



The (Self-) Fashioning of an Eighteenth-Century Christian Philosopher:

Religion, Science and Morality in the Writings and Life of Jean Henri Samuel Formey (1711-1797)

Annelie Grosse

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization
of the European University Institute

Florence, 19 January 2018

European University Institute
Department of History and Civilization

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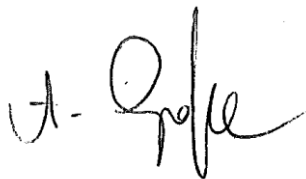
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Grosse', written in a cursive style.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Note on abbreviations and language.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
(Anti-) Enlightenment Thinker or Knowledge Broker? Formey in the Scholarship.....	10
Religious Enlightenment.....	17
The Huguenots and the Enlightenment in Berlin.....	28
On Method.....	39
FORMEY – AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER.....	49
1. Formey's Concept of Philosophy and its Relation to Religion.....	51
Philosophy as a Universal Science of Reason.....	53
The Epistemological Foundations of Christian Philosophy.....	55
The Christian Philosopher as an Antagonist of the philosophes.....	60
2. Formey between the Huguenot Colony and the Republic of Letters, or How to Reconcile the Pastor and the Philosopher?.....	68
Formey's Huguenot Socialisation.....	68
Formey's Acquaintance with Wolff's Philosophy and Wolffianism.....	75
The Transition from the Pastor to the Professor of Philosophy.....	81
3. Preaching like a Philosopher and Philosophising like a Preacher.....	92
Wolffian Philosophical Preaching.....	94
From the Philosophical Sermon to the Moral Philosophical Discourse.....	99
Different Genres, Same Audiences?.....	108
4. The Target of Formey's Writings: Moral Decline in Church and Republic of Letters.....	113
The Context of the French Church: Moral Decline and Disintegration of the Colony because of Bad Preaching.....	113
The Context of the Republic of Letters: Moral Decline and Lack of Sufficient Censorship.....	119
The Power of the Booksellers.....	136
5. Between Apologist, Moral Role Model and Scholar, or How Did Formey's Contemporaries Perceive Him?.....	142
Formey as the Author of the <i>Philosophe Chrétien</i>	142
Formey as a Defender of Religion in Church, Literature and the Society at Large.....	146
The (Christian) Virtues of a Learned Man.....	151
Formey as a Wolffian Scholar.....	158
FORMEY AND THE RELIGIOUS, EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND MORAL DEBATES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.....	166
6. Encyclopedic Knowledge of God: Defending the Comprehensibility of God's Nature against Bayle.....	167
Formey's <i>Dictionnaire Philosophique</i> and the Article DIEU.....	167
The Critical Method in the Article DIEU: Fighting Bayle with His Own Weapons.....	171
The Ontological Proof in the Article DIEU.....	177
7. Religion and the Politics of Science: Proving the Existence of God through Metaphysical Principles.....	184
The Proof of God's Existence from Descartes to Wolff.....	186
Metaphysics against Physico-Theology.....	192
The Controversy on Metaphysics at the Academy.....	197
Reactions to the Debate.....	206
8. The Danger of Fatalism: The Religious and Moral Criticism of Pre-Established Harmony.....	212
Pre-established Harmony.....	214
Intention and Setting of the <i>Belle Wolfienne</i>	215

The Attack against Pre-established Harmony in the Belle Wolfienne.....	219
Formey and Crousaz.....	223
Formey's Search for Potential Replies to Crousaz.....	226
Finding Help in the Enemy's Camp? Lange's Criticism Revisited.....	230
Towards an Emancipation from the Religious and Moral Debate.....	235
Reactions to the Belle Wolfienne and Formey's Reconciliation with the Aléthophiles.....	239
9. The Determination of Free Will: The Relation between Liberty and Causality in Psychology.....	247
The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Liberty.....	250
The Independence of the Body and the Soul.....	252
Empirical Knowledge between Self-Consciousness and Observation.....	255
Free Will between Necessity and Pure Chance.....	262
The Debate between Libertarians and Necessitarians.....	263
The Rejection of Chance ('Liberté d'indifférence').....	266
Free Will and Moral Perfectibility.....	270
10. Human Perfectibility and Divine Providence: The Relation between Liberty and Determination in Moral Philosophy.....	272
The 'Psychologisation' of Moral Philosophy as a Support for Innate Morality.....	273
The Superiority of Divine Law.....	278
The Academy's 1751 Essay Contest on Providence.....	284
Formey's Approval of Kästner's Winning Essay in 1751.....	291
The Aftermath of the Prize Question on Providence at the Academy.....	297
11. Constructing a Science of Morality or How to Link Science, Morality and Revealed Religion?.....	302
Transforming the Rationalist Conception of Innate Morality into a 'Moral Science'.....	303
The Place of Religion in a 'Secular' Moral Science.....	306
The Principes de Morale between Scientific Treatise and Popular Instruction.....	315
The Principes de Morale as a Reply to the Challenge of Scientific Progress.....	320
CONCLUSION.....	332
The Christian Philosopher's Cultures of Controversy.....	333
Beyond Faith and Reason: Three Dichotomies that Affected Formey's Practice as Christian Philosopher.....	338
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	345
1. Sources.....	345
Handwritten Correspondences.....	345
Handwritten Files.....	346
Printed Sources.....	346
2. Literature.....	354

Acknowledgements

This thesis was written at the European University Institute in Florence between September 2013 and October 2017. My thesis and I have benefited greatly from the exciting and inspiring international research environment that this exceptional institution offers, as well as from the academic infrastructure that it provides. Moreover, I am very grateful to the *Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst* (DAAD) and the EUI for having funded my work for the past four years.

I am also indebted to a multitude of people but – afraid of missing anybody – I will thank only a few by name. I am the most grateful to my supervisor Professor Ann Thomson who guided me with precious comments and enthusiasm through the process of writing this thesis. The nature and shape of this thesis owe a lot to the Intellectual History that she practises with intelligence and passion. Moreover, I am very grateful to my second reader at the EUI, Professor Stéphane Van Damme, whose expertise in a new History of Science significantly broadened my approach to eighteenth-century ideas and learned culture. Finally, I want to thank Professor Dr. Daniel Fulda and Dr. Thomas Ahnert, who so kindly agreed to examine my thesis and to be part of the defence board.

Note on abbreviations and language

I have used the following abbreviations for archival sources:

A	–	Sammlung Autographa, Biblioteka Jagiellonska, Krakow
BBAW	–	Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin
BCU	–	Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire, Lausanne
CV	–	Sammlung Varnhagen von Ense, Biblioteka Jagiellonska Krakow
FF	–	Fonds Formey/ Nachlass Formey, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – preußischer Kulturbesitz
GstA	–	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußen
Slg. Darm.	–	Sammlung Darmstädter, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – preußischer Kulturbesitz
UBL	–	Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig

I have tried to use gender-neutral language throughout the thesis. Yet, for the sake of clarity I have suspended this practice when referring to concepts like *human being* and *man*, especially since eighteenth-century perceptions of these terms almost always referred to male human beings.

INTRODUCTION

In 1750 the Prussian Huguenot and secretary of the Royal Academy of Science in Berlin, Jean Henri Samuel Formey, published a book entitled *Le Philosophe Chrétien*. This event marked not only a significant peak in his life and career, but it also is a significant example within a canon of several European events that emblematically represent the particularly diverse and partially ambivalent character of the middle decades of the Eighteenth Century: In 1751 the first volume of the Parisian *Encyclopédie* appeared, and it quickly obtained the reputation of spreading religious heterodox and anti-clerical ideas. Moreover, it was shaped and it circulated amongst authors that held materialist and sometimes even atheist ideas.¹ Besides this, the *Encyclopédie* provided the leitmotiv for the eighteenth-century pursuit for truth and human progress: in his *Discours préliminaire* to the *Encyclopédie*, d'Alembert depicted the predominance and universality of philosophy as a science of reason, which comprised all kinds of subjects including religion.² Simultaneously to the encyclopedic project of universal knowledge and trust in human reason, Jean Jacques Rousseau campaigned for the opposite model in his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* of 1750, in which he argued that the progress of the sciences had a negative effect on human morality.³ At the same time in Scotland, David Hume, in his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* brought moral philosophical theories to a peak that had fermented in the British Isles since the third Earl of Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson. Moreover, Locke's empiricist epistemology inspired Hume to present a theory of moral sense that was established on empirical observation, and according to which morality was determined by feelings and passions instead of reason alone. By linking morality to human nature, Hume's theory discarded the role of God and revealed religion in questions relating to morality, and he generally dismissed the fusion of religious and philosophical questions.⁴ The moral theory that in the 1750s concluded the comprehensive oeuvre that the German

1 In 1758/59 Abraham Joseph Chaumeix published a fundamental criticism of the *Encyclopédie*, stressing its subversive contents with respect to religion and morals: *Préjugés légitimes contre l'Encyclopédie et Essai de réfutation de ce dictionnaire*, 8 vols. (Brussels & Paris, 1758-59). The official prohibition of the *Encyclopédie* in France also came about in 1759. For an analysis of the contemporary opposition to the *Encyclopédie* in journals and print see John Lough, *Essays on the Encyclopédie of Diderot and d'Alembert*, (Oxford, 1968), 252-423. Diderot was one of the two editors of the *Encyclopédie*, and he was an open exponent of materialist and atheistic ideas. His *Lettre sur les aveugles*, which demonstrated this attitude, appeared in 1749 when he was already engaged in the enterprise of the *Encyclopédie*, and this caused him some months of detention in the prison of Vincennes. The same circles that frequented Diderot in Paris were also frequented by another famous French materialist, Julien Offray de La Mettrie, whose *Homme machine* appeared in 1747 and was prohibited.

2 [Jean Le Rond D'Alembert], "Discours préliminaire des éditeurs," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Jean Le Rond d'Alembert & Denis Diderot, vol. 1 (Paris, 1751), I-XLV.

3 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours qui a remporté le prix à l'Académie de Dijon, en l'année 1750. Sur cette question proposée par la même Académie: Si le rétablissement des Sciences et des Arts a contribué à épurer les moeurs. Oeuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 3 (Paris, 1964).

4 David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (London, 1751).

philosopher Christian Wolff had spent half a century developing, postulated an almost opposing argument to Hume: Wolff determined that the human intellect was the main source of morality and praised God as the creator of this intellect.⁵ The middle of the Eighteenth Century however also heralded the slow decline of Wolff's rationalist philosophy which, following Leibniz's legacy, had been built upon the premise that faith and reason were compatible. At this time, the academic career of Immanuel Kant had only just begun; towards the Eighteenth Century's end, he famously named it a 'Zeitalter der Aufklärung', an age that increasingly enabled people to freely use their own reason.⁶ The intellectual world of the mid-eighteenth-century Europe was in many ways a complex web of ideas, where rationalism and empiricism, the criticism of revealed religion and the criticism of science, ideas of moral sense and of divinely determined self-perfection co-existed alongside each other. The Prussian Huguenot Formey, who is the protagonist of my thesis, joined this colourful and multi-layered picture as a defender of the harmonic co-existence of Christian belief and universal reason: as the Christian philosopher.

As much as the union of the Christian and the philosopher might seem contradictory, or at least strange to us today, it was a common concept for the longest time of history. In the mid-Eighteenth Century Formey was just one of many individuals, who claimed this hybrid identity. Thomas Aquinas in the Thirteenth Century was considered to have been a Christian philosopher for the equal legitimacy that he gave to Christian dogma and Aristotelian philosophy. Closer to Formey's time, the French priest and Cartesian Nicolas de Malebranche, as well as the English physicist and Anglican scientist Robert Boyle, were both known to be Christian philosophers: as they were not only convinced that (natural) philosophy and religion supported each other but, they also – like Formey – referred rhetorically to this hybrid conception.⁷ Although Formey was part of a general tradition, his perception of the Christian philosopher grew from a different chronological, geographical and cultural root than that of his predecessors. The middle decades of the Eighteenth Century with their amalgam of diverse epistemological, religious and moral philosophical claims were considered to fall in a larger period of transition in terms of the conceptualisation of philosophy or science, and religion. Until the Seventeenth Century neither science nor religion were the (more or less) precisely defined entities, as we understand them today, whereas in the Nineteenth Century they were perceived as two mutually exclusive, and often even contradictory

5 Christian Wolff, *Philosophia Moralis sive Ethica, methodo scientifica pertractata*, 5 vols. (Halle, 1750-3).

6 Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung," *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, vol. 4, no. 12 (1784), 481-94.

7 See Nicolas de Malebranche, *Entretien d'un philosophe chrétien et d'un philosophe chinois, sur l'existence et la nature de Dieu* (Paris, 1708) and Robert Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso: Showing that by being addicted to Experimental Philosophy, a Man is rather Assisted, than indisposed to be a Good Christian* (In the Savoy [London], 1690).

realms of life – a perception that has survived until today and makes it difficult for us to understand the concept of the Christian philosopher in the past.

The history of the conceptualisation of science and religion as two distinct entities has recently been written by the historian of science and religion Peter Harrison with the aim to remind historians that they should not project their contemporary concepts of these two entities onto the past.⁸ This is a reminder that for more than 20 years, when John Hedley Brooke published the first substantial study on this subject, has regularly been repeated in the history of science and has directly inspired this thesis on Formey.⁹ Harrison starts his history in Christian Antiquity and demonstrates that first both science – which he takes to be equal to (natural) philosophy – and religion counted as interior virtues and habits, and hence that the question of whether the two were in conflict or agreement with each other did not occur to contemporaries.¹⁰ This conception of science and religion went unchallenged during the Middle Ages – Thomas Aquinas was hence a Christian philosopher as a matter of course – while in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (due to various reasons, particularly the criticism of the teleology in Aristotelian philosophy in the Reformation), the process of an externalisation and systematisation of the two categories evolved, and our modern conceptions of science and religion took root.¹¹ In Harrison's view, the two entities began to need each other in order to mutually support their respective authority: religion, which since the Reformation had become multiple, increasingly drew on reason to justify the truth of its propositional contents, and likewise the natural philosophers' inquiry into nature through the use of reason and experiment obtained social legitimacy because it had the aim to provide new evidence for religious dogma. This mutually beneficial situation is best described by the rise of physico-theology of which Robert Boyle was one of the most well-known practitioners.¹² However, as Harrison shows, in this harmonic relation between science and religion, there lay the origin of their later conflict: with science's increasing objectivity and specialisation towards the Nineteenth Century, the very idea that religious dogma was explainable through reason caused that it eventually was challenged towards the end of the Eighteenth Century, while science acquired during the Nineteenth Century the reputation of being true and useful.¹³ The essentials of Harrison's narrative are not reserved to the history of science. In a form that is less thoroughly founded on conceptual

8 See Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (Chicago; London, 2015), 3 and 5.

9 See John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge; New York, 1991).

10 See Harrison, *The Territories*, 16.

11 See Harrison, *The Territories*, 14-5 and for a more detailed description of what changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see chapter 4. For Harrison the particular history of the emergence of our modern understanding of science and religion is the reason why they are nowadays commonly considered to be contradictory.

12 See Harrison, *The Territories*, 110-1.

13 See Harrison, *The Territories*, 115 and 181-2.

historical investigation as Harrison's work though, this narrative prevails also in most of the accounts in history of philosophy and theology that explain the advent of a secular and rational modernity in the Eighteenth Century as an accidental result of the attempt to protect religion through reform, as we will see below.

According to this seemingly universal narrative of the gradual substitution of dogma for reason (religion for science), Formey's self-conceptualisation of the Christian philosopher took place in a moment when not only were the categories of science/ philosophy and religion taking shape as separate systems of beliefs and practices, but also at a time when the idea of the mutual support of natural reason and religious belief (that had peaked in the Seventeenth Century) was supposedly falling apart. In this sense, Formey's Christian philosopher seems to be an obsolescent construction, in a time when science was already starting to replace religion, as the means for explaining the world and humanity. However, this is not the angle from which I will write Formey's history. Instead, my thesis tries to capture the historical actors' own perceptions of their time and their particular challenges and opportunities. Although now we cannot deny that in the Eighteenth Century science and philosophy had a damaging effect on religion in the long run, it should be made clear that these developments were not straightforward or clear-cut. As I tried to insinuate in the beginning, this period contained many diverse and seemingly contradictory developments, and as such, a Christian philosopher did not have just one defined role or one delimited set of activities. On the contrary, depending on the context and audience, Formey's Christian philosopher was either a fierce defender of a scientific (rationalist) method, an analyst of the human soul and its cognitive capacities, an apologist of divine Providence against moral indifference, or a moral instructor who pleaded natural morality and the authority of divine laws alike. What is more, quite often things were not as they appear to us today: a plea against the argument from design was not necessarily a rejection of God's existence, but a plea for more scientific thoroughness; and the appraisal of God's perfection in a sermon was not a simple expression of devotion, but a vehicle to teach believers their natural and autonomous morality. In order to understand the subtleties of Formey's arguments and to capture the many different oscillations between philosophy and religion that the life and thought of an eighteenth-century Christian philosopher spawned, we have to look at them through his own lens and apprehend the cultural and intellectual web that was his frame of reference.

The eighteenth-century concept of the Christian philosopher was multi-faceted in its construction and was based on shifting concepts of philosophy and religion. Due to this it also had several different implications on the thoughts of the one who adopted this concept. In my thesis, I attempt to trace both the construction of Formey's (self-declared) identity as a Christian philosopher and the particularities of his ideas concerning pertinent questions of his time. My analysis is limited

to the middle decades of the Eighteenth Century – roughly from the late 1730s to the mid-1760s. During these decades many of the writings that marked this particularly ambivalent and transitory moment in the European intellectual landscape of the Eighteenth Century were published, but it was also during this period that Formey's intellectual development peaked and he achieved his highest proficiency in philosophical and theological writing. In many respects, Formey's life and written output, his general self-fashioning as a Christian philosopher and his particular positions concerning precise questions, were answers to the different epistemological, religious and moral philosophical propositions that marked the debates in and between Germany, France, Switzerland, Britain and Holland. Hence the history of the Christian philosopher Formey is not only the history of one person's thought over a limited period of time but a study of a whole set of individuals (who were Formey's contemporaries and predecessors) and their ideas, which he either adopted or objected. It is a history of a 'collective elaboration of thought', through appropriation and discussion with many different people.¹⁴

All histories of ideas should examine such a 'collective elaboration of thought', yet Formey's case, in particular, requires such an approach. As a second-generation Huguenot refugee in Berlin and a member and Secretary of the Berlin Academy of Science, he was a doubly favoured member of the pan-European community of scholars and men of letters, the Republic of Letters, and was literally familiar with all the intellectual events and developments that took place in Europe: he took part in these intellectual discussions and became part of the epistolary and journalistic infrastructure of the sub-network of the Huguenot diaspora that was scattered in Protestant Europe.¹⁵ He also corresponded with and read the works of an international group of intellectuals that were affiliated to the Berlin Academy. Formey's position in the former network was definitely connected to his role in the Berlin Academy and the Republic of Letters, but the further his career advanced, the more these two networks intersected and overlapped, and as such, they developed the same kind of learned and communicative practices. From early on in his life, Formey was engaged in the practices of a broker/ 'passeur' of knowledge that was typical for the Huguenots: in 1733 he started to work as a journalist in the *Bibliothèque germanique*, a learned journal dedicated to the diffusion of German literary and scientific news into the francophone world. During his lifetime he was involved in more than a dozen similar journalistic projects, either as a contributor or as a publisher,

14 For this term see Ann Thomson, *L'Âme des Lumières: le débat sur l'être humain entre religion et science: Angleterre-France (1690-1760)* (Seyssel, 2013), 238.

15 On the role of the Huguenots in the Republic of Letters, i.e. their function as intermediaries that provided coherence to this imagined learned community, see Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven; London, 1995), 9-10, and also Ann Thomson, *L'Âme des Lumières, 170-5* who describes the Huguenots' function as 'passeurs' in the case of the transfer of ideas between Britain and France at the end of the Seventeenth and beginning of Eighteenth Centuries.

which he increasingly augmented with information and material gathered as the Academy's secretary. The main journalistic exercise that Formey and his contemporaries carried out was to review new books, hence to comment on others' ideas. Likewise, from the beginning of his career, Formey was engaged in the translation and publication of other authors' works: beginning with sermons and the writings of the German philosopher Christian Wolff, he later also translated the works of ancient philosophers and the scientific contributions of his German colleagues at the Academy. Often linked to his practices as a commentator and a translator was that of an abbreviator of other authors' works, where Formey shortened and simplified the texts, which in many instances had instructive functions. This was the case of his *Histoire abrégée de la Philosophie*, which was based on Johann Jakob Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae*. The boundaries between these different methods of engaging with and disseminating ideas of other philosophers and writers, which were favoured by Formey's particular position in the Republic of Letters, and his 'independent' writings were fluid, not only because the writings authored by Formey – academic treatises and more substantial works alike – most probably reflected what he had read, translated and commented on, but also because Formey's notion of authorship was rather large and hence several of his writings very faithfully rendered parts of other authors' writings.¹⁶ These diverse and entangled practices of writing and publication, which were facilitated and accompanied by Formey's immense epistolary activity, are the reason why in my view, we can speak of him as a true example for the appropriation, discussion and translation (in the literal and extended meaning of the term) of ideas in the mid-Eighteenth Century.

(Anti-) Enlightenment Thinker or Knowledge Broker? Formey in the Scholarship

The scholarship on Formey has taken a while to appreciate his extraordinary role as an accumulator and broker of ideas and knowledge; yet once this appreciation was achieved – most recently in 2013 through an entire multi-disciplinary conference dedicated to him as a multiplier of knowledge ('Wissensmultiplikator') – only a few people seem to have been interested in *what* Formey accumulated, appropriated and brokered.¹⁷ The unanswered question of the (detailed) content, references and immediate contexts of Formey's writings as a Christian philosopher is the dark spot in the scholarship on Formey that my thesis wants to shed light upon. In the initial scholarship on

16 For the list of all of Formey's written productions, see Rolf Geissler, "Bibliographie des écrits de Jean Henri Samuel Formey," in *La Correspondance de Jean Henri Samuel Formey (1711-1797): Inventaire alphabétique*, ed. Jens Häselser (Paris, 2003), 419–73. Amongst others, Geissler distinguished between the categories 'translations' and 'Formey author'. However, a closer look reveals how ambiguous this separation is.

17 See Jannis Götze, Martin Meiske, eds., *Jean Henri Samuel Formey: Wissensmultiplikator der Berliner Aufklärung* (Hannover, 2016).

Formey the content of his thought had been already to a certain extent a topic of interest, but this scholarship had two significant flaws: a negative evaluation due to a biased conception of the period of the enlightenment, and a missing contextualisation of these writings. A first substantial account of Formey's thought was provided by Christian Bartholmèss in a chapter on the perpetual secretary within his philosophical history of the Berlin Academy. It thus concentrated on Formey's academical writings, but also contained an evaluation of his ideas on psychological, moral and theological-philosophical issues, which was based on a review of his main independent writings. Bartholmèss reached the conclusion that Formey possessed a variegated and vast erudition, but that his fanatical pursuit for universality and polygraphy had harmed the quality of his writings.¹⁸ Yet, Bartholmèss' evaluation of Formey was still relatively decent compared to that of his German colleagues of the time. The historian of the Berlin Academy, Adolf Harnack, denied that Formey's writings held any quality, described him as an orthodox theologian, and believed that Formey's great recognition by his eighteenth-century contemporaries was disproportionate to his actual significance as an author.¹⁹ A similar tone was used in Ludwig Geiger's history of the intellectual life of Berlin, who furthermore accused Formey of having failed to eradicate his religious feelings through his philosophical training. According to Geiger, Formey could nevertheless be classified as a theologian of the enlightenment – an 'Aufklärungstheologe' - since he had sought to prove the compatibility of revealed religion and reason.²⁰ The negative judgements of these late-nineteenth-century inquirers into Formey's thought reveal their predominantly biased perception of the Eighteenth Century as the 'age of the enlightenment' on which they relied: for them this time was characterised by the emergence of a stable mindset of secular, rational and liberal ideas. However, Geiger's comments highlight the potential problem of their perception as it did not seem to provide for the co-existence of rationality and religious purposes that was present in Formey's writings, and hence Geiger opted to classify him as a theologian.

Although being obviously simplistic and biased in their view of eighteenth-century intellectual developments, these rather negative early judgements of Formey's thought in late-nineteenth-century historiography seem to have had an important impact on the scholarly works of the Twentieth Century. The thematic focus and the widely hostile tenor of Eva Marcu's and Jacques Voisine's works from the early 1950s are evidence of this development. Both of them focused on Formey's relationship with the French *philosophes* who were perceived to be the bearers of the core

18 See Christian Bartholmèss, *Histoire philosophique de l'Académie de Prusse depuis Leibniz jusqu'à Schelling, particul. sous Frédéric-Le-Grand*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1850), vol. 1, 365.

19 Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 3 vols. (Berlin 1900), vol.1, 448-449.

20 Ludwig Geiger, *Berlin 1688-1840. Geschichte des geistigen Lebens der preußischen Hauptstadt*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1892), vol. 1, 361.

ideals of the enlightenment. Marcu and Voisine tried to make sense of the (in their eyes) strange co-existence between Formey's polemical apologetics against Voltaire's, Diderot's and Rousseau's atheistic and deistic writings, and his contribution to the *Encyclopédie*, that was authored by almost the same group of individuals and was widely understood as a symbol of enlightenment. Marcu in her PhD thesis in 1952, attributed Formey's ambiguous stand towards the French enlightenment – which in the 1950s was still mainly equated with *the* enlightenment as such – to his intellectual weakness and deep conservatism.²¹ In contrast, Voisine interpreted it as a sort of economically originated opportunism.²² Besides their apparent indebtedness to the nineteenth-century view on Formey, the works of Marcu and Voisine also marked the creation of the major field of interest within the research on Formey: his position as an actor between the French and the German enlightenments. This interest has continued to play a central role until today, not only because the historical record suggests such a focus, but also because the scholars who studied Formey since the 1960s have mainly been German scholars of French literature.

The first of those scholars – in German they are called 'Romanisten' – was Werner Krauss who likewise can be considered as the first scholar who introduced a shift in the evaluation of Formey compared to his evaluation established in the Nineteenth and mid-Twentieth Century. It has to be said that from the nineteenth-century studies on Formey until today, historical scholarship, in general, has evolved on at least two levels: our understanding of the (intellectual contents of) the enlightenment has significantly changed (as I will discuss below), and the history of ideas and philosophy has experienced the so-called cultural turn. Both of these developments had a positive influence on recent evaluations of Formey's historical role. In 1963, Werner Krauss dedicated two short articles to Formey, and these works became a precursor of this evolution. Independently of the acclaimed cultural turn in Anglo-American historiography, he added a cultural-historical layer to what had previously been mainly philosophical-historical approaches to Formey, by pointing to the insights that the huge corpus of Formey's correspondence could offer to research on eighteenth-century francophone literary life.²³ Still before the emergence of an alternative definition of the enlightenment that was not centred on certain 'enlightened' ideas, but on 'enlightened' practices that came in the wake of the cultural turn, Krauss emphasised Formey's merits as a cultural mediator, particularly with respect to his translation and popularisation of Christian Wolff's philosophy.²⁴

21 See Eva D. Marcu, "Formey and the Enlightenment," PhD diss., Columbia University, 1952, 129-131.

22 See Jacques Voisine, "J. Formey (1711-1797). Vulgarisateur de l'Œuvre de Rousseau en Allemagne," in *Mélanges d'histoire littéraire offerts à Daniel Mornet, Professeur honoraire à la Sorbonne, Par ses anciens Collègues et ses Disciples français* (Paris, 1951), 143.

