the Dictionnaire (1689–96)*

*Q[uod] F[elix] F[austum] Q[ue] S[it] le 27 oct. 1689. Incipit generalis delinea[ti]o errorum alicujus momenti emendatorum a me P. Baelio Roter. Phi[los]ophiae et Histor[iae] Professor. in Dictionario Morery<sup>1</sup>*

With these words Pierre Bayle opened the section of a notebook in which he began to collect a number of corrections and additions to Louis Moréri's *Grand Dictionnaire Historique*: 'May it be prosperous and fortunate, 27 October 1689. Here begins the general summary of the errors of some magnitude that have been corrected by myself, Pierre Bayle, professor of philosophy and history at Rotterdam, in Moréri's *Dictionary*.' Bayle had probably been asked to start such a project by his Dutch publisher Reinier Leers, with whom he had developed a friendship and close working relationship after their first collaboration on Bayle's *Pensées Diverses* (1682).<sup>2</sup> Following the vast success of Moréri's dictionary, which had been reprinted several times after its first publication in 1674, Leers wanted to persuade Moréri's Parisian publisher, Denis Thierry, to publish a new edition of the *Grand Dictionnaire*, with corrections and additions provided by Bayle. This Baylean Moréri could then be marketed in the Dutch Republic, and compete with another new edition that was being prepared in the northern Netherlands by Jean Le Clerc.<sup>3</sup> In the end, Thierry was not persuaded by Leers's plans, and as this gradually became clear Bayle might have let his research project, announced so

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Bost, *Pierre Bayle*, 625. On the production of the *Dictionnaire*, see esp. Van Lieshout, *The Making*, esp. 1–54; also Bost, *Pierre Bayle*, 387–406; and Labrousse I, 235ff; Armstrong, 'The textual strategies', 138ff; Nedergaard, 'La genèse du "Dictionnaire historique et critique"':

<sup>2</sup> Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers*, 28–30, 51–4.

<sup>3</sup> Van Lieshout, *The Making*, 1–7.

proudly in his own notebook, die a quiet death. But he did quite the opposite.

In the course of correcting Moréri and sending the resulting ‘morceaux de papier’ to Thierry, Bayle had had a better idea, and started working on ‘un Dictionnaire d’une autre nature qui m’occupait tout entier’.<sup>4</sup> From the same notebook in which Bayle collected his notes on Moréri, it appears that the original project had grown beyond its boundaries, since Bayle had also started adding notes and corrections on dictionaries other than that of Moréri, pointing out errors and omissions.<sup>5</sup> Probably again in collaboration with Leers, Bayle conceived of the idea to assemble these notes in a ‘Dictionnaire Critique’ of his own. But before he went much further with this new project, Bayle and Leers wanted to know whether the public would actually be interested in such a dictionary of errors. They therefore decided to publish a test-version of the project, in order to gauge the opinion of the public. In November 1690 the scholarly journal *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savants* announced the impending publication of the ‘Projet d’un Dictionnaire Critique, où l’on verra la correction d’une infinité de fautes répandues soit dans les Dictionnaires, soit dans d’autres livres’.<sup>6</sup> The production of this work was somewhat delayed by Bayle’s controversy with an old friend turned foe,<sup>7</sup> so that it eventually appeared on 14 May 1692, as the *Projet et Fragments d’un Dictionnaire Critique*.

This work contains two parts. First, a letter addressed to Bayle’s friend Jacques du Rondel, describing the ‘Projet’: ‘Je me suis mis en tête de compiler le plus gros recueil qu’il me sera possible des fautes qui se rencontrent dans les Dictionnaires, et... de faire aussi des courses sur toutes sortes d’Auteurs, quand l’occasion s’en présentera.’<sup>8</sup> Second, the work included an eclectic selection of twenty-four test-case articles or ‘Fragments’, which were later to appear in the *Dictionnaire* as well, albeit in a somewhat different form. As Leers points out in his ‘Avis du Libraire’, he had pressed Bayle to put together this material, and as a result the selection was rather random and unpolished—and indeed, these ‘Fragments dressés à la hâte’ were of very variable topics, mostly commenting on classical and historical figures, and containing no real narrative structure.<sup>9</sup> The articles were a fragmentary mixture of biography, corrections,

<sup>4</sup> Bayle to Jacques du Rondel, 17 July 1693, *Correspondance*, vol. 9, 106.