23 Werner Krauss, "La correspondance de Formey," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 63 (1963): 207–16.

24 Werner Krauss, "Ein Akademiesekretär vor 200 Jahren: Samuel Formey," *Studien zur deutschen und französischen Aufklärung*, ed. Werner Krauss (Berlin, 1963), 55.

Moreover, Krauss took a first step towards a re-evaluation of Formey's own thought within the philosophy of the enlightenment, which at this time was according to large parts of scholarship, particularly the Anglo-American one, still predominantly considered to be a set of secular, rational and socially progressive ideas associated with the limited circle of some French *philosophes* (Peter Gay's famous interpretations of the Enlightenment appeared first in 1966 and 1969, while Roy Porter's and Mikuláš Teich's distinction of national enlightenments only saw the light fifteen years later).²⁵ More precisely, Krauss recognised that there was a significant difference between the philosophical developments in eighteenth-century France and Germany, and consequently he defined Formey's approach against the *philosophes* (that Marcu had interpreted as orthodox and anti-enlightenment) as an expression of Formey's rootedness in the German *Aufklärung*, in which 'philosophical enlightenment' and revealed religion intersected.²⁶

Krauss' positive re-evaluation of Formey's philosophical position was a precarious one, as it could also easily lead to an ahistorical interpretation of Formey's thought. This can be seen in Margarete G. Smith's brief engagement with Formey's ideas on the human soul in the early 1990s: she basically construed Formey's views on the (sensual) origin and effect of moral conscience as being similar to those of the French materialist Julien Offray de La Mettrie.²⁷ Her attempt to deal with Formey as 'a serious philosopher in his own right' is praiseworthy,²⁸ but her work suffers from a serious lack of contextualisation, as she situated Formey's writings in a direct dialogue with the Frenchmen La Mettrie and Voltaire while she completely ignored both Formey's historical relation to these philosophers (i.e. his hostile and polemical engagement with them), and the indebtedness of Formey's arguments to German thought and debates, particularly those connected to Christian Wolff.

Compared to Smith's study and to enlightenment studies in the 1960s, Krauss' studies were surprisingly vanguard, although they remained rudimentary. Still, they informed recent scholarship on Formey in several ways. This scholarship peaked in the 2000s as a result of the work conducted within the *Forschungszentrum Europäische Aufklärung*, which was situated at the University of Potsdam and sparked a new interest in Formey's abundant correspondence. Most importantly, in the wake of the cultural turn in eighteenth-century history and the immense historiography on the

25 See Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York; London, 1966) and Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Science of Freedom* (New York ; London, 1969). See Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge ; New York, 1981).

26 Krauss, "Ein Akademiesekretär vor 200 Jahren," 57-8.

27 Margarete G. Smith, "Materialism and Idealism: La Mettrie's 'Discours Sur Le Bonheur' and J.H.S. Formey's 'Système Du Vrai Bonheur,'" in *Transactions of the Eighth International Congress on the Enlightenment*, ed. Haydn Mason (Oxford, 1992), 504-7 and "In Defence of an Eighteenth-Century Academician, Philosopher and Journalist: Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 311 (1993): 85-100.

28 Smith, "In defence of," 87.

Republic of Letters and on the circulation of ideas that this has spawned, Formey is now regarded as a central actor within early modern European correspondence networks. It has been pointed out that he was placed at the intersection of several communities, namely those of the Huguenot refugees, the academies, the book trade and journalism, which enabled him to act as an information and knowledge broker.²⁹ The crucial merit of this research was indeed the creation of an inventory of the integral conserved correspondences of Formey published by Jens Häselser. This is an indispensable tool for accessing this significant part of the sources concerning Formey, which has made possible the exploitation and the edition of single large correspondences within the last years.³⁰ However, this precious groundwork, unfortunately, has not yet resulted in one integral analysis linking all the aspects of Formey's life and work. Instead, there are several unconnected case studies on the form and content of single epistolary exchanges.

Besides research on Formey's correspondence, his journalistic activities have also attracted the attention of scholars, which has led to similar conclusions as the studies on his epistolary practices: Formey's francophone journals, which were mainly based on literature news, were supposed to have transmitted scientific and philosophical knowledge creating a connection between the North-German and French learned cultures.³¹ More recently, the research on the different learned practices within the Republic of Letters has increasingly highlighted the overlapping and intertwining nature of Formey's fields of practice, such as the Academy, learned journals and scientific publications. As the Formey-expert Jens Häselser points out in his latest article, Formey benefited from his position at the intersection of these fields and used that position to facilitate his own work. In so doing he contributed to the maintenance and progress of Prussian scientific discourse via the distribution of information through different media.³²

The increasingly positive evaluation of Formey's historical role in recent cultural-historical works on him, is due to the almost exclusively instrumental role in the Republic of Letters that is

29 Jens Häselser, "Jean Henri Samuel Formey: L'homme à Berlin," in *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la République des Lettres. Etudes et réseaux de correspondances du XVIIe au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Hans Bots, and Jens Häselser (Paris, 2005), 434, and Id., "Entre République des Lettres et République des Sciences: Les correspondances 'scientifiques' de Formey," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 40 (2008), 102-103.

30 Jens Häselser, ed., *La correspondance de Jean Henri Samuel Formey (1711-1797): inventaire alphabétique* (Paris, 2003).

31 See Rolf Geissler, "Formey Journaliste: Observations sur la Collaboration au Journal Encyclopédique et d'autres journaux européens," in *La vie intellectuelle aux Refuges Protestants. Actes de la table ronde de Münster du 25 Juillet 1995*, ed. Jens Häselser and Antony McKenna (Paris, 1999), 137-56; and Annett Volmer, "Journalismus und Aufklärung. Jean Henri Samuel Formey und die Entwicklung der Zeitschrift zum Medium der Kritik," *Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte* 9 (2007): 101-29. Besides these two case studies the general article of Ann Thomson, "Formey," in *Dictionnaire de la Presse II: Dictionnaire des journalistes, 1600-1789*, ed. Jean Sgard, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1999), 402-406 has to be mentioned. She provides an extensive overview of Formey's different journalistic enterprises, including their publication dates and places as well as indications on their content.

32 See Jens Häselser, "Journaux savants et l'Académie de Berlin: deux acteurs sur le marché de l'information scientifique en Prusse," *Archives internationales d'Histoire de Science* 63 (2013): 199-214; see in particular 210 and 214.

attributed to him: the question of Formey's thought seems to have almost entirely vanished, instead his role as a broker and secretary of the Republic of Letters has been showcased in various examples, most recently in the appreciation of Formey as a 'multiplier of knowledge'. Such a focus is problematic in my view, as, although they are valuable and interesting, the studies on Formey's practices in the Republic of Letters foster a conceptual and methodological division between the external and internal aspects of eighteenth-century intellectual life. In short, in these studies, the various processes of the circulation of ideas, and the content of those circulated ideas are disconnected. This is in my view the main reason why there has not yet been an appropriate and comprehensive evaluation of Formey's historical role. It is time that the changes in the history of ideas and philosophy that have occurred over the past 20 or 30 years – the reconsideration of enlightenment thought and the elaboration of a socio-cultural history of ideas – are included in a study on Formey.

Despite the generally lopsided state of recent scholarship on Formey, there have been some recent attempts to update research on him, such as studies that used the information on Formey's life and practices, that are contained in his correspondence, to analyse Formey's thought. Having worked through 17000 letters of Formey's correspondence, Jens Häselser and Martin Fontius must be the two most knowledgeable scholars on Formey's various acquaintances, his publications, the highs and lows of his personal and professional life, as well as on the learned debates, controversies and polemics that he was involved in. Each of them tried to use this knowledge in (article-long) analyses of Formey's thought.³³ While they did so with different thematic focuses, they seem to have shared an overarching preoccupation, to determine Formey's position (again) in respect to the perceived opposition between French and German enlightenments. Fontius being well aware of the diversification (and conflation) of the concept of the enlightenment from the late 1970s and 80s onwards, and particularly of the flawed, because dismissive, treatment of the role of religion in the age of enlightenment, analysed Formey's understanding of philosophy and 'enlightened piety'. This is a valuable study, which deserves particular merit for paying attention to the historical actors' conceptions of their time and themselves.³⁴ However, in certain moments Fontius struggled to escape the tendency to think in terms of 'Weltanschauungen', i.e. he attempted to assign to Formey a position in line with stable intellectual convictions: such an attempt leads him to an image of

33 Jens Häselser, "Samuel Formey, pasteur Huguenot entre Lumières françaises et Aufklärung," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 34 (2002): 239–47; Martin Fontius, "Zwischen 'libertas philosophandi' und 'siècle de la philosophie'. Zum geistesgeschichtlichen Standort Formeys und der zweiten Generation der réfugiés," in *L'Allemagne et la France des Lumières/ Deutsche und französische Aufklärung. Mélanges offerts à Jochen Schlobach par ses élèves et amis*, ed. Michel Delon and Jean Mondot (Paris, 2003), 45–68.

34 See Fontius, "Zwischen 'libertas philosophandi' und 'siècle de la philosophie'," 47.

Formey's ideas that were riven and not unequivocal.³⁵ Compared to Fontius' essentially philosophical, but well-contextualised analysis, Häselers seemed to be more informed by the concept of the enlightenment as a set of practices.³⁶ He makes the very appropriate claim that Formey's 'prises de position' have to be considered in connection with his role as a cultural broker/mediator,³⁷ although one would be tempted to ask to what extent Formey was himself aware of having such a role. The 'prises de position' that Häselers subsequently very briefly analysed belong to the field of moral philosophy which Häselers qualifies as the predominant topic of Formey's oeuvre.³⁸ In my view, his conclusion is slightly too simplistic and one-dimensional, as he proposed that Formey has to be considered as belonging intellectually to the German Protestant *Aufklärung* which in his view explained Formey's apparent inconsistencies in dialogue with the French *Lumières*.

Both Fontius's and Häselers studies are a good starting point for my own undertaking of comprehending Formey as a Christian philosopher within the eighteenth-century debates on religion, science and morals. Fontius' study provides a first step towards what I am trying to do in the first part of my thesis. Yet, I do not only analyse Formey's understanding of philosophy as a concept, as it tends to give a very static and one-dimensional picture of what Formey did; but I analyse his understanding of himself and fashioning as a certain persona of philosopher, which involves reflection on his interaction with others and on the manifold aspects of his life. Häselers work points to what I do in the second part of my thesis, namely to look at the application of Formey's reconciliation of his mission as a pastor and as a philosopher (Häselers words), or of Formey's self-concept as a Christian philosopher (my words), to more specific philosophical and/or religious questions. The questions I am interested in are more specific than Häselers focus on the large field of moral philosophy, and I allow for more detailed analysis. Finally, there are two issues from which I hope my thesis will free the previous scholarship on Formey: the concern to consider Formey as an actor between France and Germany, and the tendency to rely almost exclusively on those writings of Formey that scholars have so far considered to be either philosophical or scientific. First, I try to see Formey within his very local Prussian Huguenot context, which naturally had strong links to France, but not only to France and not only to the 'French enlightenment' of the *philosophes*. Moreover, I also try to engage with the rather 'peripheral' media of the enlightenment, namely his sermons,³⁹ which I consider together with and in contrast to

35 See Fontius, "Zwischen 'libertas philosophandi' und 'siècle de la philosophie,'" 50 and 51.

36 See Häselers, "Samuel Formey," 242.

37 See Häselers, "Samuel Formey," 243.

38 See Häselers, "Samuel Formey," 247.

39 See Richard Butterwick, "Between Anti-Enlightenment and enlightened Catholicism: Provincial preachers in late-eighteenth-century Poland-Lithuania," in *Peripheries of the Enlightenment*, ed. Richard Butterwick, Simon Davies,

Formey's 'scientific' academic treatises and popular philosophical writings. The only studies so far that have touched upon Formey's sermons as a source are by Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, who has tried to analyse the evolution of Huguenot preaching in the Prussian refuge, and as such she engaged with Formey's sermons. Unfortunately, her work remains on a rudimentary level and is not connected with other sources.⁴⁰ The inclusion of religious sources is important for this thesis; it gives equal weight to Formey's role as a pastor, which, contrary to what previous scholarship with its stress on a genuinely and exclusively 'philosophical' enlightenment has suggested, was an integral component of his being and thinking.

Religious Enlightenments

The lack of sufficient recognition of religious sources and topics in scholarship on Formey is somehow symbolic of the bias that still exists in some work on the intellectual history of the Eighteenth Century. As I have insinuated, the traditional concept of the Enlightenment as a genuinely French issue that was exclusively concerned with secular, rational and liberal ideas has been increasingly de-constructed over the past 20 years, and it is through this more nuanced understanding of the enlightenment that an evolution in the evaluation of Formey's work can take shape. Nevertheless, it seems that not all contemporary historians have adopted the implications of this de-construction to the same extent. This impression emanates from an ever increasing call of historians, mostly in Anglo-American academia, to emphasise the 'religious turn' in Enlightenment studies, i.e. the need to incorporate theological ideas and religious practices into the intellectual history of the Eighteenth Century. The most recent example of the argument that God played a role in the Enlightenment was in 2016, in William Bulman and Robert Ingram's edited volume *God in the Enlightenment*.⁴¹ In his introduction to this edited volume, Bulman makes the diagnosis that the

and Gabriel Sanchez Espinosa (Oxford, 2008), 201–28.

- 40 See Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, "Entre ferveur et scepticisme: une enquête Huguenote," in *Scepticisme, clandestinité et libre pensée = Scepticism, clandestinity and free-thinking: Actes des tables rondes organisées à Dublin dans le cadre du Congrès des Lumières, Tenth International Congress on the Enlightenment, 26-27 Juillet 1999*, ed. Gianni Paganini, Miguel Bernitez, and James Dybikowski (Paris, 2002), 195–212; "Les pasteurs français Berlinoises entre le Piétisme allemand et le rationalisme de Wolff," in *Refuge et Désert: L'évolution théologique des Huguenots de la Révocation à la Révolution française: Actes du colloque du Centre d'Étude du XVIIIe siècle, Montpellier, 18 - 19 - 20 Janvier 2001*, ed. Hubert Bost and Claude Lauriol (Paris, 2003), 243–52; and "L'évolution spirituelle des pasteurs réfugiés de Berlin," *Hugenotten zwischen Migration und Integration: neue Forschungen zum Refuge in Berlin und Brandenburg*, ed. Manuela Böhm, Jens Häsel, Robert Violet, (Berlin, 2005), 205-217.
- 41 William J. Bulman and Robert G. Ingram, eds., *God in the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2016). For a similar recent endeavour within the 'religious turn', which however pursues a methodological instead of a chronological approach, see Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory, eds., *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame, 2009). This is a plea for including religious thought into the discipline of Intellectual History – not only because of the non-existing methodological difference between the analysis of political or philosophical thought on the one hand and religious thought on the other, but also because, according to the authors, religion 'leaks into other areas of intellectual life'. (John Coffey and Alister Chapman, "Introduction:

paradigm of an anti-religious and secular enlightenment is persistent in the historiography on the Eighteenth Century, although it has been disproved in so many ways.⁴² The targets of this diagnosis, as has been the case with the majority of scholarship on religion and Enlightenment in the past 15 years, are Jonathan Israel's monumental interpretation of the Enlightenment and – to a lesser extent – Anthony Padgen's *The Enlightenment and why it still matters* (2013). According to Bulman, Israel's and Padgen's works not only repeated Peter Gay's outdated views but also the simplified idea of the enlightenment that is popular among non-historians.⁴³ I support Bulman's evaluation and therefore, my intention here is not to re-address the problems of the traditional view of the enlightenment that was advanced by Peter Gay, nor to discuss the not less disturbing twenty-first-century view of Jonathan Israel – this has been abundantly and in the most cases well done. Instead, I want to reflect briefly on the different ways of re-evaluating the enlightenment and its relation to religion, which have been offered by the various studies that have appeared on this issue in the past twenty years. Together with Bulman and others, I want to reflect on the problems of these studies and on their potential solutions.

First and foremost, I want to stress that the different studies within the research field of religion and enlightenment mainly adopted two different approaches: one branch of this research is interested in the historical actors who opposed the ideas of the enlightenment, while the other tries to trace, depending on the phrasing, 'enlightened' ideas among theologians or theological ideas in the 'enlightenment'. Both branches of research share a significantly broad concept of the enlightenment while at the same time conceiving it as an important step on the teleological path to modernity. The first type of studies, that are concerned with the opponents of enlightenment, is useful as they reveal the importance of historical actors who had formerly been despised or ignored. The most prominent example of this endeavour, is Darrin McMahon's *Enemies of the Enlightenment*; his work does not exclusively deal with religious or theological criticism of enlightenment ideas, but with the 'conservative' opposition to it in general. His aim was to extend the concept of the counter-enlightenment that Isaiah Berlin had framed to designate the mainly German philosophical opposition to the French enlightenment, and thus, McMahon focused on the French Catholic adversaries of the enlightenment, who until that point had been rather neglected.⁴⁴ Through the analysis of the thoughts and rhetoric of the very broad and heterogeneous group of so-called *anti-philosophes* in the second half of the Eighteenth Century, he attempted to revisit the definition of the enlightenment itself: in his view the idea of enlightenment was constructed in a

Intellectual History and the Return of Religion,” in *Seeing Things Their Way*, 4.)

42 See William J. Bulman, “Introduction: Enlightenment for the Culture Wars,” in *God in the Enlightenment*, 7.

43 See Bulman, “Introduction,” 6.

44 Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the making of modernity* (Oxford ; New York, 2001), 8-10.

battle between force and counterforce,⁴⁵ a dialectical process between *philosophes* and *anti-philosophes* that shaped the enlightenment.⁴⁶ More than simply giving them a place in the genesis of enlightenment, and against all earlier pejorative views of them, McMahon also bestowed the eighteenth-century opponents of the enlightenment with the attribute of being modern, for their contribution to the creation of the modern emphasis of the enlightenment's flaws.⁴⁷ However, his study reifies the assumed trench that separated enlightenment and anti-enlightenment thinkers by underlining the mutual exclusiveness of their arguments and intentions. Still, McMahon seems to have ignored the existing overlap of critics and defenders of enlightenment with respect to certain questions.

McMahon's work intersects with the predominantly French trend of research on religious apologetics during the enlightenment, which not only pursued the appreciation of formerly despised actors but recently also seems to be open to the grey zones between the thinkers of the enlightenment and their enemies.⁴⁸ Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, in her preface to the 2002 special issue *Christianisme et Lumières* of *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, emphasises that an 'ideological' shift had to occur among scholars of the Eighteenth Century in order to enable a legitimate and appropriate treatment of the formerly called *anti-Lumières*, i.e. a treatment that had previously only been granted to 'recognised' historical figures of the enlightenment such as, Voltaire, Diderot etc.⁴⁹ Moreover, the special issue, which originally was only supposed to concentrate on the apologetic replies to irreligion, expanded the scope of the question by recognising the complexity of the dialogue between *philosophes* and religious opponents. A complexity that, as Geneviève Artigas-Menant explains in the same volume, can be apprehended on the one hand by the divisions within the group of religious opponents and on the other, in the shared 'enlightened' practices and ideas among the opponents and *philosophes*.⁵⁰ However, despite all efforts to loosen the categories of defenders and enemies of enlightenment, the studies on religious apologetics also draw the picture of a religious enlightenment which necessarily and uniquely was generated in dialogue with or in contrast to something external to religion itself, i.e. in contrast to enlightenment understood as a set

45 See McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 12.

46 McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 201.

47 See McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 197 and 200.

48 The pioneer work in this realm is Albert Monod, *De Pascal à Chateaubriand: les défenseurs français du christianisme de 1670 à 1802* (Paris, 1916). For a list of the rather continuous occupation with this topic in French scholarship see Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, "Présentation et état de recherche," in *Christianisme et Lumières*, ed. Sylviane Albertan-Coppola and Antony McKenna, *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 34 (2002), 5–9. The most recent works are a conference proceedings: Nicolas Brucker, ed., *Apologetique 1650-1802 la nature et la grace* (Bern, 2010), and a PhD thesis: Emmanuelle Brun, "L'apologétique conciliatrice française et le dialogue de l'Aufklärung Chrétienne avec le 'parti philosophique'," PhD diss., Université Nice Sophia Antipolis, 2014.

49 See Albertan-Coppola, "Présentation et état de recherche," 7.

50 See Geneviève Artigas-Menant, "Perspectives," in *Christianisme et Lumières*, ed. Sylviane Albertan-Coppola and Antony McKenna, *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 34 (2002), 10.

of secular ideas. Linked to this, Antony McKenna has formulated a teleological narrative about these apologetics according to which the different types of apologetic arguments that were developed in the Seventeenth Century, either the Pascalian historical one or the Cartesian rationalist one, contained in themselves the 'seeds of doubt' concerning dogma. In his view, these seeds helped over the course of the Eighteenth Century to provide arguments to freethinkers and enemies of religion. This narrative is very similar to Peter Harrison's one on the development of modern science for McKenna argued that it was the Christian apologetics themselves that (unintentionally) led to a religious secularisation.⁵¹ McKenna's narrative is only one example of what Bulman,⁵² similar to Knud Haakonssen,⁵³ generally criticises about studies of the religious or Christian enlightenment, namely that it is usually depicted as an intermediary stage towards a modern secular era.

The legitimacy of this criticism might be less obvious in the second branch of research on the religious enlightenment, as it has not been overly concerned with defining the 'enlightened' religious ideas that emerged from the confrontation with a pre-existing construction of an irreligious enlightenment, but rather it attempts to construct an enlightenment based on theological ideas or ideas of theologians. This branch of research deals mostly with non-French contexts, particularly Britain and Germany, where the enlightenment was traditionally considered to have evolved within the Church, and within theological discourse or conservatism at large (and hence for a long time has not been recognised as belonging to *the* Enlightenment).⁵⁴ For the English case, Brian Young's study in 1998 was based on the aim to 'open up discussion of England's enlightenment in terms other than those derived from the analysis of freethinking criticisms of Christianity', and hence he deals with the thought that emerged and was discussed *within* the English clergy in the Eighteenth Century.⁵⁵ By analysing several chosen controversies among English theologians and ecclesiastics he portrays the plurality of positions within the religious realm that were held by orthodox and more heterodox clericals alike. They discussed not only thinkers such as Locke, Newton and Hume, who are nowadays part of the canon of enlightenment, but also the apologetics of British physico-

51 See Antony McKenna, "Deus Absconditus: Quelques réflexions sur la crise du rationalisme Chrétien entre 1670 et 1740," in *Apologetique 1680-1740: Sauvetage ou naufrage de la Théologie? : Actes du colloque tenu à Genève en Juin 1990 sous les auspices de l'Institut d'histoire de la Réformation*, ed. Maria Cristina Pitassi (Genève, 1991), 13–28 and Id., "Le dilemme de l'apologétique au XVIIIe siècle," in *Apologetique 1650-1802*, 10–20.

52 See Bulman, "Introduction," 11.

53 See Knud Haakonssen, "The Historiographical vagaries of Enlightenment and Religion," in *Enlightenments and Religions. 14th C. Th. Dimaras Lecture, 2009* (Athens, 2010), 104-5.

54 See for Germany Joachim Whaley, "The Protestant Enlightenment in Germany," in *The Enlightenment in National Context* and for Britain J.G.A. Pocock, 'Clergy and Commerce: The conservative Enlightenment in England', in *L'età dei Lumi: Studi storici sul settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, ed., R. Ajello, E. Contese, and V. Piano (Naples, 1985), 524-62.

55 B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in eighteenth-century England. Theological debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998), 3.

theologians. For Young, this attested to the inherently religious nature of the English Eighteenth Century⁵⁶ and allowed him to re-adjust the depiction of the English legacy of the supposedly secular thought that was developed in eighteenth-century continental Europe.⁵⁷ A similar demonstration of the religious origins of (supposedly) 'enlightened' ideas has been achieved by Thomas Ahnert, in the case of the early German enlightenment, and more precisely through one of its main figures, Christian Thomasius. Previous studies suggested that Thomasius was affiliated to the *Aufklärung*, as it was believed that he pursued a secular political and moral philosophy that was neatly separated from religious faith.⁵⁸ Ahnert argues that this interpretation is not adequate since, although Thomasius made a plea for an intellectual reform, in which faith and philosophy would be separated from each other, he still perceived them as depending on each other. Ahnert supports his argument mainly by showing that the change in Thomasius' conception of faith and the reform of faith he attempted had their origin in religious enthusiasm. He demonstrates how Thomasius' conception of faith in turn informed his ideas on natural law and moral philosophy as well as his general reform of learning: they were not informed, as is usually thought by a strong trust and emphasis on reason – the commonly presumed criteria for enlightenment – but on the contrary, by a distrust of reason and human intellect to comprehend certain truths.⁵⁹ Young's and Ahnert's studies show, each in their own way, how certain theological conceptions and faith shaped ideas of the Eighteenth Century which are nowadays considered to belong to the enlightenment because of their apparent secular, rational or liberal character.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from Jennifer McNutt's recent re-assessment of the enlightenment in Geneva, which for my own study is particularly interesting because it is concerned with the Calvinist intellectual world in which Formey originated, and with which he maintained strong links. Moreover, McNutt's study is interesting because she writes the history of a religious enlightenment – without ever using the term – from the perspective of a scholar of theology, instead of philosophy or political thought. Her work counters the narrative of religious decline in eighteenth-century Geneva, more precisely the narrative that had already been suggested in the Eighteenth Century itself by d'Alembert's article 'Genève' in the *Encyclopédie*, i.e. that the Genevan pastors had quit Calvinist orthodoxy and become Socinian. From the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, animated through the teachings of the theologian Jean-Alphonse Turretini and the influence of deism, the pastors are supposed to have developed a so-called 'enlightened orthodoxy'

56 See Young, *Religion and Enlightenment*, 15.

57 See Young, *Religion and Enlightenment*, 214-5.

58 See Thomas Ahnert, *Religion and the Origins of the German Enlightenment: Faith and the Reform of Learning in the Thought of Christian Thomasius* (Rochester, NY, 2006), 1-2.

59 See Ahnert, *Religion and the Origins of the German Enlightenment*, 121-2.

that was equated to Christian heterodoxy.⁶⁰ McNutt challenges this narrative by emphasising the continuities between sixteenth-century and eighteenth-century Calvinism in Geneva.⁶¹ She speaks of a co-existence or convergence of the preservation of Calvinist orthodoxy on the one side, and its adaptation to a changing, 'enlightened' context on the other.⁶² With respect to this, she stipulates an interesting consideration that in my view is both valuable and risky, namely that the appearance of an old idea in a new context should not automatically make it a novel idea.⁶³ In order for the historian to achieve this awareness, it is necessary to become familiar with older ideas; I would say that particularly in the field of enlightenment studies, the lack of a sufficient knowledge of the philosophy and theology of previous centuries has led to a major misinterpretation of the period as pre-secular. Therefore one of the best outcomes of this ongoing trend in intellectual history to study the religious enlightenment is indeed scholars' increasing engagement in a dialogue with the discipline of theology.⁶⁴ On the other hand, McNutt's consideration, just as her study at large, bears the risk of causing a dissolution of the very concept of enlightenment in the sense that, if we assume too much continuity with the Reformation period, it will appear ever less legitimate to speak of the Eighteenth Century as a period of change that had important implications on our time.

However, the risk that the concept of enlightenment might lose its sharpness or even dissolve is not solely the fault of endeavours such as McNutt's which stress continuities with the orthodox religious thought of previous eras. Nevertheless, there is a reason for caution as the religious turn in enlightenment studies could provoke the opposite effect of secularizing the enlightenment, by conflating the concept and adding many different characteristics, such as religiosity or sentimentalism, to it.⁶⁵ I would say that particularly the second branch of studies in this field that I have presented here, i.e. the analyses of supposedly enlightened ideas in a theological milieu (as opposed to those studies that deal with the religious opposition to a more or less well-defined enlightenment), is susceptible to this conflation of the concept of the enlightenment. In their aim at re-assessing the enlightenment, they all too often tend to simply replace the narrative of a secular enlightenment with the narrative of a religious one – to put it in an exaggerative way: religious motives and theological arguments suddenly appear to be everywhere.

60 See Jennifer Powell McNutt, *Calvin Meets Voltaire: The Clergy of Geneva in the Age of Enlightenment, 1685-1798* (Farnham, 2013), 3.

61 As Bulman, "Introduction," 15, also suggests the contributions to the edited volume *God in the Enlightenment* were all based on the hypothesis that the enlightenment was a gradual development from Reformation and Renaissance instead of a rupture and new departure from them.

62 See McNutt, *Calvin meets Voltaire*, 17 and 21.

63 See McNutt, *Calvin meets Voltaire*, 21.

64 See Simon Grote, "Review-Essay: Religion and Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75, no. 1 (2014), 156 who praises the increasing interest in eighteenth-century theologians within the scholarship on the enlightenment.

65 See Bulman, "Introduction," 11; Grote, "Review-Essay," 145; Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (2003), 1067.

One way to avoid the substitution of the traditional concept of the enlightenment with a religious concept has been advanced by David Sorkin, who suggests that we consider the religious enlightenment as only one (but equally important) part of an 'Enlightenment spectrum' beside the radical and moderate enlightenments described by Jonathan Israel – without declaring any of the three to have been the core of the spectrum, i.e. *the* enlightenment.⁶⁶ A similar claim for a 'spectral enlightenment' has been made by Dale K. Van Kley in the conclusion to *God in the Enlightenment*. Van Kley provides this spectrum with even more nuances than Sorkin, distinguishing between Catholic, Arminian, German, commercial, civic humanist, Rousseauian and radical enlightenments.⁶⁷

Sorkin's religious enlightenment is also praiseworthy for offering a solution to another problem that is inherent in many studies on the religious enlightenment: as Knud Haakonssen has stressed, these studies usually do not do justice to the complexity that each of the two categories, religion and enlightenment, bears, which according to him makes their whole endeavour to write the history of a religious enlightenment 'dubious'.⁶⁸ Sorkin instead tries to write the history of a transnational and multi-confessional religious enlightenment based on the analysis of several confessionally and culturally different contexts. Through a comparison of individual cases that are embedded respectively in the moderation in England, in reformed German Lutheranism, in the Haskala in Germany and in the reformed Catholicisms in Austria and France, Sorkin emphasises the diversity of religious enlightenment in Europe in the Eighteenth Century. Likewise it allows him to single out important commonalities: the common point of departure of the several forms of religious enlightenment has in his view been the confessionally and politically unstable situation of Europe after the Thirty-Years-War, which together with the emerging 'new' science and philosophy led to the renewal and re-articulation of faith which he understands as the religious enlightenment.⁶⁹ According to him, this renewal of faith has to be seen as a 'conscious search for a middle way between extremes', i.e. between orthodoxy and free thought.⁷⁰ On a conceptual level this middle way entailed the idea of a balance between reason and Revelation, which are understood as two compatible sources of truth, and it was mainly expressed in the defence of a natural religion (that co-existed with revealed religions)⁷¹ and of religious toleration.⁷²

66 See David Jan Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, 2008), 20.

67 See Dale K. Van Kley, "Conclusion: The Varieties of Enlightened Experience," in *God in the Enlightenment*, 289-90.

68 See Haakonssen, "The histographical vagaries," 103.

69 See Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 6.

70 See Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 11.

71 See Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 12-3.

72 See Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 14-5.

Another asset of Sorkin's multi-faceted history of the religious enlightenment is that he rejects the frequent narrative that the balance between reason and Revelation which the historical actors attempted was doomed to fail from the beginning, being nothing more than a step towards deism and the destruction of religion. Sorkin emphasises that the balance between reason and faith was in the historical actors' own perception a genuine and viable possibility (at least until the French Revolution): as far as they were concerned secular reason and religious faith did not exist as two neatly separated and dichotomous categories.⁷³ One might suppose that by observing eighteenth-century events and ideas under this lens, it is possible to circumvent the teleological narrative of enlightenment as a step towards ever more secularisation. A different, very fruitful way of escaping this telos and the concept of a dichotomy between the religious and the secular on which it is based, is to challenge the mere concept of the secular. This was done by Thomas Ahnert in his most recent study on the Scottish debates on morality in the Eighteenth Century. For him, the increasing focus on moral conduct instead of doctrine in Scottish notions of religion, which has commonly been considered a sign of increasing secularisation during the enlightenment, was not the result of a reconciliation between religious ideas and (rival) secular ideas that were based on rationality or ancient thought, no matter how intertwined they may appear in the Eighteenth Century. Instead, he argues, that the changes in the notion of religion that occurred during the enlightenment emanated exclusively from an inner-religious debate without any impact of 'external' currents of thought.⁷⁴ Using the discussion on the doctrine of solfideism and the connected question of how to reach salvation as an example, Ahnert depicts the change from doctrine to moral conduct – his religious enlightenment – as a struggle between orthodox and enthusiasts in the Presbyterian Church.⁷⁵ This approach seems to me to be the most 'radical' way of breaking with the traditional narrative of the enlightenment, and it should be borne in mind when we analyse changes in eighteenth-century religious thought, although it will not apply to all cases of such a change. Moreover, it has to be said that Ahnert's approach has to pay the price of using a very loose concept of the enlightenment, which he defines as 'the sum of the debates and ideas of the period from the late Seventeenth to the early Eighteenth Centuries'.⁷⁶

It seems hence that Sorkin's religious enlightenment shows best how one can navigate between the two big flaws of the religious turn in enlightenment studies, i.e. on the one hand the persistence of the telos of modernity, and on the other the dissolution of the very concept of enlightenment.⁷⁷ The path taken by Sorkin seems to be in line with Haakonssen's (posterior) claim

73 See Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 17; 21.

74 See Thomas Ahnert, *The Moral Culture of the Scottish Enlightenment, 1690-1805* (New Haven, 2014), 6.

75 See Ahnert, *The moral culture*, 12.

76 Ahnert, *The moral culture*, 13-4.

77 These are also the two essential flaws cited by Sheehan, "Enlightenment, religion and the enigma of

for a particularist approach to the religious enlightenment.⁷⁸ Haakonssen seems to believe that this approach has been particularly well served by the method of intellectual history, which has the task of restoring meaning to historical authors' ideas without imposing current views of coherence and commensurability on them, current views being distorted because they were obtained through a-historical conceptualisations of the historical actors' frames of references.⁷⁹ His claim sounds very much like an argument for abandoning historical narratives of the enlightenment and it differs from the direction in enlightenment studies that Bulman suggests: he, who is still very much obsessed with the persistence of Gay's flawed narrative of the enlightenment, makes a plea for the need of a (coherent) strong counter-narrative to the traditional view of a secular, liberal enlightenment. Of course Bulman does not argue for a counter-narrative as simple and uniform as the traditional one against which it is supposed to fight: on the contrary, he wants to see all the scattered scholarship that has challenged and revised this traditional view so far reassembled and integrated into it, while including new approaches.⁸⁰ In my view this is by far too ambitious and, as enticing the idea of it might be, not very realistic. My study on Formey cannot and will not be a narrative of any *one* of the different religious enlightenments discussed here, nor will it succeed in assembling *all* of them. The particularity of Formey's life and cultural context makes it impossible to write either the history of a religious apologetic or of an enlightenment philosopher with religiously inspired ideas. If at all, he has always been both, often at the same time and sometimes more strongly the one than the other. My thesis hence does not want to confirm the existence of a religious enlightenment (however it might be defined), nor does it add another type of religious enlightenment to the historiography. Instead, similarly to Haakonssen's suggestion, it tries to understand which possibilities Formey had to argue in his role as a pastor and a scholar in the mid-Eighteenth Century and how he used these possibilities to discuss religious topics in different settings. In this vein, my thesis does not operate with a pre-constructed category – the religious enlightenment – but rather listens to the constructions made by the historical actors: in Formey's case, this is the category of the Christian philosopher.

I am convinced that such an intellectual historical approach, which is aware of the constructedness and situatedness of both the past and of our contemporary concepts, is the best way to understand the eighteenth-century changes in religion and philosophy, yet, I want to stress that not every intellectual history achieves its purpose of socially and culturally contextualising past ideas to the same good extent. Therefore, I do not fully agree with Haakonssen when he argues that

secularization,” 1069.

78 See Haakonssen, “The historiographical vagaries,” 129.

79 See Haakonssen, “The historiographical vagaries,” 134-5.

80 See Bulman, “Introduction,” 4, 8 and 10.

in order to answer the question of the relation between religion and enlightenment, it should not matter whether the enlightenment is considered in a philosophical way, as a set of ideas, or in a cultural way, as a set of practices, since either way historians tend to succumb to the telos of modernity, unless they follow an intellectual historical method.⁸¹ This claim can only be true in the case we practice an intellectual history that really combines textual analysis with the analysis of past intellectual practices and structures and hence an intellectual history that is attentive to the developments of a cultural history of the Eighteenth Century. At the same time I contend that it should be questioned when a socio-cultural approach simply substitutes for a philosophical-historical one which might lead to strange scenarios such as when a historical actor suddenly is considered as 'enlightened' for his affiliation with an 'enlightened' institution like an academy, while his ideas are considered to be orthodox.⁸²

The need for a new diversity in enlightenment studies in the wake of which the religious enlightenment saw the day as described here, has indeed also triggered studies that based the re-assessment of the enlightenment almost exclusively on elements external to ideas and concepts. One of the early defenders of such a socio-cultural approach to the religious enlightenment was Jonathan Sheehan, who in 2003, in an influential article on the historiography of the religious turn in enlightenment studies, called for scholars to break the perennial link between enlightenment and philosophy.⁸³ He argued that this break would give space not only to the idea of religion but also to cultural practices and institutions that together with their arguments would be able to explain the renewal of religion, which he understands as the (religious) enlightenment. He follows a 'media-driven concept of the Enlightenment' on the basis of which he claims that new ways of acquiring, presenting and discussing knowledge and the culture of enlightened institutions influenced the way traditional (religious) ideas changed (rather than through the clash of secular and religious ideas).⁸⁴ In 2005, in his monograph *The Enlightenment Bible* he even suggested that the ideas treated in the Eighteenth Century were those of the previous centuries, but that the tools to engage with them, the practices of scholarship and translation, were new and thus made the difference.⁸⁵ In the same year also S.J. Barnett presented a re-consideration of the (religious) enlightenment that was influenced by social and cultural history. He challenges the reigning interpretation of the enlightenment, particularly the 'myth' of the existence of a deist movement, by focusing on its political and social

81 See Haakonssen, "The historiographical vagaries," 133.

82 See Bulman, "Introduction," 20.

83 See Sheehan, "Enlightenment, religion, and the enigma of secularization," 1070-1.

84 See Sheehan, "Enlightenment, religion, and the enigma of secularization," 1076-1077.

85 See Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, 2005), XI-XII.

circumstances⁸⁶ and especially on the role of public opinion as a bearer of intellectual change.⁸⁷ Both Sheehan's and Barnett's works are valuable for their refreshing effort to de-construct the traditional image of the enlightenment, not on a merely conceptual level but through a focus on behaviour, practice and perception. The risk of such approaches is however – and this I have shown already for the scholarship on Formey – that they are susceptible to diminishing the role of the ideas that were carried by the practices. In respect to this Haakonssen is right: a socio-cultural approach should not stand alone, but in this sense nor should a purely philosophical one.

Instead, social historical and/or cultural-historical approaches to the relation between religion and enlightenment, as defended by Sheehan and Barnett, can enter into a very fruitful symbiosis with the enlightenment's history of ideas and concepts. The above-mentioned studies by Sorkin and McNutt are also good examples of this. Sorkin defines his religious enlightenment intellectually, socially and culturally, and shows the interaction between the different elements: his multi-confessional religious enlightenment is characterised by its conception as a reasonable belief, with the idea of toleration on the one side and its actors' important contribution to the emergence of the public sphere as well as to state politics on the other.⁸⁸ McNutt combines her analysis of the Genevan clergy's sermons and theological texts with an analysis of the political situation (influence of France on Geneva) and prosopographical analysis of the clergy. In my thesis, I try to analyse Formey's ideas mainly through the lens of his (self)-perception and scholarly practices in order to gain a holistic image of the Christian philosopher who stood not only for a certain set of ideas, but was also a historical actor of a particular origin and with certain practices. Through this, I hope to show that there is no contradiction between Formey the knowledge broker, and Formey the 'thinker', as the separation of philosophical and cultural-historical fields of research that were characteristic of former scholarship on Formey has wrongly suggested. On the contrary, I show how they were conducive to one another. As such my study is informed by the discussion that has stirred scholarship on the enlightenment over the past 20 years: it benefits heavily from the great awareness of the complexity of eighteenth-century ideas and practices and of the need for interdisciplinary analysis – particularly with respect to religion – that this discussion has raised. Yet precisely out of this awareness I refuse to term Formey's thought and behaviour a (or the) religious enlightenment in order to avoid the above-mentioned conceptual flaws that this construction inevitably entails.

86 See S. J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity* (Manchester; New York, 2003), 6.

87 See Barnett, *The Enlightenment and religion*, 9.

88 See Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 11.

The Huguenots and the Enlightenment in Berlin

Another reason why my thesis operates without claiming to construct a religious enlightenment is that a study of Formey's thought, as already insinuated, has to be in large parts embedded in German philosophy of the first half of the Eighteenth Century. Moreover, there is simply no need for a historiographical claim for a religious enlightenment in the German case. It has to be highlighted that the scholarly debate on religion and enlightenment that I have roughly outlined above, is predominantly an Anglo-American and French one that also dealt almost exclusively with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain and France, which were at the centre of the traditional narrative of a secular and liberal enlightenment. For the German enlightenment, such a narrative did not exist: the *Aufklärung* has always been largely recognised as religious, highlighting that the existing critical stands towards religion were not necessarily opposed to belief and piety, but were part of it.⁸⁹ Scholars claimed that the *Aufklärung* also culturally and institutionally evolved within and through the (Protestant) Church.⁹⁰ Therefore the rather scarce efforts to discuss the problem of religion and enlightenment in the German case (as compared to the abundance of literature in the French and British cases) are of a rather recent emergence and seem to have been mainly inspired by the research done in Britain and the USA.⁹¹ Likewise, it seems almost that German scholarship on the *Aufklärung* underwent a rather contrary development to the Anglo-American and French one, as for several years some scholars have tried to re-introduce the 'radical' into the traditionally religious German *Aufklärung*.⁹²

The special character of the German (Protestant) enlightenment⁹³ within the landscape of the

89 See particularly the introductory words of Karlfried Gründer and Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, *Religionskritik und Religiosität in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Heidelberg, 1989), 9. The conference on which this volume is based took place in 1979. Much before this, in 1932, Ernst Cassirer pointed to a religious character of the enlightenment, particularly the German one: Ernst Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, Ernst Cassirer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 15 (Hamburg, 2003), 143. For him, the *Aufklärung's* aim was a 'transcendental foundation' of religion which bore the possibility for both belief and unbelief. Ernst Troeltsch's evaluation also appeared for the first time in 1897: Ernst Troeltsch, "Aufklärung," in *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Bürgertum in Deutschland*, ed. Franklin Kopitzsch (München, 1976), 270-2.

90 See Werner Schütz, "Die Kanzel als Katheder der Aufklärung," *Wolffenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung* 1 (1974): 137-71 and Klaus Scholder, "Grundzüge der Theologischen Aufklärung in Deutschland," in *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Bürgertum in Deutschland* 294-318. The latter article appeared for the first time in 1966.

91 Michael Hofmann and Carsten Zelle, eds., *Aufklärung und Religion: neue Perspektiven* (Hannover, 2010); Lothar Kreimendahl, Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, and Friedrich Vollhardt, eds., *Religion im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, *Aufklärung* 21 (Hamburg, 2010). In October 2006 an interdisciplinary research centre at the University of Halle was founded, which is concerned with the relations and transformation of religion and knowledge during the enlightenment: Landesforschungsschwerpunkt "Aufklärung – Religion – Wissen. Transformationen des Religiösen und des Rationalen in der Moderne".

92 See Winfried Schröder, *Ursprünge des Atheismus: Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik- und Religionskritik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart; Bad Cannstadt, 1998) and Martin Mulsow, *Moderne aus dem Untergrund: radikale Frühaufklärung in Deutschland 1680-1720* (Hamburg, 2002).

93 This differed from the Catholic enlightenment which fits together with the counter-enlightenments of France and Catholic Europe, see for example Harm Klueting, Norbert Hinske and Karl Hengst, eds., *Katholische Aufklärung - Aufklärung im katholischen Deutschland* (Hamburg, 1993).

European enlightenment has also been underlined by Van Kley in whose above-mentioned spectral enlightenment, the German enlightenment figures as the only national enlightenment among the different 'thematic' enlightenments that he assembled. This special character results not only from the (Protestant) German enlightenment's strong engagement with its Lutheran inheritance in general,⁹⁴ but also from the sheer diversity of the theological and philosophical 'schools' that were developed in the German Protestant lands from the late Seventeenth to the end of the Eighteenth Centuries, which very often entered into conflict with each other. From around 1680 Pietism, a reform movement within Lutheranism that emphasised individual piety and practical religiosity emerged in Leipzig and subsequently spread to Halle. Around the same time the jurist and philosopher Christian Thomasius, influenced by Samuel Pufendorf and – as Ahnert has shown – by religious enthusiasm, developed a natural law theory that attempted to separate civil and religious governance and likewise defended a reform of higher learning. Although the Pietists and Thomasius diverged in many points,⁹⁵ they both contested the power of reason as a source of truth and opposed its interference with religious matters. This was the origin of each of their conflicts with the philosopher Christian Wolff and his disciples, who were from 1706 also centred in Halle and who, in the tradition of Leibniz, were convinced of the epistemological power of natural reason and its harmonic relationship with faith.⁹⁶ Also Leibniz's and Wolff's rationalist metaphysics had its roots in the Lutheran school philosophy.⁹⁷

In the traditional philosophical narrative of the German enlightenment, which was understood as a continuous extension of rationality in all realms of life that entailed ideas of toleration, freedom and self-governance, Leibniz's and Wolff's rational metaphysics played a central role for they were supposed to have eventually led to Kant's idea of autonomous reason and self-clarification – the peak of the *Aufklärung*.⁹⁸ This narrative discards Thomasius's thought as a practical-critical current of the early enlightenment that ceased with Wolff⁹⁹ and shows how, after 1740, Pietism and Wolffianism converged.¹⁰⁰ From a theological point of view, that since the early Twentieth Century has conceived of the theological *Aufklärung* as a transformation of Christendom

94 See Van Kley, "Conclusion," 296.

95 On the relation between the Pietists and Thomasius, particularly on Thomasius' early overlap and later rupture with the Pietists, see Ahnert, *Religion and the Origins of the German Enlightenment*, 27-42.

96 On the triangular conflict between Pietists, Thomasius and Wolff at Halle in the first decades of the Eighteenth Century see Ian Hunter, "Multiple Enlightenments: Rival Aufklärer at the University of Halle 1690-1730," in *The Enlightenment World*, ed. Martin Fitzpatrick et al. (New York, 2004), 576-95.

97 See Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge; New York, 2001), 198-202; 269-70.

98 See Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments*, 15-6. In his book, Hunter challenges the legitimacy of this narrative which presents the German enlightenment as a uniform entity.

99 See Werner Schneiders, "Deus est philosophus absolute summus. Über Christian Wolffs Philosophie und Philosophiebegriff," in *Christian Wolff 1679-1754. Interpretationen zu seiner Philosophie und deren Wirkung. Mit einer Bibliographie der Wolff-Literatur*, ed. Werner Schneiders, 2. (Hamburg, 1986), 12.

100 See Hunter, "Multiple Enlightenments," 598.

('Umformung des Christentums'),¹⁰¹ the picture does not differ a lot. Also in the history of theology, rationality and its gradual superseding of revealed dogma as a basis of religion is considered to be the central category that accounts for the developments in eighteenth-century Protestantism. According to this, Wolffian theology, i.e. a theology inspired by Wolff's metaphysics, was the first step in this evolution for its recognition of a harmonic dualism between reason and Revelation, which since the 1740s entailed a rationalisation, i.e. a historicisation, of dogmatic contents by the so-called neologists, which from the 1780s finally led to a replacement of revealed religion by a rational religion.¹⁰² For a few years, however, scholarship has tended to slightly alter this narrative by also appreciating other theological and philosophical currents as bearers of enlightenment. For example, Pietism might be considered as a form of enlightenment because of its emphasis on spirituality and moral conduct instead of doctrine, its sociopolitical aims and its contribution to the development of biblical and historical erudition.¹⁰³ In a more communicational approach, Martin Gierl argued that Pietism played a crucial role in the change of the public sphere characteristic of the enlightenment.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Hunter has engaged in appreciating Thomasius' civil philosophy as an enlightenment in its own right.¹⁰⁵ However, this diversity, i.e. the many different scholarly interpretations of the German enlightenment, has led to attempts of homogenisation through a socio-cultural approach which considers the German enlightenment as a practical reform movement,¹⁰⁶ or as a particular assemblage of institutions, actors, media and processes of communication.¹⁰⁷

Usually, the explanation for the German enlightenment's special character is the confessional plurality and the continuing crucial role played by the universities in the Eighteenth Century. As Bödeker underlines, the particular religious character of the German enlightenment (as a reformation of faith) was due to the co-existence of (at least) two different Christian confessions in the German Holy Roman Empire after the Reformation, which favoured the tendency to modify

101 See Emanuel Hirsch, *Die Umformung des christlichen Denkens in der Neuzeit: ein Lesebuch* (Tübingen, 1938) and Friederike Nüssel, "Die Umformung des Christlichen im Spiegel der Rede vom Wesen des Christentums," in *Religion und Aufklärung: Studien zur neuzeitlichen "Umformung des Christlichen,"* ed. Albrecht Beutel and Volker Leppin (Leipzig, 2004), 15–32.

102 See Karl Aner, *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit*, (Hildesheim, 1964), particularly 3–4, and Walter Sparr, "Vernünftiges Christentum. Über die geschichtliche Aufgabe der Theologischen Aufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland," in *Wissenschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. Rudolf Vierhaus (Göttingen, 1985), 18–57, particularly 21–2.

103 See Van Kley, "Conclusion," 293; Sorkin, *The Religious enlightenment*, 120–1; Richard L. Gawthrop, *Pietism and the making of eighteenth-century Prussia* (Cambridge, 1993).

104 Martin Gierl, *Pietismus und Aufklärung: theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1997).

105 See Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments*.

106 See Whaley, "The Protestant enlightenment in Germany," 108 and 117.

107 See Hans Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann, eds., *Über den Prozess der Aufklärung in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert: Personen, Institutionen und Medien* (Göttingen, 1987).

theological ideas and spawned an interest in natural religion that appeared to be common to all confessions.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, unlike in France, the predominant institutions in which new ideas emerged and through which they spread during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries were the universities, which were under the control of the state and therefore had the purpose of supporting the right religious doctrine.¹⁰⁹ All the above-mentioned controversies between Pietists, Thomasians and Wolffians mainly took place in the environment of the University of Halle.

Eighteenth-century Prussia, and more particularly Berlin – Formey's immediate cultural context – were in many ways different from what historians usually define as the German enlightenment. First, Prussia was, in contrast to all the other German states, a 'multi-religious estate society' within which a Lutheran majority together with Calvinist, Jewish and Catholic minorities existed under the rule of a Calvinist sovereign.¹¹⁰ This socio-confessional configuration is said to have created a particular toleration policy, which prescribed the separation between a Christian public religion and private confessional or non-confessional convictions.¹¹¹ It was also very much shaped by the mass immigration of French Calvinist refugees in the Seventeenth Century in the wake of which Formey's ancestors (more precisely his father) came to settle in Berlin. Moreover – and this leads to the second characteristic of the Berlin Enlightenment – these multiple confessions possessed no major educational institution to spread their doctrine, since, until the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, Berlin did not have a university. There were only two universities in the Prussian heartland (not counting the Reformed university of Duisburg in the Western part Kleve, and the Lutheran University of Königsberg in the East): the Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder which in the Seventeenth Century, after the Hohenzollern's conversion to Calvinism, became a stronghold of the Reformed confession, whereas the University of Halle developed as a centre for Pietism, and was in the 1710s and 1720s the stage for the conflict between Pietists and Wolffians. Instead, in Berlin, the key state-supported institution through which the enlightenment evolved was a learned society modelled after the Parisian *Académie des Sciences*, and the *Royal Society* in London: the *Académie royale des Sciences et Belles Lettres*, founded in 1700 by (then still) Elector Frederick III of Brandenburg-Prussia, and in 1744 – after a period of decline – re-founded by his grandson King Frederick II.¹¹² The statute of this institution excluded theology as a discipline and religious doctrine

108 See Hans Erich Bödeker, "Strukturen der deutschen Frühaufklärung. Thesen," in *Strukturen der deutschen Frühaufklärung 1680-1720*, ed. Hans Erich Bödeker (Göttingen, 2008) 16-7.

109 See Notker Hammerstein, ed., *Universitäten und Aufklärung* (Göttingen, 1995); Notker Hammerstein, "Innovation und Tradition - Akademien und Universitäten im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation," *Historische Zeitschrift* 278 (2004): 591–623.