<sup>5</sup> Van Lieshout, *The Making*, 4–5.

<sup>6</sup> HOS (Nov. 1690), art. xxiii, 136.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 2, this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Bayle, ‘Projet d’un Dictionnaire Critique’, in: *Projet et Fragments d’un Dictionnaire Critique* (1692), sig. \* 2.

<sup>9</sup> Leers, ‘Avis du Libraire’, signed 5 May 1692; Bayle too advised his readers that, in order to divine ‘le goût du public’, he had selected precisely those ‘morceaux dont je me défiais le plus’ (‘Projet’, sig. \*\*).

and digressions, with a set of additional remarks at the end: neither the famous tripartite *in folio* structure of the later *Dictionnaire*, nor the enticing philosophical discussions for which it would be renowned, were present in the *octavo* volume of the *Projet et Fragments*.

Although the work had been published anonymously, Bayle's authorship was soon a public secret in the Republic of Letters, the more so since Bayle had sent it to his friends and correspondents, asking them for their opinions and urging them to send him any material that might be of use.<sup>10</sup> Most reactions were curious and positive, though some criticism was voiced on the lack of structure in the articles, and on Bayle's failure to distinguish between important matters and mere details: Leibniz, for instance, argued that Bayle had spent too much time merely listing errors instead of exploring the truth.<sup>11</sup> Bayle was not deaf to such criticism. Indeed, the very aim of the *Projet et Fragments* was to solicit feedback, and, having been made aware that a merely *critical* dictionary of errors would be too negative to satisfy his readers, Bayle adjusted his project accordingly.<sup>12</sup> On 16 November 1692 Bayle first used the title 'Dictionnaire Historique et Critique' in one of his letters,<sup>13</sup> thus reorienting the project towards a more positive aim: not only to criticize and correct, but to explain and comment of his own accord.

If this republication was successful in spurring discussion of the project, it also put great pressure on both author and publisher to make haste in producing the *Dictionnaire*. Bayle's readers, their appetites whetted by the *Projet et Fragments*, were increasingly impatient to have the final work, and so, in the years that followed, Bayle worked on the *Dictionnaire* in a continuous rush. Even before printing started, he wrote to his friend Vincent Minutoli: 'Certain *Dictionnaire Critique*, à quoi je me suis engagé, et qui est une mer orageuse et sans fond ni rive, m'ôte toute sorte de loisir.'<sup>14</sup> The presses began to roll in the second half of 1693, and as the printing sped up and demand for copies rose, Leers eventually devoted all his manpower and technological apparatus towards

<sup>10</sup> Van Lieshout, *The Making*, 16; McKenna, 'Une certaine idée de la République des Lettres', forthcoming; and *Correspondance*, vol. 9, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> Van Lieshout, *The Making*, 15–20; see also Bost, *Pierre Bayle*, 392; Bianchi, *Progetto di un Dizionario Critico*, 51ff; Fairbairn, 'Pierre Bayle in France', vol. 2, 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> See Basnage de Beauval to Leibniz, 2 Oct. 1692: '[M. Bayle] s'occupe tout entier à son Dictionnaire critique. Il en retranchera tout le détail de faits qui a paru ennuyeux à bien des gens dans le fragment que vous en avez vu.' (Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, vol. 3, 87). See also Bayle to Pierre Silvestre, 19 Sept. 1692 (*Correspondance*, vol. 8, 631): 'J'ai fait un plan un peu différent, et qui remédiera à une partie des inconvénients'.

<sup>13</sup> Albeit in Latin: 'laborem Dictionarii historio-critici' (Bayle to Theodor Jansson van Almeloveen, 16 Nov. 1692, *Correspondance*, vol. 8, 669).

<sup>14</sup> Bayle to Minutoli, 28 Aug. 1692; in *Correspondance*, vol. 8, 611.