110 Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 119-20.

111 Ian Hunter, "Kant's Religion and Prussian religious policy," *Modern Intellectual History* 2, no. 1 (2005): 12.

112 On the history of the Berlin Academy in the eighteenth century see still Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der königlich-preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1900) and more recently Conrad Grau, *Die preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin: eine deutsche Gelehrten-gesellschaft in drei Jahrhunderten*

as a topic; instead religious questions were treated 'philosophically' within the discipline of metaphysics, which – unlike in other European academies – obtained a place in the institution through the establishment of the so-called class of speculative philosophy that existed beside three other classes on mathematics, physics and literature/history.¹¹³

Finally, the Berlin enlightenment was marked by the influence of the reign of Frederick II, who ascended to the throne in 1740 and under whom Berlin became a real intellectual and cultural centre, despite its lack of a university and its provincialism.¹¹⁴ This rise was mostly linked to Frederick's II liberal ideas – especially concerning religion – which favoured a certain freedom of thought in comparison to other German regions. During the end of Frederick's reign and the peak of the (German) enlightenment in Berlin, the educationalist Friedrich Gedike published in his journal *Berlinische Monatsschrift* – a mouthpiece of the enlightenment in Berlin – a description of the cultural and intellectual atmosphere that reigned in Berlin at the time. There he stressed that it was thanks to Frederick that in Berlin, unlike in the rest of Germany, one would not be persecuted for defending natural religion instead of the Christian one (like Gedike himself did as a neologist), and moreover that Berlin was a place where a church of natural religion could be founded.¹¹⁵ Besides this Gedike also ascribed a rather liberal stand to the ecclesiastics in Berlin: in his view, the orthodox fraction among them was rather weak and the majority of the clergy were instead 'aufgeklärt, freidenkend und auch freimüthig.'¹¹⁶ This positive portrayal of the legislators' progressive religious opinions and the state of the clergy coincided with the important reform of the Prussian judicial system that Frederick undertook at the beginning of his career on the basis of natural law theory, and which included the abolition of torture and the limitation of the death penalty.¹¹⁷ As Ursula Goldenbaum emphasises, all of this and the relatively liberal censorship regulations contributed to the image of Frederick as 'enlightened' or *roi philosophe*, which attracted young innovative thinkers from the other German states and Europe who came to Berlin and contributed to the establishment of an enlightened sociability.¹¹⁸

Another factor that favoured this development, while having likewise an inhibiting effect on

(Heidelberg, 1993). In the anglophone historiography for the period, Mary Terrall's work is particularly relevant: Mary Terrall, "The culture of science in Frederick the Great's Berlin," *History of Science* 28 (1990): 333–364 and the chapter on the Academy in her intellectual biography of its President Maupertuis: Mary Terrall, *The man who flattened the earth: Maupertuis and the sciences in the Enlightenment* (Chicago, 2002), 231–269.

113 Terrall, "The culture of science," 352.

114 For Frederick II see the two classical and still essential biographies by Theodor Schieder, *Friedrich der Grosse: ein Königtum der Widersprüche* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983) and Johannes Kunisch, *Friedrich der Grosse: Der König und seine Zeit* (München, 2004).

115 See Friedrich Gedike, "Über Berlin, von einem Fremden", in: *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 1784, no. 1, 272–4.

116 See Friedrich Gedike, "Über Berlin, von einem Fremden", in: *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 1784, no. 1, 278.

117 See Kunisch, *Friedrich der Grosse*, 290–1.

118 See Ursula Goldenbaum, "Der 'Berolinismus': Die preußische Hauptstadt als ein Zentrum geistiger Kommunikation in Deutschland," in *Aufklärung in Berlin*, ed. Wolfgang Förster (Berlin, 1989), 339–343.

the evolution of German culture was Frederick's reputation as an admirer of French literature and philosophy. He corresponded with Voltaire when he was still a crown prince (since 1736) and later, when he was King, he invited the French *philosophe* to his court, just as he did with the French mathematician Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1740) and the writer Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, Marquis d'Argens (1742), who both became pillars of the renovated Academy (the first as its president and the latter as the director of the class of literature). They were joined by their Italian friend and populariser of Newton, Francesco Algarotti (1747), by the French materialist Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1748) and many more philosophers and poets who travelled to Frederick's 'enlightened' Prussia during his reign. Moreover, it is said that Frederick neither wrote nor read German. He publicly stated his aversion towards German literature,¹¹⁹ and in the Academy, in which he oversaw the appointment policy, no German members were accepted during his reign.¹²⁰ This exclusion of German intellectuals and scholars from Frederick's French state-enlightenment explains why the German *Aufklärer* gathered in a non-state-institutional environment, i.e. in the enlightened societies like the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* or the *Montagsclub*, and published in journals like the *Berliner Monatsschrift* and Friedrich Nicolai's *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*.¹²¹ In the second half of the Eighteenth Century, the separation of French and German groups of learned men in Berlin's intellectual life fuelled the narrative that the notable boom in German literature was a reaction to the Prussian King's favouritism for the French, which caused a greater sense of competitiveness amongst the German scholars.¹²² That there existed an aversion of the native Germans – learned men and common people alike – towards the French in Berlin, was also confirmed by Friedrich Gedike in his description of the life in the city: according to him, although the French were supposed to have helped the economic growth of Prussia, neither the German scholars nor the citizens were grateful for this; the scholars' reason for their lack of gratitude was the Academy, i.e. their exclusion from it. The citizens' reason was the government in general, i.e.

119 See Frederick II, *De la Littérature Allemande; des défauts qu'on peut lui reprocher; quelles en sont les causes; et par quels moyens on peut les corriger* (Berlin, 1780), in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, ed. Johann Preuss, vol. 7 (Berlin, 1847).

120 See Horst Möller, "Enlightened Societies in the Metropolis. The case of Berlin," in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckart Hellmuth (London ; Oxford ; New York, 1990), 220-221 and Horst Möller, "Die politische und kulturelle Rolle Berlins von der Aufklärung bis zur Reichsgründung," in *Berlin im Europa der Neuzeit. Ein Tagungsbericht*, ed. Wolfgang Ribbe and Jürgen Schmädeke (Berlin, 1990), 63.

121 Horst Möller, *Aufklärung in Preussen: der Verleger, Publizist und Geschichtsschreiber Friedrich Nicolai* (Berlin, 1974); Hans Erich Bödeker, "Journals and Public Opinion. The Politicization of the German Enlightenment in the second half of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Transformation of Political Culture*, 423-45; Horst Möller, "Enlightened societies," 219-233.

122 See Martin Fontius, "Privilegierte Minderheiten als Instrument königlicher Kulturpolitik?," in *Französische Kultur - Aufklärung in Preußen. Akten der internationalen Fachtagung vom 20./21. September 1996 in Potsdam* (Berlin, 2001), 28.

the assumed privileging of the migrants over the native population.¹²³

Gedike's comment points to the main problem of assessing the role of the French in the Berlin enlightenment during the second half of the Eighteenth Century, namely that Frederick's 'enlightened' ideas were based on only a few French philosophers and writers, but that these French philosophers were lumped together with, and equated to the very large number of French Huguenots who had come to Prussia after the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685. These Huguenot refugees contributed significantly to the recovery of the Prussian economy and culture after the Thirty-Years-War, and had marked Prussian society since then. Yet they rarely defended the same ideas as the *philosophes* who were gathered at Frederick's court who often went beyond claiming tolerance and freedom of thought and rather embraced deist, materialist or anti-religious ideas. This distorted perception of the role of the French in the Berlin enlightenment, according to which Huguenots were not distinguished from *philosophes*, has also shaped misleading interpretations of the earlier scholarship on the Huguenots in Prussia,¹²⁴ which in Martin Fontius' view has either overstated or reduced their role. Fontius claims that the association of the Huguenots' thought with that of the French *philosophes* neglects their actual opposition to these *philosophes* and their contribution to the spread of German thought to France. In contrast to previous portrayals, Fontius underlines that the Huguenots were not propagators of the French *Lumières* in Germany.¹²⁵

As Fontius explains, Frederick's reign had a double-sided effect on the Huguenot community that had established itself in Berlin since the second half of the Seventeenth Century: on the one hand the international prestige of the *philosophes* that Frederick invited to Prussia rubbed off on them, which increased the prestige of their own learned productions in the Republic of Letters, while on the other hand they soon felt the need to oppose these *philosophes*, and the danger that they posed to religion. It was due to this sense of opposition that the Huguenots increasingly

123 See Friedrich Gedike, "Über Berlin, von einem Fremden," *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 1783, no. 2, 455. On public aversion towards French in general and particularly in Prussia see Jens Häselser and Albert Meier, eds., *Gallophobie im 18. Jahrhundert: Akten der Fachtagung vom 2./3. Mai 2002 am Forschungszentrum Europäische Aufklärung* (Berlin, 2005).

124 The literature on the Berlin Huguenot community is abundant. The main studies from the 1980s are the edited volumes by Sibylle Badstübner-Gröger, ed., *Hugenotten in Berlin* (Berlin, 1988) and by Ingrid Mittenzwei, *Hugenotten in Brandenburg-Preussen* (Berlin, 1987) and the article Frédéric Hartweg, "Les Huguenots à Berlin: Des artisans de l'Aufklärung," *Lendemains* 38/39 (1985): 69–75. The more recent studies are well aware of the tension between French Huguenots and French *philosophes*, see Sandra Pott, Martin Mulsow and Lutz Danneberg, eds., *The Berlin Refuge, 1680-1780: Learning and Science in European context* (Leiden, 2003) and Manuela Böhm, Jens Häselser and Robert Violet, *Hugenotten zwischen Migration und Integration. Neue Forschungen zum Refuge in Berlin und Brandenburg* (Berlin, 2005). The most recent and detailed picture of the intellectual and theological climate in the Berlin Refuge at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, the generation that preceded Formey, draws Fiammetta Palladini, *Die Berliner Hugenotten und der Fall Barbeyrac: Orthodoxe und "Sozinianer" im Refuge (1685-1720)* (Leiden, 2011).

125 See Fontius, "Privilegierte Minderheiten," 18-9.

adopted the ideas of German philosophy, and neglected their own 'French' heritage.¹²⁶ I largely agree with this description, although I would rectify Fontius's depiction of the positive effect that the *philosophes*' arrival had on the Huguenots' prestige. I do not believe that their enhanced prestige was the direct result of their association with the *philosophes*, who after all raised as much contempt as appreciation within the Republic of Letters. Instead, in my view the boost in reputation that the Huguenots might have experienced resulted rather from the functions they fulfilled in Frederick's state-enlightenment institutions, particularly in the Academy of Science where Huguenots were the second largest contingent (the Swiss being the largest) of the membership.¹²⁷ However, their role in the Berlin's intellectual institutions did not begin in Frederick's reign; on the contrary, it is more likely that the omnipresence of the first-generation of Huguenot refugees in Berlin's cultural and intellectual life caused the pro-French character of Frederick's reign.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, Frederick confirmed and reinforced the Huguenots' role in Berlin, which certainly contributed to his German subjects' perception that he favoured them. Ironically, it is very likely that Frederick's view of the Huguenots' philosophical position might have been rather negative given that their views were commonly rooted in theology. Frederick certainly preferred to have more Voltaires, Maupertuis and the like come to Berlin, and have them take over positions in the scientific institutions, but this often failed because of the contrary projects of the *philosophes* themselves, and hence Frederick was to a certain extent obliged to resort to the Huguenots to maintain the French character of his enlightenment. There is thus quite a lot of room to speculate that the Huguenot community, despite their large presence in the Berlin enlightenment, were double outsiders, who were on the one hand mocked by Frederick and the *philosophes* for their more conservative views, and on the other hand disdained by the German intellectuals and citizens because they believed that the Huguenots had been granted privileges due to their Frenchness.

The particular and sometimes tense configuration of Berlin's cultural and intellectual life under Frederick II (i.e. the triangular relation between Germans, French *philosophes* and French Huguenots) has spawned two different views in the scholarship with respect to the relation between Germans and Huguenots. First, on the basis of the above-mentioned narrative of the German enlightenment's acceleration despite Frederick's preference for the French, some scholars have developed the positivist narrative that the Huguenots were a sort of external catalyst that enabled the emergence of a genuine German literature and culture of enlightenment.¹²⁹ In a modified and

126 See Fontius, "Privilegierte Minderheiten," 24-5 and 27.

127 See Conrad Grau, "Die Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften und die Hugenotten," in *Hugenotten in Berlin*, ed. Sibylle Badstübner-Gröger (Berlin, 1988), 327-62.

128 See Rolf Geissler, "Die Hugenotten im literarischen Leben Berlins," in *Hugenotten in Berlin*, ed. Sibylle Badstübner-Gröger (Berlin, 1988), 366-368.

129 The main supporter of this view is Horst Möller. See for example his articles "Die politische und kulturelle Rolle

more nuanced way, Annett Volmer establishes this narrative for the periodical press in Prussia. According to her, the francophone learned journals founded by the Berlin Huguenots in the first half of the Eighteenth Century to advertise and spread the developments in German literature and science, facilitated the development of German periodicals and the self-awareness of the German literary scene after the Seven Years War.¹³⁰ Besides the theory of the unintentional influence of the Huguenots on the intellectual production of their host country (and the necessary assimilation or decline of the Huguenot culture that went with it), an alternative narrative has also been postulated on the mutual fecundation of Huguenots and Germans, in the sense that the first brought enlightened ideas from France and the European refuge to Germany, and the second provided the immigrants with a good university formation. According to Günter Mühlpfordt, this relation of exchange resulted eventually in what he calls 'a common enlightened mentality of Prussian colouring'.¹³¹ Probably based on such a questionable view, scholars have more recently attempted to analyse so-called French-German cultural spaces and networks in order to demonstrate this image of a mutually beneficial influence between Huguenots and Germans. This research considers Huguenots as mediators who spread their influence in Berlin's intellectual circles, and at the same time kept their community exclusive.¹³² The problem of these grand narratives, which often only seem to serve the purpose of tracing a Franco-German collaboration over centuries, is that they seem to rely on rather weak evidence and remain only on the surface of the things. In my view, it is insufficient to reveal institutional and epistolary networks and alleged transfers of knowledge if one fails to provide an analysis of the contents that supposedly passed through these networks. It is for this reason that the history of the Berlin Huguenots' continuous assimilation into German Protestant thought during the Eighteenth Century, which undoubtedly took place, is still largely a black spot, (while the social and cultural processes of this assimilation have been abundantly researched.)

The most comprehensive study on the Huguenots' thought – although not under the limited perspective of Berlin – was provided by Erich Haase in 1959, yet it covers only the Seventeenth Century, and hence the time that preceded my period of interest.¹³³ Most recently an edited volume by Sandra Pott, Martin Mulsow and Lutz Danneberg tried to continue Haase's work into the

Berlins von der Aufklärung bis zur Reichsgründung," and "Enlightened societies."

130 See Volmer, "Journalismus und Aufklärung," 124.

131 Günter Mühlpfordt, "Hugenottische und deutsche Aufklärung. Von der Gesinnungs- zur Kulturgemeinschaft," in *Hugenotten in Brandenburg-Preußen*, 225.

132 See Manuela Böhm, "Hugenottische Netzwerke in der Berliner Wissenschaft, Verwaltung und Kunst um 1800," *Netzwerke des Wissens. Das intellektuelle Berlin um 1800*, ed. Anne Baillot (Berlin, 2011), 284-285. See also Anna Busch, Nana Hengelhaupt, and Alix Winter, *Französisch-deutsche Kulturräume um 1800: Bildungsnetzwerke, Vermittlerpersönlichkeiten, Wissenstransfer* (Berlin, 2012).

133 Erich Haase, *Einführung in die Literatur des Refuge; der Beitrag der französischen Protestanten zur Entwicklung analytischer Denkformen am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1959).

Eighteenth Century, with an explicit focus on Berlin.¹³⁴ Many of the essays account for the – in Pott's words – 'hybrid identity' of the Huguenots, and how their works represented a merging of French reformed traditions with those of their German host country,¹³⁵ but some also reflect on the limits of this merging process. In another place, Pott herself illustrates these processes of adoption: in her study on reformed moral-philosophical thought and its interaction with German literature in the Eighteenth Century she traces the trope of beatitude in the works of several members of the *Refuge*, including Formey. From this, she concludes that German philosophical strands like the natural law of Pufendorf and Wolff were integrated to a large extent into French reformed theology as responses to the orthodox Protestants on the one hand and sceptics and atheists on the other.¹³⁶ Pott's work points in the direction in which my study on Formey will go: I want to show his engagement with German philosophy, particularly with that of Leibniz and Wolff, in the context of particular questions and ideas. Formey's indebtedness to Wolffian thought is well-known, but so far it has always been stated rather generally, often only on the basis of the titles of Formey's writings (*La Belle Wolfienne*) and his translations. Instead, I will trace Formey's ideas to the individual writings of Wolff, compare Wolff's original and Formey's rendering, and show how and with which purpose Formey adopted Wolff's thought in different circumstances.

Such a detailed analysis of Formey's Wolffian thought requires a thorough understanding of the history of German philosophy and of Wolff's philosophy in particular. This is not an easy task as this scholarship is rather fragmented, due to the sheer immensity and diversity of Wolff's oeuvre. Between c. 1710 and his death in 1754, Wolff developed an integral philosophical system that ranged from logic to practical philosophy (i.e. politics and morality) and he developed it in two cycles: in the first period he approached all the aspects of his philosophy in German, and a second he significantly elaborated on his thought and published it in Latin. All of Wolff's writings are accessible in a complete edition, yet their analysis by the scholarship has been rather piecemeal so far and has predominantly focused on his theoretical philosophy, i.e. logic and metaphysics, as opposed to his practical philosophy. A monograph on Wolff is rather unlikely to be released in the near future.¹³⁷ This uneven character of Wolff's own work and of the scholarship on him, makes it

134 See Pott, Mulsow and Danneberg, eds., *The Berlin Refuge*. Between Haase's pioneer work and this most recent one, are the likewise very diverse results of two Franco-German round tables: Jens Häselser and Antony McKenna, eds., *La vie intellectuelle aux refuges protestants. Actes de la table ronde de Münster du 25 juillet 1995* (Paris, 1999) and Jens Häselser and Antony McKenna, eds., *La vie intellectuelle aux refuges protestants II: Huguenots traducteurs. Actes de la table ronde de Dublin, juillet 1999* (Paris, 2002).

135 See Sandra Pott, "'Gentle, Refined, Cultivated, Witty People': Comments on the Intellectual History of the Berlin Refuge and on Relevant Research," in *The Berlin Refuge*, 8.

136 Sandra Pott, *Reformierte Morallehren und deutsche Literatur von Jean Barbeyrac bis Christoph Martin Wieland* (Tübingen, 2002).

137 Given the lack of a monograph on Wolff, see the edited volumes: Werner Schneiders, ed., *Christian Wolff: 1679 - 1754 ; Interpretationen zu seiner Philosophie und deren Wirkung ; mit einer Bibliographie der Wolff-Literatur*, second edition (Hamburg, 1986) and Jürgen Stolzenberg; Olivier-Pierre Rudolph, eds., *Wolffiana II : Christian*

difficult to account for his position within German and European intellectual life of the Eighteenth Century: did he simply copy and systematise Leibniz? Or did his philosophy contain original elements? Was his philosophy exclusively rationalist? Or are there empiricist elements in his philosophy? Did he believe in revealed religion? Or was he leaning towards deism? For the purpose of my study, it is not important to have definite answers to these questions as my interest lies in observing which aspects of Wolff's work Formey appropriated, as well as which ones he defended and disputed. Therefore it is sufficient to know that Wolff was indebted to Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason, which constituted the foundation of his philosophy and meant that in the universe nothing could occur without a cause. Moreover, as mentioned above, Wolff's metaphysics was based on an almost endless trust in human intellect/ reason, which was able to account for even large parts of Christian dogma, except for some few revealed truths that were 'above reason' like the trinity or the virginity of Mary.¹³⁸ These two aspects, his idea of a global causal order and his practice of explaining large parts of Christian doctrine by reason, were the origin of his above-mentioned controversies with Christian Thomasius and particularly with the Pietists that Wolff and his disciples faced. Wolff's conflict with the Pietists culminated in Wolff being accused of heterodoxy and led in 1723 even to his suspension from the chair of philosophy at the University of Halle as well as his banishment from Prussia on royal order. This order was only withdrawn in 1740 and Wolff was allowed to return to Halle, where he taught until his death. In the course of my thesis, I will investigate some of these events in detail, in order to adequately judge Formey's engagement with Wolff and to comment on the effects that the transposition of an idea that emerged in Wolff's work into a new context, i.e. Formey's context, had on this same idea.

With respect to this, it also has to be underlined that for a limited period of time Wolff and Formey were contemporaries, which meant that although they were geographically separated their contexts did overlap for a period. This was particularly the case for the years after 1740, when Wolff was back in Prussia and not only Wolff himself but also Formey, as one of his disciples, were faced with criticism from new empirical approaches that reached Prussia from England and France. Hence, there were certain circumstances in which Formey appears as a proxy for Wolff, particularly because his contemporaries very quickly associated him with Wolffianism. To understand this precise period and the circumstances of Formey's initial acquaintance with Wolff's thought through the so-called *Société des Alétophiles*, a private society that had been formed with the aim to strengthen and divulge Wolff's philosophy, I can draw on the recent and very detailed work of

Wolff und die europäische Aufklärung: Akten des 1. Internationalen Christian-Wolff-Kongresses, Halle (Saale), 4.-8. April 2004, 5 vols., (Hildesheim, 2007-10). Moreover, Jean École's comments on Wolff's metaphysics are rich in information: Jean École, *Introduction à l'opus metaphysicum de Christian Wolff* (Paris, 1986).

¹³⁸ See Mario Casula, "Die Theologia Naturalis von Christian Wolff: Vernunft und Offenbarung," in *Christian Wolff 1679-1754*, 129–38.

Johannes Bronisch who analyses mid-eighteenth-century Wolffianism as a form of sociability and a kind of political/ ideological affiliation.¹³⁹ Bronisch observes the strategies that were used for establishing and disseminating one coherent Wolffian doctrine by the members of this private society, among whom Formey and some of his fellow Huguenots also participated. His particular focus lies on the debates within this limited group of actors, which he conceives as a network that was predominantly animated by the Saxon nobleman Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel. Bronisch's study admittedly overlooks a large part of the philosophical implications, but he engages much more convincingly with the relation between the German and French Huguenots in contrast to the above-mentioned scholarship on the Huguenots. My own study on Formey follows the example of scholars like Bronisch, particularly with respect to the investigation of the Berlin Huguenot enlightenment. Through Formey, I try to account for the contents and practices that the particular Huguenot Wolffianism of mid-eighteenth-century Berlin embraced, and how it interacted with other European currents of thought.

On Method

My thesis is as a study based on intellectual history, more precisely a history of eighteenth-century religious, epistemological and moral philosophical ideas. But what is intellectual history (today)? Recently Richard Whatmore has replied to this question with much detail and wit. He draws a picture of an eclectic and inclusive discipline, which embraces a huge variety of subjects and activities, and interacts with many different disciplines in the humanities.¹⁴⁰ This eclectic identity of current intellectual history has not, however, received such a positive evaluation from all of its practitioners: As Darrin McMahon and Samuel Moyn insinuate in their recent survey on the current state of intellectual history, this eclecticism bears not only an opportunity but also a risk: a risk that allowing so many different approaches, subjects and methods under the roof of intellectual history, paired with a lack of critical self-reflection, blurs the sharpness of the discipline and ignores the incompatibility of certain methods and approaches.¹⁴¹ I do not quite share this concern because in my view it is precisely this eclecticism that has spawned the most creative works in the field, which has personally given me the confidence to undertake this study. For me, intellectual history is much more than the history of political thought, the history of great thinkers, or the exclusive engagement with programmatic texts as has been objected to the discipline many times in the course of its

139 Johannes Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel und das Netzwerk des Wolffianismus* (Berlin, 2010).

140 See Richard Whatmore, *What Is Intellectual History?* (Cambridge, 2016).

141 See Darrin McMahon and Samuel Moyn, "Introduction: Interim Intellectual History," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. Darrin M McMahon and Samuel Moyn (Oxford, 2014), 4 and 11.

history. Instead, I see it as an opportunity to meaningfully study the ideas of historical actors like Formey, who have formerly been discarded for their presumed philosophical insignificance and exclusively instrumental role in the Republic of Letters. In addition, intellectual history in its current state provides the opportunity to study such actors by combining the analysis of many different sources, thanks to the new ways of conceiving human interaction and intellectual creation that have diffused into intellectual historical research via the exchange with the social sciences and philosophy. To name just one of the fruitful research fields that can enrich intellectual historical research (since it has influenced my own practice of intellectual history), I want to refer to Stéphane Van Damme's attempt of a new history of philosophy: inspired by French sociology and modern history of science, he asks how practices of knowing, forms of writing, material culture, as well as the performance and social role of the philosopher interacted with ideas in order to form what, according to Van Damme, eighteenth-century philosophy really was: a historical phenomena and a cultural practice, rather than a canonical and timeless assemblage of thought.¹⁴²

Although Van Damme's approach starts rather from the anthropological side if philosophy instead of the ideas, it shares the strong plea for historicity with intellectual history. Intellectual history's core assumption on which all its current methodological and conceptual eclecticism is founded, according to Whatmore, is that 'ideas matter as first-order information about social phenomena and as directly revealing facts about our world that cannot be described except by reference to ideas', and that hence ideas can be considered as historical events themselves.¹⁴³ The importance given to ideas is however only one, although crucial, aspect of what unites the discipline and makes it in my eyes so appealing: it is augmented by intellectual history's ability to render the historicity and the complexity of the past ideas. Intellectual historical research allows us to understand what ideas in the past meant, and as such it reveals the complex and contingent nature of this past, i.e. the various possibilities, intentions and reactions of past actors. This ability is expressed in the discipline's earliest methodological and conceptual considerations and in my view is still the essence of intellectual history today. According to Quentin Skinner's and J.G.A. Pocock's programmatic statements, which are usually summarised under the notion of linguistic contextualism, a text has to be understood as an 'intended act of communication' that emerged from a particular discursive context, which was itself shaped by larger cultural and social developments and provided the historical actor anchored in it, with a set of possibilities for speech acts. A text of the past has thus to be analysed in comparison to this context in order to define its particularity (or

142 See Stéphane Van Damme, "Une historicité tenue à distance. Regards sur un ancien régime philosophique," in *Historicité*, ed. François Dosse, Patrick Garcia et Christian Delacroix (Paris, 2009), 169-82; and *La passion de la vérité: retour sur une pratique philosophique de plein air au temps des Lumières* (Paris, 2016).

143 See Whatmore, *What is intellectual history?*, 9.

non-particularity) in its time.¹⁴⁴ Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow, who through their 1983 book *That Noble Science of politics*, are said to have founded the Sussex School of intellectual history, claimed that the task of the intellectual historian is to refuse to account for the logical coherence of past texts, but instead to unfold the past authors' 'internal negotiations' between their intuitions and the constraints of a text which were also influenced by the authors' aim to address a certain audience.¹⁴⁵ In this way, they wanted to account for the contingency of past ideas and avoid reductionism.

Indebted to these still very valuable conceptualisations of the purpose and practice of intellectual history, my study attempts to understand how particular religious, epistemological and moral arguments emerged and converged in the hands of an eighteenth-century Christian philosopher embodied by the Huguenot Jean Henri Samuel Formey. This question itself can only be asked by an intellectual historian because, as I have mentioned above, it refrains from asking for the interaction of two supposedly dichotomous categories such as reason and faith or religion and science in the Eighteenth Century, just as it refuses to anchor the analysis of the past in the constructed and teleological narrative of a religious enlightenment. In other words, my research question itself is the product of an awareness of the concepts and modes of thinking that were available to historical actors, which, as Ann Thomson makes clear, does not mean that these questions cannot have a sense for us today.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, this research question reveals an equally strong interest in the concepts that shaped the past actors' ways of thinking and arguing – an important part of intellectual history's category of 'context' – and the results of this thinking and arguing – the 'ideas'. This means that I am as much interested in understanding what a Christian philosopher in mid-eighteenth-century Huguenot Berlin was able to be, as in comprehending the ideas he put forward, since only by taking these two aspects together can the full image of this Christian philosopher emerge. For analytical purposes I separate these two questions in my thesis, yet, in reality, they are intimately linked: the particular concept of the Christian philosopher informed the arguments put forward by an individual that embraced this identity, and the arguments themselves are constitutive for the concept of the Christian philosopher. In my thesis I approach the Christian philosopher, the culture of his thought, from two ends: in the first part I try to trace the construction of the persona of the Christian philosopher that provides one essential layer of context,

144 See Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas (1969)," in *Visions of Politics*, ed. Quentin Skinner, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 2002), 57–89 and J. G. A. Pocock, "The Concept of Language and the Métier d'historien: Some Considerations on Practice.," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987), 19–38.

145 See Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge, 1983), 5–6.

146 See Ann Thomson, "L'histoire Intellectuelle. Quelles idées, quel contexte?," *Révue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 59, no. 4bis (2012), 58

in which my analysis of Formey's arguments, which I undertake in the second part of the thesis, is anchored. In order to do so, I draw on a couple of methodological propositions that in recent years have enriched intellectual history from neighbouring disciplines, such as the history of science and of philosophy, which have made the discipline as eclectic as described above.

Firstly, my analysis of the role of the Christian philosopher is inspired by the approach to the persona that has been shaped and used in the history of science and in the history of philosophy in the recent years. At the end of the 1990s, a research project at the Max-Planck-Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, led by Lorraine Daston, conceptualised the 'scientific persona'. Derived from an anthropological notion developed by Marcel Mauss, Daston and her colleague Otto Sibum defined the persona as a context-bound cultural identity or a mask that the individual adopts to construct her selfhood.¹⁴⁷ Although often based on a profession or social role, the scientific persona is not simply understood as such a social role, but as a category at the intersection between individual biography and social surrounding. In the history of science that Daston and her team pursue, this category inspired different research questions, such as the emergence and the transmission of a particular scientific persona, and of the relations that exist between knowledge and the scientific persona as the bearer of knowledge.¹⁴⁸ These are also pertinent questions with respect to Formey as I have mentioned above. In addition, another neighbouring discipline to intellectual history, the history of philosophy, has spawned the fruitful adoption of the persona-approach. There Ian Hunter, individually and in collaboration with Conal Condren and Stephen Gaukroger, has made a claim for the persona-approach as a means to generate a more historical context to past philosophies than historians of philosophy tend to generate in his eyes.¹⁴⁹ The purpose behind this is to de-transcendentalise philosophy itself, i.e. to render it an empirical and contingent activity rather than a coherent and universal product of human reason, and by this to make philosophy manageable as a subject of intellectual history as described above. This approach requires that the philosophical persona is understood as a person who is cultivated in a particular milieu, on the basis of particular intellectual and moral means, and in accordance with a larger social context that is situated beyond the philosophical milieu.¹⁵⁰ More recently the historical theorist Herman Paul has drawn on both Daston's and Hunter's notion of the persona, in order to account for the scholarly self of the historian. He emphasises that the persona serves the individual

147 See Lorraine Daston and H. Otto Sibum, "Introduction: Scientific Personae and their Histories," *Science in Context* 16, no. 1–2 (March 2003), 3.

148 See Daston; Sibum, "Introduction," 5.

149 See Ian Hunter, "The history of philosophy and the persona of the philosopher," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 3 (2007), 574. Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter, eds., *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity* (Cambridge, 2006).

150 See Ian Hunter, Stephen Gaukroger, and Conal Condren, "Introduction," in *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe*, 8.

as an ideal-typical model of selfhood that contains certain 'abilities, attitudes, and dispositions that are regarded as crucial for the pursuit of scholarly study', which can be described as a set of virtues and skills.¹⁵¹ Moreover, with the category of the persona, Paul aims to expand the discourse-centred analysis of past self-concepts through a focus of practice and conduct.¹⁵²

All these different considerations on the persona from different disciplines have one thing in common: they enable a shift of focus from an ideology/'Weltanschauung' as the source of ideas and problems, to the (subjective) practice of these ideas and problems. This helps to avoid teleology and ahistoricism, especially with respect to the relation between reason and faith in the past, which I address in my thesis. Such an approach also underlines the collective and contingent nature of knowledge or ideas and their bearers or promoters. This not only supports my view on the study of past ideas as an intellectual historian, it also gives me a concrete and useful tool to describe context: the concept of the persona draws a much broader and integrative picture of context than the simple reference to a biography or institutions. Instead, context perceived on the basis of the persona-approach is an amalgam of concepts, practices, perceptions, moral behaviour and cultural and social processes. Furthermore the persona-approach enlarges (and by this makes perhaps more relevant) the study of an individual, which a thesis that focuses on one particular actor usually is: by emphasising the model-character and the collective construction of the persona its analysis accounts for much more than Formey's individual case, and embraces a whole intellectual and moral culture. Finally, the persona-approach helps me to overcome the lacuna in evaluating Formey as an individual in his time, which I have encountered in previous studies on him. More precisely, this approach succeeds in building a bridge between Formey's practices (as a learned man, reader, writer or multiplier of knowledge) and the content that he produced and transmitted through these practices.

Besides the persona-approach, my study is also indebted to methodological considerations on controversies in intellectual history, since these considerations, in a similar way as the persona-approach, serve the purpose of destroying the image that issues such as philosophical ideas and knowledge, were self-contained and pure, and they introduce agency into our perception of the emergence and development of ideas. Beyond this, the controversialist approach is not overly focused on the author of an idea or argument as the persona approach is, but concentrates predominantly on the rhetoric of a text that is understood as the outcome of a (imagined) negotiation between its author and his audience. Therefore the controversialist approach enriches the concept of context that I apply to the analysis of Formey's ideas. I am drawing here mainly on

151 Herman Paul, "What is a scholarly persona? Ten theses on virtues, skills, and desires," *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (October 1, 2014), 353.

152 See Paul, "What is a scholarly persona?," 351-2.

the work of Anthony La Vopa, who formulated his concept of a controversialist approach as a critical reply to Jonathan Israel's questionable way of doing intellectual history in his *Enlightenment Contested*. La Vopa argues that ideas should be analysed in their nature as arguments or positions in public controversies of the past, yet without pre-judging the potential winners or losers of such controversies. He defines a public controversy as a field of ideas which are shaped to interact with each other within this field, and therefore he sees the key to the meaning of an idea in its form and relation to other ideas.¹⁵³ The process that evolves in this field of ideas or controversy comprises (in his view) of three heavily entangled elements, namely the content of an idea itself, the mediation of this content when the idea is received by an audience, and the form of an idea chosen by the author in order to create this reception.¹⁵⁴

This approach is not only different to what Israel did in his to some extent ahistorical study of enlightenment philosophy, but it is in my view a valuable solution to one of intellectual history's perennial problems, i.e. the question of how to integrate the detailed study of an argument with the study of the larger social and cultural fabric in which it is inserted. In linguistic contextualism, which was developed by Skinner and Pocock in the 1970s and still dominates today's intellectual history, an argument is analysed with respect to the discourse in which it emerged, i.e. with respect to the complex structure of assumptions, rhetoric and language that was at the disposal of the argument's author.¹⁵⁵ This does not sound so alien to the entanglement between argument, its author's intention and its reception by an audience implied by La Vopa, and indeed, in their programmatic writings Skinner and Pocock (each of them to a different extent) pointed equally to the reception-side of an idea.¹⁵⁶ Yet in their practice, they were much less sensitive to questions of mediation, translation and appropriation, and predominantly focalised their analysis of an argument around the supposed intention of the author. An almost opposite approach to linguistic contextualism seems to prevail in studies that are indebted to the social history of ideas, which is linked to the works of Robert Darnton and Rogier Chartier and draws on the French historical tradition while having its origins in the same period as Skinner's and Pocock's considerations.¹⁵⁷ Through a focus on the material, economic and social factors that determine the production and

153 See Anthony La Vopa, "A New Intellectual History? Jonathan Israel's Enlightenment," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009), 730. For La Vopa's understanding of the field of ideas and his indebtedness to Fritz Ringer's *Fields of Knowledge* in 1992, see Anthony La Vopa, "Doing Fichte. Reflections of a sobred (but unrepentant) contextual Biographer," in *Biographie Schreiben*, ed. Hans Erich Bödeker (Göttingen, 2003), 118-22.

154 See La Vopa, "A new intellectual history?," 730.

155 See Whatmore, *What is intellectual history?*, 42-3.

156 This has been particularly emphasised by László Kontler, "Translation and Comparison II. A Methodological Inquiry into Reception in the History of Ideas," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 4 (2008), 31-3.

157 For a brief account of the development of the social history of ideas linked to Robert Darnton and Rogier Chartier and their major claims, see Brian Cowan, "Intellectual, Social and Cultural History: Ideas in Context," in *Palgrave Advances in Intellectual History*, ed. Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (New York, 2006), 175-80.

circulation of knowledge, these studies emphasise the importance of the transmission and reception of ideas, yet very often they do not go beyond the exploration of this end of the process of creating meaning: they hardly link back quantitative observation of book sales, exploration of private libraries, and physical descriptions of books to the nature and potential intention of the arguments that were transported in these books.

I admit that it is difficult to equally treat both sides, an argument produced by an author and its appropriation by an audience, in one study. To do so requires the combination of very different methods and sources, and sometimes the scarcity of certain sources makes it almost impossible. Apart from this, there is also no added scholarly value in analysing the potential meaning of an argument for its author on the one side, and the meaning it acquires through reception on the other. Instead, what should attract the historian's attention is the intersection of intention and reception since the importance of incorporating insights from reception history, or the history of the book into intellectual history lies not in demonstrating the 'actual importance or outreach' of one particular idea, but in seeing how the reception of this idea, or a similar one, potentially affected the intention of an author. With respect to this the rather small-scale entity of the controversy suggested by La Vopa, i.e. the discussion of one topic within a circumscribed group of people that is carried out not only in public but also in private communication,¹⁵⁸ seems an ideal category of analysis to me.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, it allows to depict on an empirical level what Stéphane Van Damme describes in his attempt to redefine early modern philosophy at large, namely the fusion of different literary forms and rhetoric in the eighteenth-century presentation of 'philosophical' knowledge for particular groups of recipients.¹⁶⁰ In the case of Formey, I try to define his (immediate) public, or the stage of the controversy, by considering the genre of writing that he used and his claims in the prefaces or introductions, by which his public writings were very often preceded. In order to obtain an impression of the reception that his arguments potentially and actually faced, I look for others' positions on certain questions in his correspondence and for direct reactions to his writings in learned journals. This then allows me to evaluate his rhetoric and content-related choices in his texts. What makes the case of Formey particularly interesting is that, since he operated in so many different fields (which in turn spawned so many different genres of writings), we are able to

158 For the need to consider 'private' writing in order to better understand the rhetoric of public writings, see La Vopa, "A new intellectual history?," 736.

159 La Vopa's controversialist approach with its emphasis on the entanglement between authors, receiver and content bears in my view some resemblance to the claims of the historian of science James Secord, who sees the production of knowledge as an act of communication that includes 'receivers, producers, and modes and conventions of transmission'; see James A. Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," *Isis* 95, no. 4 (2004), 661.

160 See Van Damme, "Une historicité tenue à distance," 174-77; and "Philosophe/ philosopher," in *Cambridge Companion to the French Enlightenment*, ed. Daniel Brewer (Cambridge, 2014), 157-62. He shows how the blurring of boundaries between genres of writing enlarged the set of ideas and practices that could be considered as being philosophical.

compare how certain core ideas like the comprehensibility of God, or the co-existence of determinism and liberty, changed shape when he transported them from one public to another.

The transportation or transfer of ideas and entire controversies is a point that deserves some further explanation because it is of the utmost relevance for an analysis of the rhetoric of an actor like Formey, who most of the time acted as a broker of third persons' ideas. The transfers that Formey carried out comprise not only his presentation of one idea to the different audiences available to him, such as his congregation or his colleagues at the Academy. On the contrary, in most cases, Formey also transported (and simultaneously) ideas and controversies from chronologically or geographically remote contexts to his own contemporary one. In other words, Formey very often reproduced/re-enacted other philosophers' controversies or arguments in his writings, which he used at the same time to take a position in the controversies in which he himself was engaged in his days. Therefore the analysis of Formey's texts' rhetorical strategies must distinguish between at least two layers of reception: the reception by the public in which a certain controversy evolved for the first time, and the reception by the public to which Formey brought this controversy (or parts of it). The first helps us to understand Formey's process of appropriation of an idea, and the latter helps us to understand the intention he pursued as an author himself. Besides the analysis of this complex rhetorical situation, we also need to observe the very processes of transferring controversies or intellectual fields from one context to another. For this Ann Thomson's considerations on the transfer of controversies as she studied it in her book *Bodies of Thought*, are very insightful. In this study she analysed two distinct moments of the early modern controversy on human nature, first in England at the end of the Seventeenth Century and then in mid-eighteenth-century France. She established the link between these two moments of debate via paying a particular attention to the mechanisms that helped the controversy pass across the English Channel, such as learned journalism or private correspondence, which were very often performed by the Huguenot milieu.¹⁶¹ The particularity of Formey is that since he combined the role of a broker/transporter of ideas, and that of an author together, all the distinct processes that Thomson described so well step by step, converged in his oeuvre and sometimes even in his single writings. Starting with him, my study hence tries to address controversies that existed in early eighteenth-century Europe – in most of the cases they were anchored in the German lands and were linked to Christian Wolff – and to single out which parts of these controversies Formey chose to transport in his context. I will reflect on the different practices he employed to transport them and finally (or simultaneously) inquire as to with which purpose and to which effect he reanimated these

¹⁶¹ See Thomson, "L'histoire intellectuelle," 61, and Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2008).

controversies/ arguments in controversies, that very often he engaged in himself with colleagues at the Academy or with French *philosophes*. The almost microscopical analysis of these processes that converge in Formey allows us to open the black box of cultural transfer in Europe.

To show this complex entanglement between controversies, their appropriation and their transfer to different controversies is the purpose of the second part of my thesis, which is concerned with Formey's arguments concerning religious, epistemological and moral problems as a Christian philosopher. The first such question that had the most important implications for Christianity but which Formey addressed predominantly as an epistemological problem was the question of how to prove the existence of God. My analysis of this begins with the controversy over the comprehensibility of God between Pierre Bayle and the Huguenot theologians known as the 'rationaux' at the end of the Seventeenth Century. I observe how Formey transported their refusal of Bayle's sceptical stand towards this question in a dictionary article on God that he formally shaped on the basis of Bayle's own famous *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, and which he directed to a public of professional and amateur philosophers alike. Formey's appropriation of the anti-sceptical arguments against Bayle, which his dictionary article witnesses, found its echo in a controversy that he engaged in himself short time later at the Academy with its president, Maupertuis, which is the subject of chapter 7. In this debate, which concerned the legitimacy of physico-theological proofs of God's existence, Formey opposed Maupertuis's conception of metaphysics by drawing heavily on Wolff.

From the question of the provability of God's existence, I then shift my attention to another major problem in eighteenth-century public debates which had religious, scientific and moral implications: the co-existence of determinism and liberty. The initial controversy that marked Formey's repeated engagement in this question had taken place between Christian Wolff and his Pietist opponents at the University of Halle, in which the latter had blamed the former for supporting fatalism through the principle of pre-established harmony that he had inherited from Leibniz. Formey seems to have familiarised himself with the contents of this problem in his epistolary exchange with the Swiss philosopher Jean Pierre de Crousaz, who was himself an opponent of Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy. Formey transported and merged these two geographically and chronologically remote controversies on fatalism in his philosophical novel *La Belle Wolfienne*, with which he had intended to disseminate Wolffianism. His critical rendering of the controversy between Wolff and his opponents entailed a debate between Formey, himself, and his teacher and patron, Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel, who was a strong partisan of Wolffianism. Formey's reaction to Manteuffel's criticism is the subject of chapter 9, which traces Formey's elaboration of a middle way between contingency and determination in the debate on free will.

Formey reached this answer by readdressing the problem with different epistemological assumptions that he found in Wolff's psychological writings, which he had translated and discussed elsewhere. While chapter 9 deals with Formey's rendering of the relation between contingency and determination in the context of a science of man, chapter 10 shows how he reflected on it in a moral and religious context. It demonstrates first how Formey 'translated' Wolff's 'scientific' moral theory into a sermon on perfection, and then how he defended the position that he had established on this basis in a debate on the sense of moral laws in a world determined by divine Providence. Formey engaged in two steps in this debate (which later became the question in the Academy's essay contest of 1751): first in an early private one with Maupertuis and D'Alembert, and second in a later public one by translating Adolph Friedrich Reinhard's winning essay. Chapter 11 follows up on Formey's engagement with moral theory by showing how he transformed Wolffian rationalist moral theory into a moral philosophical textbook designed for self-instruction. This multi-faceted work, which addressed both scholars and common people and defended revealed doctrine alongside natural human morality, was Formey's answer to Rousseau's denunciation of the immorality caused by scientific progress in the *Premier Discours*. With the analysis of this debate which highlights Formey's position between a perception of religious and moral decline, and trust in a philosophy based on universal human reason, I emblematically conclude my quest for the mid-eighteenth-century Christian philosopher.

FORMEY – AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER

To define the nature and function of an eighteenth-century Christian philosopher through the example of Formey is no easy undertaking, for this persona incorporated multiple roles that were constructed at different moments and by different communities of actors. In this first part of my thesis, I will, therefore, observe a process of construction rather than present a list of qualities. In order to describe the construction of this persona, which, as I argue, served Formey as a model of behaviour and informed his arguments, I will observe how he performed it, or – in other words – how he fashioned himself on various occasions.¹⁶² Self-fashioning itself is a concept that for more than two decades has enriched scholarship in intellectual history and history of science as a methodological tool.¹⁶³ The self-fashioning of an individual must be understood as a part of identity building and as such as a social process or practice, which is conditioned by the self's interaction with its social and intellectual context. More precisely, when an actor interacts with his contemporaries, his self-statements emerge from and nourish his fellows' perception of him. Consequently, in order to understand Formey's self-fashioning, I will not only focus on the instances of Formey's self-representation that were present in his public writings, particularly in their prefaces or introductions, and in his letters, but I will also scrutinize the perception of Formey in his environment as has been mainly expressed in his correspondents' letters.

Besides the perception of Formey through the individuals around him, his self-fashioning was also significantly informed by the larger cultural and social context in which he and these individuals were embedded: his biography, the institutions of the European Republic of Letters and of the French reformed Church, as well as the book market, to name but a few. Formey's self-fashioning as a Christian philosopher relied primarily on his experience as a concrete social person that acted in a particular social and professional environment. This is why I observe Formey's actual practices that informed and were informed by his self-fashioning as a Christian philosopher. The entanglement of Formey's individual self and concrete practices with the imagined model of the persona of the Christian philosopher becomes particularly obvious when we confront the forms of

162 On the difference between the persona as a model and the performance of an individual see Paul, “What is a scholarly persona?”.

163 For the method of self-fashioning the classical reference is Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980). Yet, my inspiration for the investigation on Formey's self-fashioning stems from the application of the concept of self-fashioning to the history of science in Mario Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism* (Chicago, 1993). For Biagioli's methodological considerations see particularly pages 2-3 and 12-14.

his philosophical writing and his imagined purposes of these writings: what does the transformation of sermons into moral discourses tell us about the role that Formey played for his main readership in the Huguenot community? Or what does his refutation of other philosophers' works reveal about his perception of censorship and religious apologies? Everything we observe about Formey's construction of writings, audiences and purposes has its root in the changes that pervaded the eighteenth-century scientific and religious communities.

All I have said so far with respect to the method of self-fashioning applies to any kind of persona. However, with the persona of the philosopher, the link between his self-conception and the conceptualisation of the discipline of philosophy to which this persona refers is particularly important. Here, I am reminded of Gaukroger's, Condren's and Hunter's studies on the early modern philosopher, as they defined the persona of the philosopher as 'the purpose-built "self" whose cognitive capacities and moral bearing are cultivated for the sake of a knowledge deemed philosophical.'¹⁶⁴ Ian Hunter adds that historical attempts to define the discipline of philosophy were 'simultaneously ways of grooming the philosopher'.¹⁶⁵ According to this, the construction of the philosophical self, the persona of the philosopher, was influenced by both the personal concepts of philosophy and those predominant in a particular context and time, hence they served as a standard by which the persona's practice was judged. In the following, therefore, I simultaneously analyse moments of the persona's construction, i.e. Formey's self-fashioning, as well as Formey's and his contemporaries' definitions of philosophy that these moments of self-fashioning reveal. As Gaukroger, Condren and Hunter underline and as we will see very clearly with Formey, these definitions of philosophy consisted not only of a characterisation of intellectual practices but were also to a large extent informed by moral notions. Stéphane Van Damme, in his approach to the history of philosophy of the *Ancien régime*, adds to this that doing philosophy also consisted of performing a certain 'philosophical life'.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, given my interest in a particular form of the philosopher, the *Christian* philosopher, my analysis of these concepts and practices of philosophy will be dominated by the question of how the relationship between philosophy and religion, reason and faith, science and dogma, were imagined by the actors concerned.

I will begin my analysis of Formey's self-fashioning by defining the meaning of philosophy and more precisely Christian philosophy that Formey ascribed to, and how, based on this, he perceived of his role as a Christian philosopher. This will be followed by an observation of the biographical circumstances that favoured the construction of this particular hybrid persona and the

¹⁶⁴ Hunter, Gaukroger, and Condren, "Introduction," 7.

¹⁶⁵ See Ian Hunter, "The University philosopher in early modern Germany," in *The philosopher in early modern Europe*, 64.

¹⁶⁶ See Van Damme, *La passion de la vérité*, 27.

perception of him: what did it mean for a man in the mid-eighteenth-century Prussian Huguenot community to be a pastor and a philosopher at the same time? Subsequently, I will observe how this two-fold identity translated into Formey's particular forms of writing for both a 'philosophical' and a religious public as well as the permeability between these two spheres and the different genres of writings. To better understand the purposes pursued within particular forms of writing I will then reflect on the different intertwined contexts from which they emerged, and which they targeted: the division and polemics in the Republic of Letters and particularly the role of the *philosophes* in it, the decrease of practical religiosity in the Berlin Huguenot community and the exigencies and constraints produced by the contemporary book market. All this will finally lead me to observations of how different groups of people, who were representative in the different contexts in which Formey acted, constructed their perception of him and his role as a Christian philosopher and how they communicated it to him.

1. Formey's Concept of Philosophy and its Relation to Religion

If we want to understand what it meant to be a Christian philosopher and how this role was constructed by Formey and his correspondents, we cannot get around his landmark work with the same title: *Le Philosophe Chrétien*, the first volume of which was published in 1750. It became one of Formey's most successful books, just as he had expected it.¹⁶⁷ In total the book appeared in four volumes until 1757 and was published in several editions in French and German.¹⁶⁸ In addition to this, it entailed two later follow-up works, the *Discours moraux* in 1764 and the *Consolations raisonnables et religieuses* in 1768, which Formey advertised with explicit reference to the *Philosophe Chrétien*.¹⁶⁹ These numerous volumes were filled with reworked versions of Formey's sermons that, cleaned from most of their pastoral rhetoric, were supposed to, as Johann Merian Bertrand in his *Éloge* of Formey retrospectively claimed, 'accorder les doctrines chrétiennes avec une saine philosophie.'¹⁷⁰ As such the *Philosophe Chrétien* could be defined nowadays as a kind of

167 See Formey, "Notice de mes ouvrages," *Conseils pour former une bibliothèque peu nombreuse mais choisie*, 3rd edition (Berlin, 1755), 118.

168 The different editions of the *Philosophe Chrétien* are: 1. edition: 4 vols, Leiden: Luzac Fils, 1750-1757; 2. and increased edition: 2 vols, Leiden: Luzac Fils, 1752; 2. and increased edition: 3 vols, Leiden: Luzac Fils, 1752-1755; 3. edition: 4 vols, Leiden: Luzac Fils, 1755-1758. Formey, in his "Notice de mes ouvrages," 119 spoke of two more editions produced in Lausanne and Lyon. Furthermore, there are two German editions, translated by Osterländer.

169 Formey, *Discours Moraux pour servir de suite au Philosophe Chrétien* (Berlin, 1764) and *Consolations raisonnables et religieuses* (Yverdon, 1768).

170 Johann Bernhard Merian, "Éloge de Monsieur Formey," *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres* 1797 (Berlin, 1800), 55.

secularised sermon collection; the contemporaries ranged it under theology, more precisely in the genre of so-called literature of edification.¹⁷¹ This genre implies the book's relatively easy intellectual and practical accessibility to wide groups of readers. As a letter by the Huguenot pastor Abraham Bocquet shows, it also attracted a large number of female readers: Bocquet apologized for not yet having had the occasion to read the *Philosophe Chrétien* because his wife and her mother and sisters indulged excessively in its reading.¹⁷² Moreover, the book and its follow-up works were dedicated to noble women, which is another indication for the explicit inclusion of women in the targeted group of readers.¹⁷³ Generally, the book seems to have been read mostly by readers of Reformed confession, not only in the German lands, but also in Geneva¹⁷⁴ and in France.¹⁷⁵ This wide success of the *Philosophe Chrétien* made it a perfect vehicle of self-fashioning, the detailed mechanics of which on the part of its recipients we will observe below (ch. 5).

On the conceptual level, Formey's claim that the book combined Christian doctrine with philosophy facilitated his identification with a particular persona of a philosopher, the Christian philosopher. More precisely, Formey claimed to re-unite through his writing, and ultimately in his person, the philosopher and the Christian with the purpose to preserve the doctrine of Christianity and the happiness that resulted for people out of its recognition.¹⁷⁶ This statement immediately implied an apologetic function as the main characteristic for the Christian philosopher. Yet, this apologetic function constituted only one first, although very influential, aspect of the complex concept of this persona. Its roots have to be sought in the conception of philosophy as a particular form of knowledge and of the relation that Christian religion potentially and actually maintained with it. What exactly did Formey mean when he claimed that he wanted to re-unite the philosopher and the Christian? To answer this question we first and foremost have to understand what philosophy meant to him and his contemporaries and which role it had among eighteenth-century conceptions of science.

171 See Merian, "Éloge de Formey," 54.

172 See Abraham Bocquet to Formey, 30.12.1750 (FF).

173 The first volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien* was dedicated to 'La Reine mère', who was Sophie Dorothea von Hannover, the wife of Frederick William I of Prussia and the mother of Frederick II; in the second edition of the same volume the dedication was aimed at Philippine Charlotte of Prussia, the daughter of the former and thus sister of Frederick II. The *Discours Moraux* and the *Consolations raisonnables et religieuses* had no such royal 'patrons' instead they were dedicated to Prussian noble women: the first was dedicated to the Comtesse douarière Golowkin and the second to Friedericke Charlotte of Brandenburg-Schwedt.

174 See Jacob Vernet to Formey, 18.6.1753, *Lettres de Genève (1741-1793) à Jean Henri Samuel Formey*, ed. André Bandelier and Frédéric Eigeldinger (Paris, 2010), 368.

175 See Merian, "Éloge de Formey," 55.

176 See Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, Dédicace à la Reine Mère (without pagination).

Philosophy as a Universal Science of Reason

In the Eighteenth Century prevailed the definition of philosophy as the 'science of reason' or as the part of human knowledge related to reason and it was purported perhaps most famously through the *Système des connoissances humaines* at the beginning of the Parisian *Encyclopédie*.¹⁷⁷ In this classification of the sciences or different forms of knowledge, which was to a certain extent inspired by Francis Bacons' *Advancement and Proficiencie of Learning* (1603), reason was understood as the central of three cognitive faculties based on the human understanding with memory and imagination on its sides.¹⁷⁸ According to the *Système*, memory, which was the object of the discipline of history, was the simple reproduction of the human being's sensory perceptions; reason had the task to form clear ideas of these perceptions through reflection, whereas imagination imitated and falsified these perceptions and hence was the object of the discipline of poetry.¹⁷⁹ Philosophy was considered to be particularly extended since it consisted of all sciences, or sub-categories of human knowledge, that could be formed on the basis of each of the manifold human perceptions. In this sense, philosophy fulfilled the role of a universal and foundational science that embraced three main objects of investigation: God, human-kind and nature which in turn were sub-divided into other particular sciences.¹⁸⁰

Formey described the structure and nature of philosophy in a very similar way as the *Système des connoissances humaines* in his introduction to the *Histoire abrégée de la Philosophie* which was published in 1760. His work was based on the Latin history of philosophy by the German theologian and historian Johann Jakob Brucker who was an exponent of philosophical eclecticism as well as favourable of Wolff's philosophical ideas.¹⁸¹ Hence, Formey's depiction of philosophy as the unique and universal science which embraced all particular sciences or forms of human knowledge,¹⁸² must be considered to have emanated from different traditions (German and French) which, however, were similar in content (actually Diderot drew heavily on Brucker for

177 See "Explication détaillée du Système des Connoissances humaines," *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, vol. 1 (Paris, 1751), xlvii-li (including "Système figuré des Connoissances humaines", without pagination).

178 See Robert Darnton, "Epistemological Angst: From Encyclopedism to Advertising," in *The Structure of Knowledge: Classifications of Science and Learning since the Renaissance*, ed. Tore Frängsmyr (Berkeley, 2001), 57-8.

179 See „Explication détaillée du Système des Connoissances humaines,” xlvii.

180 See „Explication détaillée du Système des Connoissances humaines,” xlviii.

181 Jean Henri Samuel Formey, *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie* (Amsterdam, 1760). Johann Jakob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae a mundi incunabilis ad nostram usque aetatem deducta*, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1742-44). On Brucker and his history of philosophy see Mario Longo, "A 'Critical' History of Philosophy and the early Enlightenment: Johann Jakob Brucker," in *Models of the History of Philosophy II: From the Cartesian Age to Brucker*, ed. Gregorio Piaia and Giovanni Santinello (Dordrecht etc., 2011), 477-577. (For the Wolffian influence on Brucker, see especially p. 486).

182 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 9.

most of the *Encyclopédie's* philosophical articles).¹⁸³ Formey undertook in his *Histoire abrégée* a division between memory and reason or history and philosophy that resembled that of the French *encyclopédistes*: he defined philosophy as the science that provided intelligible explications of and reasons for simple facts that relied on human perception: 'Ainsi toutes les connoissances humaines, dès que ce ne sont plus de simples connoissances de fait, mais qu'elles s'élèvent aux raisons des faits, & en donnent de valables, rentrent dans la Philosophie.'¹⁸⁴ As a result we can say that philosophy in the understanding of its eighteenth-century practitioners, Formey included, was a type of knowledge that was less characterised by its subjects – basically, everything observable was the subject of philosophy – than by its method, which was a method based on the natural cognitive capacities of the human being. Formey followed this conceptualisation of philosophy as a method very rigorously in his *Histoire abrégée* and declared philosophy itself as a natural capacity innate to human nature and hence claimed that everybody was to be considered philosopher at the moment he explained a historical fact, i.e. something he had observed.¹⁸⁵

Formey's emphasis on the universality of the philosophical method in his conceptualisation of philosophy in the *Histoire abrégée* also reveals the influence that Christian Wolff's concept of philosophy had on him. In comparison to the definition of philosophy in the *Système des connoissances humaines*, Wolff added in his *Discursus praeliminaris de Philosophia in genere* an important aspect to the definition of philosophy which enlarged the scope of philosophy and made it become the foundation of all other sciences: for him it was the science that explained the existing *and* the possible.¹⁸⁶ Hence philosophy not only explained historical facts, i.e. the things we experienced, but also things that not (yet) existed, hence everything.¹⁸⁷ Formey adopted Wolff's formulation of the science of the possible in his *Histoire abrégée*: '[la Philosophie] tend en générale à donner une explication solide & intelligible de tout ce qui est, & de tout ce qui peut être.'¹⁸⁸ Another distinctive feature of a particularly Wolffian conception of philosophy, that can be found in Formey, is the strong emphasis on the rational and systematic character of the philosophical method, that was able to the same scientific certainty as the mathematical method,¹⁸⁹ and which had

183 See Longo, "A 'Critical' History of Philosophy," 557-8.

184 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 10.

185 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 10.

186 See Christian Wolff, "Discursus praeliminaris de Philosophia in genere," in *Philosophia rationalis sive Logica*.

Pars Prima [1728], ed. Jean École. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 2, vol. 1.1 (Hildesheim, 1983), §46.

187 See Schneiders, "Deus est philosophus," 18.

188 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 9-10.

189 I should emphasise that I do not consider Wolff's philosophical method as the application of methods from mathematics to philosophy, yet that I adhere to the opinion that Wolff considered the philosophical method as a genuine method of its own, which was established on the same concept of certainty as the mathematical method, as it has been claimed by Stefanie Buchenau, "Notions directrices et architectonique de la métaphysique. La critique kantienne de Wolff en 1763," *Astérion. Philosophie, histoire des idées, pensée politique*, no. 9 (December 1, 2011), doi:10.4000/asterion.2136, paragraph 6. Already Giorgio Tonelli, "La Disputa sul Metodo Matematico nella Filosofia della Prima Meta del Settecento e la Genesi dello Scritto Kantiano sull'evidenza," in *Da Leibniz a Kant*:

the purpose of making philosophical knowledge appear as absolutely certain knowledge that served other sciences as fundamental principles.¹⁹⁰ Wolff's presentation of this method was itself characterised by the reference to first, universally evident notions from which philosophical knowledge was to be deduced.¹⁹¹ In Formey's account of philosophy in his *Histoire abrégée*, this Wolffian method of certainty clearly resonated: 'C'est une Science solide, puisée dans les plus pures sources de la raison & de l'expérience; un assemblage de principes évidens par eux-mêmes, ou évidemment prouvés, & de conséquences qui en sont légitimement déduites.'¹⁹² Both, Wolff's definition of philosophy as the science of possibles and his emphasis on the demonstrative method implied that, unlike the definition of the *Encyclopédie*, philosophy relied for him not only on sense experience, i.e. a-posteriori sources, but also on merely rational constructions, i.e. a-priori sources. From all this we can conclude that Formey's concept of philosophy corresponded to the general eighteenth-century view on philosophy as a science linked to the human capacity of reason that was emblematically purported in the *Encyclopédie* as well as in Johann Jakob Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiae*, and that it has been at the same time very much informed by the particularities of Christian Wolff's understanding of this science.

The Epistemological Foundations of Christian Philosophy

According to both the common and the particularly Wolffian understanding of philosophy as a universal science or method, religion – natural and revealed – was considered part of philosophy and not contradictory to it.¹⁹³ This meant in theory that the medieval concept of the parallel separate existence of philosophy and theology, which some medieval authors had portrayed as a conflicting relationship and others as a dominance of theology over philosophy, was dissolved.¹⁹⁴ Instead, theology, or the subjects of theology, were included into the realm of philosophy if the latter was considered merely as a universal cognitive capacity. If this was the case, what did it then mean to declare the existence of a Christian philosopher? Within the eighteenth-century conception of philosophy, was there room for a particularly Christian version of philosophy and how was this Christian aspect characterised by people like Formey? An initial answer to this seems not to lie in the subjects of philosophical inquiry but rather in its sources. Although there apparently existed no

Saggi sul Pensiero del Settecento, ed. Claudio Cesa (Naples, 1987), 87 emphasised that Wolff saw analogies between mathematics and the demonstrative method but that he did not claim to apply mathematics to philosophy.

190 See Schneiders, "Deus est philosophus" 13.

191 See Wolff, "Discursus praeliminaris de Philosophia in genere," §30.

192 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 11.

193 See Schneiders, "Deus est philosophus," 14.

194 See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theologie und Philosophie: ihr Verhältnis im Lichte ihrer gemeinsamen Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1996), 21-23.

division between philosophy and religion in Formey's and his contemporaries' perception of the contents of philosophical knowledge, there existed nevertheless a division between the two realms with respect to the epistemological quality of this knowledge. The universal philosophical method could deal with two different sources of truth, each associated either with philosophy or religion: natural reason or revealed doctrine. 'Reason' or its French synonym 'lumières naturelles' indicated a particular source of knowledge rooted in nature and was thus given to every human by God. The second particular source of knowledge opposed to this was provided only to few by God: the divine Revelation synonymously called 'faith'. Therefore, the first aspect that allowed Formey and his contemporaries to single out a particularly Christian philosophy within the general concept of philosophy as a universal science related to human understanding was the distinction of different types of sources on which the search for the 'truth' on both religious and other topics was based.

In Formey's conceptualisation of philosophy and particularly of Christian philosophy, this distinction of the natural and revealed sources of truth was sometimes present in the form of a historical reflection. This means that Formey referred with the term Christian philosophy to the state of philosophy after the birth of Christianity, or more precisely, after the Revelation of Christ, and therefore defined the persona of the Christian philosopher in opposition to the philosopher of pre-Christian times, i.e. the pagan philosopher. This historical reflection can be observed *par excellence* in Formey's three-volume work called *Le Philosophe Payen* which he published in 1759 and which he fashioned in contrast to *Le Philosophe Chrétien* that had appeared nine years earlier for the first time.¹⁹⁵ In the *Philosophe Payen* Formey used the term pagan philosopher to denominate the ancient Roman writer Pliny the Younger whose letters he presented together with his own annotations in the book of the same title. In the dedication to the *Philosophe Payen* Formey established the link to the *Philosophe Chrétien* as follows: he claimed that the former presented the 'sagesse payenne' while the latter contained the 'sagesse chrétien', whereupon he stated: 'En réunissant *Le Philosophe Payen* & *Le Philosophe Chrétien*, je me persuade qu'on aura une idée assez juste des devoirs de la Morale, déduits des notions fondamentales de la Raison & de la Religion.'¹⁹⁶ Besides having probably been a sales strategy for both works – the four volumes of the *Philosophe Chrétien* had just appeared in their third edition one year before – this comparison between pagan and Christian philosophy and their assemblage as complementary means to create a theory of morals, underlines that there existed a distinction between reason and religion as sources of knowledge. Formey's statement implies that both these sources were to be considered objects of the same universal philosophical method characterised by a deductive procedure and hence that the

195 Jean Henri Samuel Formey, *Le Philosophe Payen ou pensées de Pline. Avec un commentaire littéraire et moral*, 3 vols. (Leiden, 1759).

196 Formey, *Philosophe Payen*, vol. 1, III.

knowledge established on each of them – may it be pagan or Christian – had an equal epistemological status and therefore value in the achievement of philosophy's purpose to lead to morality.

Such a distinction between reason and Revelation as sources of knowledge was rooted in the Christian dogma of original sin which shaped not only the understanding of morality but likewise that of human knowledge since Augustinus, yet in the Eighteenth Century was in permanent decline.¹⁹⁷ Based on Genesis I, 3 the dogma of original sin divided human existence in an innocent, naturally knowing pre-lapsarian and a guilty, ignorant lapsarian state. According to this, man's natural reason was flawed since the Fall and nothing but revealed knowledge and the faith in it was able to provide him with knowledge and salvation. By despising so strongly with human natural reason, the dogma of the original sin implied a strong distrust into the human capacity of cognition which was the basis of the concept of philosophy as a universal method able to explain the world. As a consequence, particularly Luther opposed this conception of philosophy: he considered it as a sign of human impudence towards God.¹⁹⁸ Also early Calvinism adhered rather strictly to the Augustinian idea of original sin, which found entry in the Reformed *Confession de foi* that was still the basis of the dogma to which the Reformed congregations of the *Refuge* committed themselves in Formey's days: 'Nous croyons que l'homme, ayant été créé pur & entier, & à l'image de Dieu, il est déchî par sa propre faute, de la grace qu'il avoit reçûë; & qu'ainsi, il s'est éloigné de Dieu, qui est la source de la justice & de tout bien: ce qui fait que la nature de l'homme est tout à fait corrompuë, son esprit aveuglé, son coeur dépravé. [...]'¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the original Calvinist dogma and Calvin's teachings left some room for interpretation: only one line below in the same article of the *Confession de foi*, the complete intellectual and moral corruptness of man is relativised: 'Et quoiqu'il ait encore quelques discernement du bien & du mal, nous ne laissons pas de dire, que ce qu'il a de clarté se change en ténèbres, quand il s'agit de chercher Dieu.' According to this, there were remains of reason in man after the Fall, although not enough to understand God. This concession allowed not only to maintain the human responsibility for sin in Reformed doctrine²⁰⁰ but constituted also a prerequisite for the concept of philosophy as a science able to

197 See Cassirer, *Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 148 who saw in the dismissal of the dogma of original sin the element that all different philosophical schools had in common; and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, "Mutmaßungen über die Vorstellung vom Ende der Erbsünde," in *Deutschlands kulturelle Entfaltung. Die Neubestimmung des Menschen*, ed. Bernhard Fabian, Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, and Rudolf Vierhaus (Hamburg, 1980), 171–92 and who outlined the gradual destruction of the dogma of original sin by referring to Leibniz' theodicy.

198 For Luther's strong defence of original sin against Erasmus see Michael Albrecht, "Die Tugend und die Chinesen. Antworten von Christian Wolff auf die Frage zum Verhältnis von Religion und Moral," in *Nuovi Studi sul Pensiero di Christian Wolff*, ed. Sonia Carboncini (Hildesheim, 1992), 249-50.

199 See "Confession de foi. Fait d'un commun accord par les Églises Réformées de France," §IX, *Das Recht der Französisch-Reformierten Kirche in Preußen. Urkundliche Denkschrift*, ed. Ernst Mengin (Berlin, 1929), 45.

200 See McNutt, *Calvin meets Voltaire*, 197.

explain the world. Formey's concept of Christian philosophy according to which the Revelation was considered as a source of knowledge next to natural reason, both subject to philosophical method, might therefore also have been to a certain extent in line with the Calvinist tradition. The problem, however, was the way how he determined this relationship: to declare these two epistemological categories as equally valuable as he did in the *Philosophe Payen*, had been already one step beyond the Reformed doctrine which despite all concessions still attributed Revelation a position above reason.²⁰¹ In other instances, however, Formey seemed to stick more closely to the doctrine by emphasising the predominance of revealed knowledge, in line with the dogma of the negative effects of the original sin on human cognition.

In some of his moral philosophical writings in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, which – as I recall – emerged out of a religious context having been transformed sermons, Formey seemed to defend the intellectual corruption of the human being caused by Adam's sin and hence portrayed the Revelation as the unique valuable means to human enlightenment. In the eleventh essay in the second volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien*, entitled 'Sur la connoissance de la vérité', Formey depicted the Revelation as a present by God which enabled the human being to overcome the state of obscure and confused knowledge in which he had been trapped since the Fall:

'La Révélation est un moyen extraordinaire & surnaturel, dont Dieu se sert pour instruire les Hommes des Vérités qui échappent aux lumières naturelles, & qui sont néanmoins essentielles au salut. La nécessité de ce moyen, comme nous venons de l'insinuer, procède uniquement du changement de situation que le péché a causé dans l'Homme. Innocent, la Raison lui suffisoit; elle éclairoit sa gloire & sa félicité. Pécheur, cette même Raison l'accable d'humiliantes réflexions; & les tristes lueurs qu'elle jette encore, ne servent qu'à lui découvrir le précipice entr'ouvert sous ses pas.'²⁰²

Formey linked, as in the biblical dogma, the need for the divine present of Revelation with the human being's salvation in an eternal life and his earthly happiness. However, already in this essay, Formey slightly diverged from this link to salvation that gave such an outstanding role to Revelation. Towards the end of the essay he suggested that there were two functions of the Revelation: the first, as described, was to provide the human being with the knowledge of Christ's sacrifice by which he was saved. Beyond this, however, Revelation was also a means to supplement the human being's natural reason in order to provide him with the most complete knowledge on earth: as Formey put it, the revealed knowledge extended for example the human being's ideas on

201 See McNutt, *Calvin meets Voltaire*, 194. McNutt claims that, compared to the Genevan theological mainstream in which the Revelation was posed above reason, the Genevan pastor Jacob Vernes held an exceptional position for considering reason and faith as being equally legitimate means of truth.

202 Formey, "Discours XI," *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 2, 3rd edition (Leiden, 1755), 151:

the nature of God and by this offered a supplement to his natural knowledge of it.²⁰³ This account points to a development in which the distinction between natural reason and revealed reason was detached from the historical narrative of the original sin and transferred on a synchronic level where they appeared as supplementary epistemological categories in philosophical inquiry.

Such a conceptualisation of reason and Revelation as epistemological categories can be observed in another essay of the *Philosophe Chrétien* that dealt with the question of how the human being could gain certainty over the immortality of his soul. There Formey distinguished three different proofs that differed in the degree of certainty they entailed on this question: through natural reason, through natural religion and through the Revelation. He developed the arguments that each of them had in support of the soul's immortality, but forestalled that only the last, Revelation, was able to provide an absolute certainty: 'il n'y a que la Démonstration de la Foi, qui puisse entraîner notre consentement d'une manière victorieuse, & bannir pour jamais les doutes, les agitations, les allarmes.'²⁰⁴ The demonstration through natural reason instead left too many doubts and did not prove exclusively and directly the soul's immortality;²⁰⁵ the natural religious explanation, which was based on the assumption of the existence of a Creator God and His resemblance to the human being, was more persuasive than the first but still could be only considered a conjecture instead of a demonstration.²⁰⁶ Only the existence of the Revelation itself and the message that it contained were able to assure the human being of his immortality.²⁰⁷ This discussion of degrees of probative force shows very clearly how the dogma of the original sin was integrated into the concept of philosophy as a method of knowledge acquisition: revealed knowledge obtained the same function as any other kind of knowledge and was judged by its ability to work in this philosophical method; at the same time the dogma of the original sin seems to have lingered on in the background, in the sense that it allowed Revelation to carry the status of the most certain knowledge.

Compared to this, Formey's depiction of an equal contribution of natural (pagan) knowledge and revealed (Christian) knowledge to morality in the *Philosophe Payen* appears exceptional, which, however, can be explained by the different setting of this book as compared to the quoted moral discourses of the *Philosophe Chrétien*. The first was a scholarly book and the latter had originally been sermons and hence presumingly had to stick with a more orthodox interpretation of the dogma. The concept of the parity between natural reason and Revelation as Formey demonstrated it in his scholarly work had been most likely adopted by him from Leibniz and Wolff.

203 See Formey, "Discours XI," 154.

204 Formey, "Discours XV," *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 180.

205 See Formey, "Discours XV," 183.

206 See Formey, "Discours XV," 189-90.

207 See Formey, "Discours XV," 193.

The first had argued in his famous essay against Bayle that the truth of Revelation and the truths of nature did not contradict each other²⁰⁸ and Wolff had claimed that the truths that can be recognised through use of reason were as much inspired by God as the truths directly revealed by Him and that hence reason and Revelation existed next to each other.²⁰⁹ Also Leibniz' and Wolff's idea of the two distinct but compatible epistemological categories reason and Revelation was due to their adherence to a 'softened version' of original sin similar to the Calvinist one. Some scholars argue even that at the end of the Seventeenth Century the German Lutheran theology in general and the dogma of original sin, in particular, had adopted influences of Reformed theology, more precisely of Covenant theology.²¹⁰ But also within Lutheran orthodoxy existed from early on trends to loosen the rigidity of the Augustinian conception of original sin; these trends are attributed to Philipp Melancthon and Wolff is said to have developed his moral philosophy partially on this tradition.²¹¹ It seems hence that Formey's concept of Christian philosophy was informed by at least two sources, which were quite similar in their essence: the Reformed dogma of original sin which allowed to integrate reason and Revelation as sources of knowledge into one universal philosophy and the understanding of philosophy of the German philosophers Leibniz and Wolff, which with respect to the perception of the relation between reason and faith was quite similar to Reformed thought. This double foundation seems to have allowed Formey to be either less or more orthodox in his conception of reason and Revelation depending on the context, as we will be continuously able to observe in the chapters to come.

The Christian Philosopher as an Antagonist of the philosophes

The epistemological particularities that constituted Formey's Christian philosophy, were the basis of its practical purpose to be apologetic of religion and to support Christian doctrine. This practical purpose characterised each of the various genres of writings that Formey produced, from sermons to metaphysical treatises, and it was the predominant feature of the concept of the Christian philosopher that Formey and his correspondents retained and emphasised. Usually Formey's depiction of philosophy's apologetic goal was not direct but it was expressed through the proclaimed aim to provide human beings with the greatest happiness: the acquisition and increase of

208 See Leibniz, "Discours de la conformité de la foy avec la raison," *Essais de Théodicée, Sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal. Seconde édition* (Amsterdam, 1714), 1-104.

209 See Christian Wolff, *Der Vernünfftigen Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt, Anderer Theil, bestehend in ausführlichen Anmerkungen* [1724], edited by Charles A. Corr. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 1, vol. 3 (Hildesheim, 1983), §363.

210 See Anselm Schubert, *Das Ende der Sünde: Anthropologie und Erbsünde zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung* (Göttingen, 2002), 125-6.

211 See Albrecht, "Die Tugend und die Chinesen," 250-1.

this greatest happiness (it is not specified whether earthly or heavenly) was only possible through the recognition of God and the duties that the human being had towards Him. In the introduction to his *Histoire abrégée* the transition between the description of philosophy's deductive method and its purpose was fluent. According to Formey, this method allowed the human being to know himself, the world by which he was surrounded and God as the author of it all.²¹² On the basis of this knowledge, and through the observance of the teachings that it contained, the human being could in Formey's view achieve happiness: 'elle [la philosophie] lui [à l'homme] fait sentir que le bonheur doit être le but unique & invariable de ses démarches, qu'il ne peut attendre ce bonheur que de l'Auteur de son existence, & que pour l'obtenir, il doit lui plaire, se conformer à ses intentions, & exécuter ses volontés, autant qu'il est à portée de les connoître.'²¹³

Formey's presentation of his role as Christian philosopher in his landmark work *Philosophe Chrétien*, as I referred to at the beginning, was based precisely on this perception of philosophy's apologetic task. Yet, compared to its depiction in the *Histoire abrégée*, Formey presented it in a very normative way and presumably pursued polemic intentions at the same time. Formey's claim in this dedication to re-unite the philosopher and the Christian was based on the assumption that the two were separate; such a separation was illegitimate according to his view on philosophy as a universal method that was linked to cognition and was comprised of both natural and revealed knowledge. With his assumption he hence insinuated that not all his contemporaries held this same view on philosophy. On the contrary, he accused some of them of deliberately establishing an opposition between philosophers and Christians, or more precisely, of spreading the idea that philosophy and Christian faith mutually excluded each other: 'mais par un travers bien déplorable, & qui suffit pour faire éclipser les plus brillans avantages, on sépare le titre de PHILOSOPHE de celui de CHRÉTIEN, & l'on s'imagine que la possession décidée du premier ne sauroit s'établir que sur la ruïne de l'autre'. From this criticism Formey finally deduced the task that he had chosen for himself, namely to unite the philosopher and Christian into one person and in so doing to remedy against this misapprehension of philosophy.²¹⁴ This means that he saw his task as a Christian philosopher to re-establish and safeguard the concept of Christian philosophy as explained above, for the sake of its apologetic function.

Formey's perception of the division between philosophy and Christian faith and the role of the Christian philosopher that he deduced from that division was very common in the middle of the Eighteenth Century. As Rolf Reichard and H. U. Gumbrecht have shown in their history of the concept 'philosophe' in France, the idea of the philosopher's role underwent a significant change

212 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 11.

213 Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 12-3.

214 Formey, *Philosophe chrétien*, vol. 1, Dédicace à la Reine mère (without pagination).

between the late Seventeenth and the late Eighteenth Century: from being the reclusive self-reflecting thinker within the court structure of the *Ancien régime*, the *philosophe* became the prototype of the enlightenment thinker who combined reflection with the criticism of authority and as such, became the victim of polemics by more conservative societal and religious groups in the middle of the Eighteenth Century; during the French revolution, the *philosophe* eventually became a rather radical figure whose writings constituted a canon.²¹⁵ According to Reichard's and Gumbrecht's account, the consolidation of the term *philosophe* as a reflective and critical writer in the 1730s and 1740s went hand in hand with the dispute over who had the right to call himself a philosopher. Particularly the treatise entitled *Le Philosophe*, attributed to César Chesneau Du Marsais, which to large extent was later reproduced in the *Encyclopédie's* article PHILOSOPHE,²¹⁶ contributed to the consolidation of this concept: in his depiction, a *philosophe* was someone who, through unbiased empirical thinking and the refusal of the passions, worked for the good of society and humanity at large.²¹⁷ Although Du Marsais underlined that this task for the society had nothing to do with the anti-clericalism and irreligion of freethinkers which actually destroyed the foundations of society,²¹⁸ it was precisely this point which constituted the main criticism of those who opposed this new type of philosopher.²¹⁹

This criticism evolved into a public debate on who had the right to call oneself a *philosophe*; fuelled by the appearance of the *Encyclopédie* and its programmatic view on philosophy as an emancipation from scientific and religious dogma, this debate reached its peak in the 1750s and 1760s.²²⁰ More and more writers (often with religious backgrounds) became commonly known as *anti-philosophes* (they are Darrin McMahon's above-mentioned 'enemies of the enlightenment'), because they opposed the new *philosophes* in treatises and pamphlets and most famously and influentially in a theatre play entitled *Les Philosophes*, which was presented at the *Comédie française* in May 1760.²²¹ In the 1760s the writings of the *anti-philosophes* had even become the majority in the debate, and thus their negative perception of the *philosophes* was more easily adopted by the larger public.²²² Besides blaming the *philosophes* for immoral behaviour and

215 See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Rolf Reichardt, "Philosophe, Philosophie," *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680-1820*, eds. Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt, no 3 (München, 1985), 7-89.

216 See Herbert Dieckmann, *Le Philosophe; Texts and Interpretation* (St. Louis, 1948).

217 See Gumbrecht/Reichardt, "Philosophe, philosophie," 18-9; compare to PHILOSOPHE, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, vol. 12 (Neuchâtel, 1765), 510.

218 See PHILOSOPHE, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 12, 509.

219 See Gumbrecht/Reichardt, "Philosophe, philosophie," 20-1.

220 See Gumbrecht/Reichardt, "Philosophe, philosophie," 22. Compare to Van Damme, "Philosophe/ philosopher," 155-56, who also describes the *philosophe* as an 'Enlightenment invention' and sees in the co-existence of the traditional role of the philosopher as an erudite and the new role of the *philosophe* as a man of letters an example of the breadth and diversity of 'philosophy' in the Eighteenth Century.

221 Charles Palissot de Montenoy, *Les Philosophes. Comédie, en trois actes, en vers* (Paris, 1760).

222 See Gumbrecht/Reichardt, "Philosophe, philosophie," 28 and 37-8.

the destruction of religion, the *anti-philosophes* accused them of defending materialism and atheism, being fanatical and intolerant and of forming a sect.²²³ As Gumbrecht and Reichard stressed, the particularity of this polemic debate was that each of the two groups claimed the title of the philosopher for itself, and therefore the arguments of one group were mostly negations of the other's arguments (which often themselves were negations).²²⁴ One important point in this debate, which was also the foundation of Formey's claim as a Christian philosopher, was the question of philosophy's (and the philosopher's) relation to revealed religion. In the *Encyclopédie* the possibility that reason and Revelation could be compatible was denied – 'La raison est à l'égard du philosophe, ce que la grace est à l'égard du chrétien. La grace détermine le chrétien à agir; la raison détermine le philosophe.'²²⁵ – whereas Formey, as we have seen, was convinced of it. Formey's *Philosophe Chrétien* and the role of the Christian philosopher that he claimed for himself in it was hence a contribution to the mid-eighteenth-century public debate on what it meant to be a 'true philosopher' between *philosophes* and *anti-philosophes*. Formey's arguments were part of the discourse that the critics of the 'new' *philosophes* who were in the orbit of the *Encyclopédie*'s editors had established and through this also Formey contributed to shape the increasingly dominant public perception of the *philosophe* as an atheist and freethinker.

Equally important in this debate was the question of using the right philosophical method and with respect to this both the *philosophes* and their critics – or at least Formey – used largely the same arguments for respectively characterising their own positions: both laid claim to the so-called *esprit philosophique*, an empiricist and logical way of reasoning.²²⁶ In 1754 the *Académie française* opened an essay contest that asked for the meaning of *esprit philosophique*, but posed the question in such a way to ensure a conservative response: they asked the contestants to define the *esprit philosophique* with respect to the biblical saying that one should not know more than one needed to know.²²⁷ The winner was a Jesuit priest who underlined that philosophy's task was to inspire faith. Formey had also participated in the essay contest which underlines the importance that the debate about the 'true' philosophy had for him. For him, the *esprit philosophique* was simply to reason on the basis of good logic.²²⁸ Similarly to what Du Marsais had claimed in the *Philosophe* and what

223 See Gumbrecht/Reichard, "Philosophe, philosophie," 28-34.

224 See Gumbrecht/Reichard, "Philosophe, philosophie," 37-8.

225 PHILOSOPHE, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 12, 509.

226 See Gumbrecht/Reichard, "Philosophe, philosophie," 34.

227 See Gumbrecht/Reichard, "Philosophe, philosophie," 30, n. 57. The prize question was: 'En quoi consiste l'Esprit philosophique conformément à ces paroles de l'Écriture: 'Non plus sapere, quam oportet sapere.?''

228 See Formey, "Discours sur l'esprit philosophique," *Le Triomphe de l'evidence*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1756), XX. This writing was the main source for Fontius' analysis of Formey's concept of philosophy (see "Zwischen «Libertas philosophandi» und «Siècle des Lumières»"). However, he ignored the text's origin in the essay contest of the *Académie française*.

was later reproduced in the *Encyclopédie*,²²⁹ Formey held that the 'true' *esprit philosophique* was having a particular mindset, one that formed judgements on the basis of facts and that proceeded without bias or haste and without the interference of the passions.²³⁰ As a consequence, the picture that Formey drew of the philosopher who owned such capacities was the following:

'Un Esprit philosophe ne juge point par orgueil, par hauteur, par envie de faire sentir sa supériorité; mais il juge parce qu'il ne peut s'empêcher de le faire, par ce que ce jugement n'est chez lui qu'une simple intuition, qu'un effet des idées nettes & distinctes qu'il possède, & qu'il est dans le cas d'un homme qui, ayant la vue excellente, ne peut s'empêcher d'apercevoir les objets placés à la portée de l'organe.'²³¹

In this depiction of the *esprit philosophique* we can easily recognise the idea of philosophy as a universal method linked to cognition. Formey embedded his description of the *esprit philosophique* in a polemical rhetoric, similar to the one he had put forward in the *Philosophe Chrétien* with respect to the role of religion in philosophy. He claimed that many of those who claimed to be philosophers in his days spread paradoxical opinions that lacked any logic and only served as a means for gaining personal glory.²³² Against this alleged abuse he fashioned his concept of the *esprit philosophique* as the true one, which was capable – if joined with a due respect to religion – of chasing away its disgraceful rival.²³³ Formey's essay hence shows that the argument against the *philosophes* also functioned with reference to the supposedly legitimate way of reasoning, and only with a minor reference to the actual purpose of all this, i.e. the apology of religion.

This strategy can be also observed in Formey's refutation of Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*, Formey's *Pensées raisonnables*, which only appeared one year before the first volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien* and were also published by Luzac. There Formey likewise drew heavily on the topos of defending the 'true' philosophy.²³⁴ He disputed Diderot's right to use the term 'philosophique' in the title of his work by declaring that it was far from being truly philosophical.²³⁵ In his view, Diderot had argued indefensible things, claimed principles that were bare of any connection to reality and drew conclusions which could never result from any principles and thus did not follow the rules of logic.²³⁶ In Formey's refutation of Diderot, just as in his essay on the *esprit philosophique*, the character of philosophy as a science stood clearly in the foreground of his

229 See PHILOSOPHE, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 12, 510.

230 See Formey, "Discours sur l'esprit philosophique," XIX.

231 Formey, "Discours sur l'esprit philosophique," XIX-XX.

232 See Formey, "Discours sur l'esprit philosophique," XXI.

233 See Formey, "Discours sur l'esprit philosophique," XXII.

234 Jean Henri Samuel Formey, *Pensées raisonnables opposées aux pensées philosophiques* (Berlin, 1749). The book has a false address. That the book was published by Luzac was revealed in Luzac's correspondence with Formey and by Formey himself in his "Notice de mes ouvrages," 117.

235 See Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, V.

236 See Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, X.

definition of 'true' philosophy, while the support of Christian dogma that was always linked to it, was only mentioned in passing.²³⁷ This means not only that Formey's concept of philosophy was intrinsically linked to the apologetic purpose of religion, which was particularly present in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, but also that as Christian philosopher Formey presumably could dispose of these two elements as interchangeable depending on the context. In the *Philosophe Chrétien*, through which he spoke to a rather popular and religious public, he dispensed an overly strong reference to logic, whereas in his contribution to the essay contest of the *Académie française* and in his refutation of Diderot (which were both embedded in a rather academic context), he diminished his religious rhetoric. Considered from another perspective, we can say that Formey adopted in his different works the two opposing socio-professional roles of the practitioner of philosophy that prevailed according to Van Damme in the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters: he could be the traditional philosopher who through erudite writing postulated the pursuit of certainty as well as the writer-philosopher who, through the use of other literary forms, reached a more popular public and who Van Damme identifies with the *philosophe*.²³⁸ Yet, Formey, unlike the *philosophes*, transported religious and Wolffian content to the popular reader.²³⁹ In this sense, the example of Formey shows that there was still a third actor who constituted eighteenth-century philosophy: the Christian philosopher who drew on traditional and new 'philosophical' rhetoric alike, i.e. who in terms of philosophical genre could be both philosopher and *philosophe*.

Finally, it has to be said that the persona of the Christian philosopher within the mid-eighteenth-century processes of re-conceptualising philosophy comprised the particular moral character of the individual who had adopted this identity. This particular moral character was essentially based on Christian notions and was translated into philosophy through its practice and its conceptualisation as a means to discover God. First of all, the Christian philosopher was supposed to be a person who was content with his situation in life. This was consistent with what Formey had declared to be the goal of philosophy, i.e. to provide people with the knowledge of God and the happiness that resulted from it; as a promoter of such a philosophy, he supposedly was the first to enjoy this feeling. That this was a common idea is underlined by a remark made by Formey's correspondent and friend Emer de Vattel, who regarded Formey's high degree of contentment as the result of the practice of philosophy and of his natural disposition.²⁴⁰ Formey claimed this state of

237 See Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, XI.

238 See Van Damme, "Philosophe/ philosopher," 155 and 158-9.

239 See Avi Lifschitz, "From the corruption of French to the cultural distinctiveness of German: the controversy of Prémontval's *Préservatif* (1759)," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 6 (2007), 286. Lifschitz underlines the inconsistency of Formey's philosophical writing for he "moulded his enlightened conservatism and Wolffian philosophy into the most fashionable literary devices".

240 See Emer de Vattel to Formey, 14.7.1767, André Bandelier, *Emer de Vattel à Jean Henri Samuel Formey correspondances autour du Droit des gens* (Paris, 2012), 222.

personal contentment in his *Notice de mes ouvrages* in 1755, a commented list of his hitherto published writings, by saying that he had a 'coeur joyeux' despite all his work and responsibilities and that this happiness resulted directly from the knowledge of God.²⁴¹ The important point in Formey's depiction of his joy and contentment is its contrast to the pain and sorrow that he almost always established, predominantly by referring to his personal story of suffering from rheumatism from an early age and the loss of his wife and several children throughout his life. One of the most detailed uses of this topos and its link to his practice as an author of philosophical works can be found in one of Formey's letters to his Genevan correspondent and intimate, the natural philosopher Charles Bonnet. This letter dates from April 1768, hence towards the end of Formey's most proficient period as an author, but still 30 years before his death. In this letter Formey vindicated himself from certain insufficiencies in his work, for which Bonnet had blamed him in a previous letter, more precisely the superficiality and partial incorrectness of his *Dictionnaire Instructif*.²⁴² In reply to this criticism Formey drew the picture of resigning himself to Providence and being detached from earthly life, an attitude that according to him helped him stay well despite the bad things that had happened to him throughout his life:

'Les maux des personnes qu'on aime sont plus cuisans que les nôtres propres. Cependant tout cela entre dans le même plan de la Providence, et s'y rapporte d'une façon plus particulière à notre bien, à notre perfection, à ce détachement du monde, sans lequel on ne sauroit se former aux vertus du monde à venir. [...] Ma vie a été une méditation continuelle de la mort, mais une méditation délicieuse: et je me suis toujours cru dans le cas d'un homme devant la porte duquel seroit une voiture où il est prêt à monter pour quitter un mauvais gîte, et se rendre dans un séjour enchanté. Nos crises politiques m'ont puissamment affermi dans ces idées: l'ennemi, ni par ses approches, ni par sa présence, n'a pas augmenté le moins du monde la fréquence de mon pouls, parce que je ne crains point l'ennemi qui sera vaincu le dernier.'²⁴³

According to this statement it was predominantly the belief in salvation and an afterlife to which Formey's contentment with his situation on earth was due; in light of this Formey's contentment could be characterised as frugality and resignation to faith.

Formey translated this genuinely Christian notion into certain character traits which he fashioned as dominant for his behaviour in civil life and particularly in the community of the

241 See Formey, "Notice de mes ouvrages," 122.

242 See Bonnet to Formey, 29.4.1768, *Lettres de Genève*, 743-59. In this extremely long letter Bonnet meticulously raised the errors and unacknowledged citations of his own works in Formey's *Dictionnaire*. In Bonnet's view these problems resulted from the haste with which Formey carried out his writings (see particularly p. 756-7). This was not the first time that Bonnet criticised the mediocre execution of one of Formey's works: he had done the same in respect to Formey's *Principes de Morale appliqués aux déterminations de la volonté*. In a letter of 11.11.1763, *Lettres de Genève*, 617, Bonnet had blamed Formey for working on too many writings simultaneously with the result that none of them were particularly good.

243 Formey to Bonnet, 14.5.1768, *Lettres de Genève*, 760.

Republic of Letters: as he wrote to Bonnet, all his behaviour and interaction with others was determined by a calm temper, indulgence and a lack of desire.²⁴⁴ These character traits, deduced from Christian frugality, had in Formey's depiction an important impact on his persona as a writer: because of them, it was not of great importance whether his writings reached perfection and public success. Instead, as he claimed, the motivation behind his writings was that they did not in any way run contrary to morality and the good of society.²⁴⁵ Formey had drawn largely on Bonnet's own writings without quoting him, and when confronted by Bonnet, Formey augmented this testimony of his modesty to the point of denying his own individuality as an author: 'Je n'ai absolument pas la radicule, le germe d'aucune sorte d'amour-propre. [...] Mon principe très réel, & continuellement pratiqué, c'est de m'identifier avec la masse, et de me regarder comme un grain de sable du globe terrestre, comme une goutte d'eau de l'Océan. Ce qui arrive, ce qui m'arrive à moi-même, ne m'intéresse que relativement à la masse.'²⁴⁶ With this depiction he apparently tried to establish a vision of a collaborative community of authors joined under the shared mission to preserve religion and morals, in which the achievement of the individual did not count. That this was an exaggerated statement that served predominantly to justify his incorrect behaviour towards Bonnet does not have to be stressed; yet even the exaggeration shows that the categories of modesty and servility were commonly at the disposal of the Christian philosopher and that they could be deduced by him from the contentment that was supposed to result from the practice of Christian philosophy.

The concept of Christian philosophy and of the Christian philosopher that was shaped by Formey and incorporated by him hence held several different aspects: a particular epistemic theory that considered natural and revealed truths as (almost) equally legitimate sources of knowledge; a strong aim to oppose the criticism against Christian dogma and the Church, and a catalogue of moral character traits. This diversity allowed Formey's contemporaries, as we will see below (ch. 5), to establish various perceptions of his role and to direct many different expectations towards him. Before having a closer look at the reception of the concept of the Christian philosopher we first need to analyse in more detail its origins in Formey's situation in life.

244 See Formey to Bonnet, 14.5.1768, *Lettres de Genève*, 761.

245 See Formey to Bonnet, 14.5.1768, *Lettres de Genève*, 760.

246 See Formey to Bonnet, 14.5.1768, *Lettres de Genève*, 761.

2. Formey between the Huguenot Colony and the Republic of Letters, or How to Reconcile the Pastor and the Philosopher?

The context of the mid-eighteenth-century French debates over true philosophy and the task of the philosopher was only one, although very important, aspect that helped Formey to conceptualise his particular kind of Christian philosophy and to fashion his role and moral characteristics according to it. Besides this it was also Formey's individual personal situation and social environment that made him become the kind of Christian philosopher that he and his contemporaries described him to be. The particularity of Formey's biography was his double professional affiliation as a pastor and a professor of philosophy. These were two offices that did not appear to be divergent in respect to the general concept of philosophy as a universal method of reasoning in the Eighteenth Century. Nevertheless, as we will see, his contemporaries perceived there to be obstacles to the simultaneous performance of the two offices in one person, obstacles that Formey apparently tried to overcome in his personal life story, which was that of a transition from the pastoral office to that of the philosopher. Although he quit his position as a pastor in the French church in 1739 to become a professor of philosophy at the French school of higher education, he still continued preaching.²⁴⁷ In order to understand the genesis of this particular professional situation and its effects on the (self-) fashioning of Formey's role, we first need to scrutinise the environment in which it evolved, that is the actors and institutions in Berlin and its direct surroundings through which Formey's (intellectual) socialisation took place, and which in turn – due to Formey's remarkable geographical stability throughout his life – was the soil in which Formey exercised his role as the product of this socialisation.

Formey's Huguenot Socialisation

The concentration of Formey's social contacts in the relatively closed milieu of the (Huguenot) Berlin and the Brandenburgian province is emphasised by Jens Häselser's statistical analysis of Formey's correspondences, according to which 2,800 out of 15,900 letters sent to Formey mark Berlin as a place of expedition, and a further 1,064 letters have places of expedition in the direct surroundings of the city.²⁴⁸ However, these letters probably only provide partial evidence of the extent and quality of Formey's local relationships, since these relationships usually took the

²⁴⁷ See Merian, "Éloge de Formey," 50 and Formey's own declaration in 1765 to preach almost every week: Formey to Bonnet, 6.4.1765, *Lettres de Genève*, 660.

²⁴⁸ See Häselser, *La correspondance de Jean Henri Samuel Formey*, 26.

form of personal encounters and thus favoured oral exchange; in a city like Berlin, which in the mid-Eighteenth Century had around 113,000 inhabitants, this was entirely feasible.²⁴⁹ As a result, it is difficult to grasp the extent and configuration of Formey's local social milieu simply through the conserved letters, since these were usually only very short notes preceding or succeeding personal meetings. It can be supposed, furthermore, that a part of this Berlin milieu will also remain completely obscure to us because of the mere oral character of the exchanges which constituted it. In his own autobiographical description of learned Berlin that he wrote in 1789, the *Souvenirs d'un citoyen*, Formey underlined his geographical stability in Berlin and its advantageous effect: After his education in theology, he left the Prussian capital for a few months in 1731 to work as a pastor in Brandenburg, before he eventually obtained an appointment as an assistant preacher to Philippe Forneret at the Friedrichstadt church in Berlin.²⁵⁰ Formey's retrospective comment on this development emphasises the importance of Berlin for the future course of his career: 'Mais, revenu dans la capitale à vingt ans, j'ai passé successivement par toutes les situations & rempli tous les postes, qui m'ont conduit au terme où je suis arrivé, grâce à la bonne providence.'²⁵¹ He suggested that his ascent in the philosophical profession would not have been possible if he had stayed in the province as his close friend Charles Durant, who occupied the pulpit in Brandenburg for 50 years.²⁵² To be located in the Prussian province, seems to have significantly limited the prerequisites that were essential for participating in the Republic of Letters: stable and rapid access to news and new books as well as the possibility to meet up with similar-minded people. Throughout his life, Formey had to hear the complaints about this inconvenience many times from his provincial correspondents. Formey instead benefited from the diverse and rich sociability that the Prussian capital offered and his geographical stability was hence not without reason.

The Berlin of which Formey's career benefited from so much was predominantly that of the French Huguenot colony, which by mid-Eighteenth Century comprised of about 6,500 people.²⁵³ Politically and legally this colony was a relatively autonomous entity within Berlin: as mentioned above, the refugees had been granted extraordinary privileges by the Prussian sovereigns, i.e. the

249 See Eckart Birnstiel and Andreas Reinke, "Hugenotten in Berlin," *Von Zuwanderern zu Einheimischen. Hugenotten, Juden, Böhmen, Polen in Berlin*, ed. Steffi Jersch-Wenzel and Barbara John (Berlin, 1990), 92-93, reprinted in Viviane Rosen-Prest, *L'historiographie des Huguenots en Prusse au temps des Lumières: Entre mémoire, histoire et légende: J.P. Erman et P.C.F. Reclam, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des réfugiés français dans les états du Roi, 1782-1799* (Paris, 2002), 575.

250 See Christian Velder, *300 Jahre Französisches Gymnasium Berlin = 300 ans au Collège français* (Berlin, 1989), 103 and Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, 74.

251 Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, 90.

252 See Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, 75 and 90.

253 See Rosen-Prest, *L'historiographie des Huguenots*, 575 and Fontius, "Privilegierte Minderheiten," 18. He speaks of 9,000 members of the French colony shortly before the beginning of the reign of Frederick II, which according to him corresponded to 15% of the entire population of Berlin.

possession of separate juridical, ecclesiastical and educational institutions.²⁵⁴ Moreover, due to the particular confessional situation of Brandenburg-Prussia, in which a predominantly Lutheran population was reigned over by a Calvinist dynasty and political elite, the Huguenots integrated differently into the different groups of the host society: while the indigenous German population seems to have been rather opposed to them, they have been received enthusiastically by the Calvinist and Francophile elites.²⁵⁵ The appreciation of French culture through the Prussian elite, particularly during the reign of Frederick II from 1740 onwards, led not only to their installation in high positions of the state administration but also to their increasing prestige in the Prussian cultural sphere.²⁵⁶ However, these processes were only available to the upper and better-educated ranks of the French Colony. Susanne Lachenicht refers to this Huguenot elite as *gate-keepers* who created and defended the identity of the colony,²⁵⁷ and she underlines that their narrative of identity precisely replicated the concept of the outstanding and appreciated position among the Prussian state officials and cultural elite.²⁵⁸ As we will see, Formey became part of this elite very early on in his life thanks to his attendance at the *collège français*, which was traditionally the gateway to a career in the ecclesiastical, juridical and educational institutions of the *Refuge*.²⁵⁹ Formey's entire life, but particularly his early socialisation and education, were thus predominantly determined by the institutions and intellectual legacy of a relatively closed community. The only exception of this, and hence a contact point with the German host culture, was his acquaintance as a young man with a particular branch of German philosophy, Wolffianism, which however still evolved inside the closed Huguenot environment as we will see below. It was only with his membership at the Academy, from 1744 onwards, that Formey's social and intellectual milieu significantly expanded, which was evident from the geographical and quantitative development of his correspondence.²⁶⁰

Formey received his initial training in the French colony's own institution of higher education, the *collège français* that was founded in 1689 and was under the direct control of the

254 See Jürgen Wilke, "Rechtstellung und Rechtsprechung der Hugenotten in Brandenburg-Preußen (1685-1809)," in *Die Hugenotten*, ed. Rudolf von Thadden and Michelle Magdelaine (München, 1985), 100–114; Fontius, "Privilegierte Minderheiten," 20.

255 See Susanne Lachenicht, "Étude comparée de la Création et de la Survie d'une Identité Huguenote en Angleterre et dans le Brandenbourg au XVIIIe siècle," in *L'identité Huguenote. Faire Mémoire et écrire l'Histoire (XVIe-XXIe Siècle)*, ed. Philip Benedict, Hugues Daussey, and Pierre-Olivier Léchet (Geneva, 2014), 284 and 287.

256 See Fontius, "Privilegierte Minderheiten," 22 and 24.

257 See Lachenicht, "Étude comparée," 279-80.

258 See Lachenicht, "Étude comparée," 287-8.

259 See Christian Decker, *Vom Höfling zum städtischen Handwerker: soziale Beziehungen hugenottischer Eliten und "gemeiner" Kolonisten in Preussen 1740 bis 1813* (Frankfurt/Main, 2012), 48.

260 See Häsel, "Jean Henri Samuel Formey – L'homme à Berlin," 421. Häsel divides Formey's epistolary network into three overlapping parts: chronologically the earliest part is comprised of the pastors and amateur men of letters of the Huguenot *Refuge*; later the academic and journalistic sub-networks were developed and partially intersected with the first one.

French Reformed Church and the Prussian sovereign.²⁶¹ Modelled after the French Protestant academies, it was an institution that functioned both as a school and university. The students had to go through two different structural parts of which one relied on the other: first they passed through five classes of classical education including lessons in Latin, Greek, French literature and grammar, Mathematics and bible studies, followed by two years of philosophy and elocution which resembled rather propaedeutics into university courses, and was completed by the final examinations, by which they could enter a university.²⁶² Formey started to attend the *collège* in 1720 and followed the course of philosophy taught by Mathurin Veyssière de la Croze between 1725 and 1727. After this he did not go on to study at a University – since Berlin did not have a University at this time, the nearest choice would have been the Reformed University of Frankfurt/Oder which the Huguenots of Berlin traditionally attended – but instead remained in Berlin to complete the education required for an ecclesiastical career: first he was a *proposant* for two years, then *candidat* for another two years, before finally in 1731 he became a minister. The two steps in this educational *parcours* included practical training through preaching as well as lectures in theology and church history, which were held in private by the renowned theologians and preachers of the colony. In Formey's case, these renowned theologians were Simon Pelloutier, Jacques Lenfant and Isaac de Beausobre.²⁶³ Formey's education was thus carried out by first-generation Huguenot refugees who – except for Pelloutier who was born in Leipzig – had been born in France and had experienced persecution and migration. La Croze was even originally of the Catholic creed: he had been a Benedictine monk in Saint-Germain des Près in Paris before he had fled the monastery and converted to Calvinism in 1696 in Bâle.²⁶⁴ Before they arrived in Berlin, Lenfant and Beausobre had been educated at the Protestant Academy of Saumur, which was renowned for its relatively liberal stand in theology.²⁶⁵ Lenfant was also trained in Calvinist Geneva, as was Pelloutier. In his *Notice de mes ouvrages* in 1755, where he told the story of his studies, Formey underlined that, because of his rather rapid ascent to the pastoral office, his education had been limited to the one necessary for this profession, i.e. a mainly

261 For the history of the *collège français* see the different *festschrift* on the occasion of the anniversary of its foundation, the earliest of which was written by Erman himself: Jean Pierre Erman, *Mémoire historique sur la fondation du collège royal français de Berlin* (Berlin, 1789). Followed by G. Schulze, *Festschrift zur Feier des 200jährigen Bestehens des kgl. Französischen Gymnasiums* (Berlin, 1890) and Werner Pohlmeier, *250 Jahre Staatliches Französisches Gymnasium 1689-1939. [Festschrift]* (Berlin, 1939) and Velder, *300 Jahre*. See furthermore the more recent works of Franziska Roosen, *Soutenir notre Église: hugenottische Erziehungskonzepte und Bildungseinrichtungen im Berlin des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Bad Karlshafen, 2008) and the section on the *collège* in Decker, *Vom Höfling*, 344-368.

262 See Velder, *300 Jahre*, 127.

263 See Merian, “Éloge de Monsieur Formey,” 50.

264 See Formey, “Éloge de Monsieur La Croze,” 64-5.

265 See Frédéric Hartweg, “Le Grand Beausobre. Aspekte des intellektuellen und kirchlichen Lebens der ersten Generation des Berliner Refuge,” in *Geschichte als Aufgabe. Festschrift für Otto Büsch*, ed. Wilhelm Treue, (Berlin, 1988), 64.

theological education by those first-generation Huguenot scholars.²⁶⁶

The extension of Formey's education through the study of Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy, therefore, seems to have begun only after he became a pastor. Merian suggested in his *Éloge* that after his first education, Formey completely turned away from the teachings that he had received in the Huguenot context, in order to adopt a 'new' genre of philosophy.²⁶⁷ Such a rupture with what he had previously learnt might have been true at least with respect to the philosophical teachings of La Croze, which Formey described in his *Souvenirs* as rather mediocre: Formey testified that his philosophy lessons had been exclusively based on scholastics, for La Croze ignored Descartes' teachings.²⁶⁸ Moreover, according to him, La Croze was not made for being a philosopher since he lacked the capacity to reason profoundly and to judge; his unique capacity was to memorise things.²⁶⁹ However, Formey's dismissal of La Croze's teachings seems to have been an exception that was maybe even caused by rather personal motives, as the historical evaluation of La Croze nowadays is not as dismissive as Formey's. On the contrary, Martin Mulsow underlined the empirical character of La Croze's philological and historical scholarship as well as his disinterest in dogmatic debates.²⁷⁰ Moreover, La Croze maintained an intensive correspondence with Leibniz who had been admired by Formey.²⁷¹

In contrast to Formey's discrediting opinion of his teacher La Croze, Isaac de Beausobre became one of the figures that he later referred to with praise and hence seems to have had a lasting influence on him. What is even more important, is that Formey fashioned a link between Beausobre's thought and Christian Wolff's natural theology: in the introduction to the sixth volume of his *Belle Wolfienne* in 1753, Formey quoted an anecdote according to which Beausobre, shortly before his death and after having read Wolff's *Theologia Naturalis*, had claimed that Wolff was even more orthodox than he himself and, on another occasion, that he would have liked to have known Wolff's teachings earlier in his life.²⁷² This anecdotal depiction seems not to have been completely bare of truth if we consider the essentials of Beausobre's, and also Lenfant's, view on doctrine and orthodoxy. As Frédéric Hartweg claimed, although the theology of the Berlin *Refuge* was by far not as progressive as in the Low Countries, where Jacques Abbadie²⁷³ and Isaac Jaquelot²⁷⁴ sought to

266 See Formey, "Notice de mes ouvrages," 105.

267 See Merian, "Éloge de Formey," 49.

268 See Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, 68.

269 See Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, 58-9 and 65.

270 See Martin Mulsow, *Die drei Ringe: Toleranz und clandestine Gelehrsamkeit bei Mathurin Veyssière La Croze (1661-1739)* (Tübingen, 2001). 53-4.

271 See Mulsow, *Die drei Ringe*, 57-8.

272 See Formey, *La Belle Wolfienne. Tome sixième. Contenant l'abrégé de la Theologie naturelle* (La Haye, 1753), XXV-XXVI.

273 Jacques Abbadie, *Traité de la vérité de la Religion Chrétienne, où l'on établit la religion Chrétienne par ses propres Caractères*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1684).

274 Isaac Jaquelot, *Conformité de la foi avec la raison, ou défense de la religion, contre les principales difficultés*

demonstrate the compatibility of reason and faith against Bayle, the debates concerning the rationality of faith and the Revelation, also left a mark on the works of the Berlin scholars.²⁷⁵ This can be seen particularly in the translation of the New Testament that Beausobre and Lenfant published in 1718. The particularity of this erudite work was that they added an extended historical introduction, and a critical apparatus to the translation in order, as they claimed, to avoid previous incorrect explanations of the Bible.²⁷⁶ In a letter to his Genevan correspondent Louis Tronchin, Lenfant underlined in 1701 that the purpose of the translation work was precisely to contribute to the 'éclaircissement de la vérité, et sur tout des vérités Evangeliques', which they tried to achieve by relying on both the original sources of human knowledge, Revelation and reason.²⁷⁷ What is more, in their introduction to their translation they suggested to evaluate the truth of the divine word through a natural theological approach, i.e. by explaining the descriptions of the sacred authors through reason, except for the mysteries which had to be considered above reason.²⁷⁸ With such considerations Lenfant and Beausobre did not necessarily deviate from orthodoxy, although their translation was one of the targets of the *Lettre pastorale* in 1719, in which the Huguenot pastor Gabriel d'Artis accused the theologians of the Berlin *Refuge* of socinianism.²⁷⁹ However – and this is of interest for establishing the composition of the origins of Formey's thought – Lenfant's and Beausobre's considerations bear quite some resemblance to what Wolff later wrote concerning the relation of natural theology and Revelation in his *Theologia Naturalis*: natural theology, i.e. the apprehension of God through natural reason, was able to demonstrate what was stated in the scriptures about God, and therefore helped to confirm the true and divine nature of Revelation.²⁸⁰ Given this resemblance, it can thus be said that Formey's Huguenot education formed an intellectual basis that favoured his acquaintance with Wolff's philosophy (of religion). Due to his teacher's great interest in historical-critical Bible scholarship, which held remarkable similarities to the concept of philosophy as the search for truth and their conceptualisation of the connection between natural

répandues dans le Dictionnaire Historique et critique de Mr. Bayle (Amsterdam, 1705).

275 See Frédéric Hartweg, "Toleranz, Naturrecht und Aufklärung/Lumières im Berliner Refuge," in *Hugenotten und deutsche Territorialstaaten. Immigrationspolitik und Integrationsprozesse*, ed. Guido Braun and Susanne Lachenicht (München, 2007), 220 and Hartweg, "Le Grand Beausobre," 59-60.

276 Isaac de Beausobre, Jacques Lenfant, *Le Nouveau Testament de Notre Seigneur Jesus-Christ, Traduit en François sur l'original Grec. Avec des notes literales pour éclaircir le Texte*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam, 1718), I-III.

277 Letter cited after Palladini, *Die Berliner Hugenotten*, 85. The letter is un-dated but Palladini dates it between February and Pentecost 1701.

278 See Beausobre; Lenfant, *Nouveau Testament*, vol. 1, CL.

279 See Palladini, *Die Berliner Hugenotten*, 40-85. D'Artis accusations did not deal explicitly with the methodological and epistemological considerations of Lenfant's and Beausobre's introduction but with single passages of the translation which according to him challenged certain dogma.

280 See Christian Wolff, *Theologia Naturalis, Methodo scientifico pertractata. Pars prior integrum systema complectens, qua existentia et attributa dei a posteriori demonstrantur* [1736], ed. Jean École. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 2, vols. 7.1 and 7.2 (Hildesheim, 1978), § 18. Compare to Jean École, "Introduction de l'éditeur," in *Theologia Naturalis Pars prior*, ed. Jean École, vol. 7,1, Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, Abt. 2 (Hildesheim, 1978), XII.

reason and Revelation, Formey must have found points of contact with Wolff's ideas. Moreover, as we have seen above, Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy was – unlike Lutheran orthodoxy – based on a 'softened version' of the dogma of original sin, and hence this philosophy fitted the values of the Reformed thinkers.

Besides the intellectual preconditions that were offered through Formey's Huguenot background, it was also on a very practical level that the *Refuge* favoured his acquaintance with Wolffian thought. Formey's insertion as a young pastor into the particular learned sociability of Berlin's Huguenot colony in the 1730s and 1740s was in my view the first step that brought him towards the circle of German philosophers and theologians that adhered to the ideas of Christian Wolff, who gathered in the late 1730s in the so-called *Société des Aléthophiles*. Within this Huguenot sociability, clerical and erudite practices and young and old members of the colony converged as can be seen in Formey's every-day-life in the early 1730s. It was marked by his pastoral duties, conversations with friends and parish members, dinner parties and similar events. Formey seems to have consorted mainly with his friends from school and study days, such as the brothers Alexandre-Auguste and Jacques de Campagne, and Guillaume Pelet,²⁸¹ the pastors of the two other French churches in Berlin, Paul Loriol d'Anières and Pierres des Combles, as well as with his former professors Isaac de Beausobre and Mathurin Veyssière de la Croze.²⁸² As an associate of Beausobre, Formey participated from 1733 onwards to the publication of the francophone literature journal *Bibliothèque Germanique*.²⁸³ Due to Beausobre's illness and thus lower work-capacity, Formey became even more closely involved in this enterprise towards the end of 1737, and eventually, he replaced Beausobre as the editor of the journal, a role he shared with another first-generation Huguenot refugee, Paul Émile Mauclerc from Stettin. Later in his career as a philosopher and secretary of the Academy, having such a role in an influential instrument of learned journalism was very useful for Formey, as it helped him to promote both his own opinions and the work of the Academy. In 1733 it presumably helped him to exercise himself in conducting book reviews, as it was one of the central practices of the Republic of Letters.

Besides these general social and cultural involvements, the young pastor Formey also had the opportunity to practise being a man of letters within a private learned society, the *Société*

281 See Pelet to Formey, 3.7.1731 (FF).

282 See Formey to Suzanne Bonafous, 9.7.1734 (CV). Compare to Häsel, "Jean Henri Samuel Formey – L'homme à Berlin," 421 who emphasises the heterogeneity of Formey's social network within the Huguenot colony, combining people from his own generation and of the preceding one.

283 See Jan Schillings, "Élargissement de la République des Lettres vers les 'Pays du Nord'. La Bibliothèque Germanique et ses suites: Profil Thématique et Géographique du Journal," in *Journalisme et République des Lettres: L'élargissement vers les "Pays du Nord" au dix-huitième siècle*, ed. Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck and Hans Bots (Amsterdam, 2009), 15–82.

amusante, which was founded by another young Huguenot pastoral candidate, Jean Des Champs.²⁸⁴ Established in May 1731, Formey was elected to this club right after his return from Brandenburg in September 1731.²⁸⁵ As Jens Häselser underlines, the sociability of the *Société amusante* was modelled after the seventeenth-century culture of salons.²⁸⁶ Its founder Des Champs explained that he had established it as a means of private self-education in literature and sciences. The members, who he recruited among his friends – almost always young pastoral candidates from the colony – alternated in preparing a discourse on a non-specified subject, which was then read and commented on during the weekly meeting. Moreover, these weekly meetings allowed the members to present *extraits* of books they had read and to exchange *nouvelles littéraires*. Like the renowned public learned societies, the *Société amusante* had clear rules on the terms of membership and structure of its meetings, it also carefully kept minutes and copies of its discourses.²⁸⁷ This strictness in the organisation of a private club and apparently in particular in its affiliation policy led to a certain amount of mockery among Europe's learned men, who had been informed of its practices by two satirical articles concerning the *Société* in the *Gazette de Leyden*.²⁸⁸ Despite this public resentment, the club seems to have existed until 1736, when it died a 'natural death' because of Des Champs' and Formey's engagement in the Wolffian *Société des Aléthophiles*.²⁸⁹

Formey's Acquaintance with Wolff's Philosophy and Wolffianism

Formey's familiarisation with the practices of a learned man inside the social and cultural structures of the *Refuge* went hand in hand with, and presumably supported, his introduction into the learned sociability that the German Count Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel, a former minister of Saxony and patron of the arts and sciences, had established in Berlin in 1733.²⁹⁰ Manteuffel, who in Prussia

284 On Des Champs see Uta Janssens-Knorsch, "Jean Deschamps, Wolff-Übersetzer und 'Aléthophile français' am Hofe Friedrichs des Großen," in *Christian Wolff 1679-1754*, 254–65. Janssens-Knorsch published also Des Champs' autobiography, his *Mémoires secrets*: Uta Janssens-Knorsch, *The life and "Mémoires secrets" of Jean Des Champs, 1707-1767: journalist, minister, and man of feeling* (Amsterdam; Maarssen, 1990).

285 See Jean Des Champs to Formey, 25.9.1731, *Lettres de l'Angleterre à Jean Henri Samuel Formey à Berlin: de Jean Des Champs, David Durand, Matthieu Maty et d'autres correspondants (1737-1788)*, ed. Uta Janssens and Jan Schillings (Paris, 2006), 329-330; and Alexandre-Auguste de Campagne to Formey, 26.6.1731 and 24.9.1731 (FF).

286 See Jens Häselser, *Ein Wanderer zwischen den Welten, Charles Etienne Jordan* (Stuttgart, 1993), 35.

287 See Jean Des Champs, *Mémoires secrets*, 132-133, in Janssens-Knorsch, *The life and 'Mémoires secrets'*, 99-100. According to Janssens-Knorsch the members of the *société amusante* were Messieurs de Félix, d'Esperon, Peloux, Pinault, de Beausobre, de Campagne, Formey, de Sauveterre and himself. Furthermore, there have been three associates who had fewer obligations towards the society: they were Jacques Des Champs, Messieurs Milsonneau and Gobin. Another description of the *Société* can be found in a letter of one of its members, Jacques de Campagne to Formey, s.d.s.l (FF).

288 See Des Champs, *Mémoires secrets*, 139-140, Janssens-Knorsch, *The life and 'Mémoires secrets'*, 103-104. Des Champs indicates here the jealousy of rejected candidates to the society as a reason for the polemics.

289 See Janssens-Knorsch, *The life and 'Mémoires secrets'*, 291, note 36.

290 Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 76 indicates 1733 as date of Manteuffel's installation in Berlin, whereas Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, 40, dated it to 1731.

pursued diplomatic duties at the court of Friedrich Wilhelm I, and tried likewise to gain influence over the ideas and political values of the future King Friedrich II,²⁹¹ created a meeting point for intellectual exchange in his house, the Palais Kameke, in Berlin. Jean Des Champs described this 'institution' in 1740 as follows: 'La Maison de ce Seigneur [Manteuffel] étoit depuis 7 à 8 ans les *Rendez-vous* de tous les *savans*, et de tous les *Gens d'Esprit* de Berlin. Jamais *Homme de Lettres* ne trouva nulle part autant de protection et de secours, que chés ce digne *Fils d'Apollon*.²⁹² It seems that there were several Huguenot pastors and learned men present at these gatherings, which might seem unsurprising since Manteuffel's house was in the Dorotheenstadt, a neighbourhood with a strong Huguenot population.²⁹³ Still, their presence was also certainly due to the already existing practices of learned sociability that had been established in the colony. Formey, after his own witness, became acquainted with Manteuffel in early 1732 at the occasion of a translation job that Manteuffel had offered him: Formey's translation of some political writings about the crisis of the Polish succession to the throne were his first two publications.²⁹⁴

Formey benefited from his close acquaintance to Manteuffel in several ways. First, through the gatherings at Manteuffel's palais he was able to extend his acquaintances beyond the relatively closed Huguenot circles, by meeting state officials and German noblemen.²⁹⁵ Second, Manteuffel contributed significantly to the development of Formey's career: he not only stimulated and supported Formey's first publications, but he also guaranteed the advancement of Formey's institutional career by lobbying for him at the court on at least two instances: first, in the spring of 1736, we find an opaque evidence of Manteuffel arranging the continuation of Formey's stay in the capital,²⁹⁶ and second (more importantly), it was also Manteuffel who arranged the King's approval of Formey's application to the chair of philosophy at the *collège français*, which had been vacant after the death of La Croze in 1739.²⁹⁷

291 For the circumstances of Manteuffel's stay in Prussia see Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, chapters 1 and 2.

292 Des Champs, *Mémoires secrets*, 401, Janssens-Knorsch, *The life and 'Mémoires secrets'*, 180.

293 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 76, particularly note 13.

294 See Formey, "Notice de mes ouvrages," 106.

295 See for example Formey to Suzanne Bonafous, 28.5.1734 (CV).

296 Manteuffel to Formey, 2.3.1736 (CV): 'Je prens tant de part a ce qui est arrivé avec votre chef, que je n'ai pas vacancé un moment d'ecrire la lettre que vous m'avez demandée. [...] La justice et vos merites parlant pour vous, j'ai appuié uniquement sur ces deux argumens, et j'ai représenté, que ce seroit une perte pour Berlin, que de vous forcer par une injustice manifeste, a chercher fortune ailleurs.' With regard to this letter see also Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 131 note 2. Bronisch attributes this comment to Formey's appointment to the *collège*, which is rather doubtful at this point. The letter suggests rather that Formey encountered problems in keeping his actual job, as an assistant pastor at the Friedrichstadt church. Forneret had just died one week earlier. From Manteuffel's next letter from 12.3.1736 we learn that Formey's problem was resolved and that it was thanks to Frederick ("Mgr. le Pr. [ince] R.[oyale]"). In a letter by Frederick to Manteuffel from 8.4.1736 the Prince states that Formey will replace a certain Saurin at the office of preaching for him on Sundays (this is a reference to Manteuffel's letter to Frederick, from 5.4.1736 together with which he had send *Formey's Sermons sur le contentement*, see also Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 60.)

297 More precisely, it was the Lutheran preacher Gustav Reinbeck who prepared Formey's request to be released from his church functions; see the two letters from Reinbeck to Formey, [May 1739] and 31.5.1739 (CV). Reinbeck was

Besides Manteuffel's crucial function in extending Formey's sociability and career, the noble patron and convinced follower of Christian Wolff was also a key figure in developing young Formey's intellectual standpoint. In this respect, Manteuffel's key move was to make Formey – together with Des Champs – a member of the secret society that he had founded in 1736: the *Société des Aléthophiles*, which pursued the aim to defend and to promote the person and ideas of Christian Wolff, who after having been chased out of the country in 1723 had become again victim of defamation in 1736, due to his Pietist antagonist Joachim Lange, who had accused him of contradicting Protestant dogma.²⁹⁸ The active period of the society in Berlin lasted until Manteuffel had to leave Prussia for Leipzig in 1740, where the association continued to exist for another nine years until his death. Besides Formey and Des Champs the early members of the *Aléthophiles* were Germans active in the Church and publishing market: the co-founder of the *Société* was Johann Gustav Reinbeck, a pastor and councillor of the Lutheran Church consistory in Berlin and a close confidant of King Frederick William I; moreover there was the Berlin bookseller Ambrosius Haude, the court preacher August Friedrich Wilhelm Sack, as well as Johann Christoph Gottsched and his wife Luise Adelgunde, and the university professors Carl Günther Ludovici, Romanus Teller and Christian Gottlieb Jöcher from Leipzig. Later, in 1745, the French pastor Jacques Pérard in Stettin also became affiliated. The intellectual program of the society that Manteuffel composed evolved around a key concept of Wolff's philosophy, the ontological concept of truth – to which also the name of the society alluded. Called 'veritas transcendentalis' in Wolff's *Vernünfftige Gedancken über Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen* (§ 43), this transcendental truth was understood as the last reason and principle of everything that existed. It was expressed in Wolff's philosophy by two basic metaphysical principles: Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason and the principle of non-contradiction that served to understand why something existed and that it existed.²⁹⁹ These fundamental components of Wolff's philosophical system reappeared in the society's rules, the *Hexalogus Alethophilorum*, although in a simplified version and thus formed the intellectual guideline of the *Aléthophiles*.³⁰⁰

one of Manteuffel's intimates in Berlin and was influential at the Prussian court. Formey became acquainted with him through Manteuffel.

298 On the *Société des Alethophiles* see [Carl Günther Ludovici], "Wahrheitliebende Gesellschaft," *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon alles Wissenschaften und Künste, welche bisher durch menschlichen Verstand und Witz erfunden und verbessert worden*, ed. Johann Heinrich Zedler (Leipzig; Halle, 1731-1754), vol. 52, 947-954.

For the recent research on the subject see Detlef Döring, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Gesellschaft der Alethophilen in Leipzig," in *Gelehrte Gesellschaften im Mitteldeutschen Raum: (1650-1820)*, ed. Detlef Döring and Kurt Nowak, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 2000), 95–150 and the already mentioned Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*. For the circumstances of the society's foundation see Döring, "Beiträge," 100-101.

299 See for the analysis of Wolff's understanding of truth Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 156-157.

300 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 158-60. The first paragraph of this statute propagates the discovery of truth to be the object of the members, whereas paragraphs 2 and 5 allude to the two main principles of the Wolffian methodology.

The main questions with which Wolff's followers dealt were of a theological nature since it was the assumed destructive effect of Wolff's philosophy on religion that his critics were most concerned with. As we have already mentioned, Wolff held that reason like Revelation was a legitimate source of truth. But what is more, he also claimed that the content of the divine Revelation itself was to a large extent comprehensible through natural reason and that only a few mysteries were actually above human reason, such as the trinity or the resurrection of Christ, which thus constituted pure Revelation. As a consequence, Wolff's philosophy could be understood as at least strongly reducing and perhaps even dissolving the content of the Revelation, which was the point of departure for the orthodox and Pietist criticism that Wolff had to face.³⁰¹ Unlike Wolff's enemies, his supporters were convinced that his methodological considerations were compatible with Christian dogma and aimed to defend Wolff's alignment with Protestant orthodoxy.³⁰² As Bronisch shows, among the members of the *Société des Aléthophiles*, it was mainly the Lutheran theologian Johann Gustav Reinbeck who shaped and promoted a (moderate) Wolffian theology based on this idea of a harmonic relation between reason and Revelation.³⁰³

In addition to providing space for extending Formey's and Des Champs' learned sociability, the *Société des Aléthophiles* also attracted the young Huguenot pastors through its significant focus on theological questions. However, besides this, Manteuffel also pursued a particular aim with their involvement in his secret society, an aim which he mainly carried out through the assignment of educational and literary tasks to the young men. Manteuffel had attributed to them the function of promoting the Wolffian thought among the French refugees in Berlin and Prussia. In a letter to Wolff in 1741 he described this purpose almost as a strategy of instrumentalisation:

'Mais enfin, quoique j'aie toujours douté, que ces deux hommes [Des Champs and Formey], devinrent jamais de grands arcsboutans de la Verité, je me suis servis très utilement d'eux, pour faire gouter vôtre Philosophie à leurs compatriotes réfugiés, qui en avoient, il y a quelques années, des idées très confuses et fausses. [...] j'ai animé et presque forcé Formey, à étudier vôtre Philosophie, et à l'enseigner publiquement à ses auditeurs; j'ai même poussé le même Formey, à écrire sa Belle Wolfienne, et je ne cesse pas de l'exhorter à en donner la continuation.'³⁰⁴

301 See Casula, "Die Theologia Naturalis von Christian Wolff," and Günter Gawlick, "Christian Wolff und der Deismus," in *Christian Wolff 1679-1754*, 139–47.

302 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 165.

303 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 166. For more details on Reinbeck's moderate Wolffian theology see Stefan Lorenz, "Theologischer Wolffianismus. Das Beispiel Johann Gustav Reinbeck," in *Christian Wolff und die Europäische Aufklärung*, vol. 5 (Hildesheim, 2010), 103–21.

304 Manteuffel to Wolff, 10.2.1741, Katharina Middell and Hanns-Peter Neumann, eds., *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Christian Wolff und Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel 1738 bis 1748. Transkriptionen aus dem Handschriftenbestand der Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig* (Leipzig, 2013), <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:14-qucosa-106475>, vol. 1, 211–12. Formey's *Belle Wolfienne* and its role in promoting Wolffianism, as mentioned here by Manteuffel, will be discussed in chapter 8.

Given the two men's profession – both were pastors and from 1739 onwards, Formey was also a professor of philosophy – they were ideal mediums for the effective promotion of Wolff's philosophy to a large and socially diversified, yet rather local, public.³⁰⁵

In addition to this, Manteuffel also ensured that the young Huguenots translated and abbreviated the writings of Wolff and other German Wolffian writers. These translations and other literary adaptations of Wolffian philosophy served not only to popularise this philosophy among the Huguenot community, but also have to be considered as *prises de position* in the larger literary controversy between Wolff and his Pietist opponents in Halle, which was reignited again in the late 1730s when Wolff's potential official rehabilitation was put on the agenda at the Prussian court.³⁰⁶ Due to the young Huguenots' interest and professional origin, most of the translation works that Manteuffel commissioned from them were sermons, which were mainly from the Lutheran preacher Johann Gustav Reinbeck. Reinbeck was one of the main supporters of Wolff's philosophy and he applied it to the content and style of his theological and homiletic texts. Besides Formey and Des Champs, other Huguenot pastors of their generation – their friends – were also involved in these commissioned works, and it seems that their collaboration had been partially arranged through Formey.³⁰⁷ Formey himself collaborated with a fellow Huguenot, Jacques Pérard, in a translation of Reinbeck's two sermons on the mystery of the birth of Christ, which he had preached during the Christmas of 1737. The only purpose of this French translation seems to have been the transmission of Manteuffel's politico-philosophical message concerning Wolff's defamation by the Pietists at the Prussian court, which he embedded in an extended paratext.³⁰⁸ The same was true for the collection of five of Reinbeck's sermons that Des Champs translated a year later,³⁰⁹ and the translation of a further four sermons, in which, in addition to Des Champs, two provincial pastors, Abraham Bocquet and Isaac Théodore Cabrit, were also involved.³¹⁰ Simultaneously and subsequently to these commissioned translations, the young Huguenots also started to compose their own sermons, which were inspired by Reinbeck's Wolffian homiletics. The most famous of these were again those by Des Champs and Formey who both, in the 1740s, published so-called *sermons wolffiens*.³¹¹ It can

305 See Manteuffel to Adelgunde Gottsched, 24.11.1739, *Johann Christoph Gottsched. Briefwechsel. Unter Einschluss des Briefwechsels von Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched*, eds. Detlef Döring, Franziska Menzel, Rüdiger Otto, and Michael Schlott, vol. 6 (Berlin, 2012), 211-12.

306 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 388-90. Bronisch lists 21 of these publications between 1736 and 1748.

307 See Cabrit to Formey, 21.9.1738 and 26.9.1738 (FF).

308 Johann Gustav Reinbeck, *Sermons sur le Mystere de la Naissance de J-C., prononcez le premier & le second jour de Noël 1737, [...] ; traduits par un Anonyme, & Messrs. S. Formey & J., Ministres de l'Eglise Française* (Berlin; Leipzig, 1738). See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 398-400.

309 *Recueil de cinq sermons, prononcez par Monsieur Jean Gustave Reinbeck [...] ; traduits par un anonyme, & par Mons. Jean Des-Champs [...]* (Berlin, 1739). See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 400-1.

310 *Nouveau recueil de quatre sermons, prononcez par Monsieur Reinbeck [...], traduits de l'allemand, avec un ajouté de quelques pieces interessantes* (Berlin; Leipzig, 1741). See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 410-2.

311 Jean Des Champs, *Cinq sermons sur divers Textes, expliqués selon la Methode du celebre Mr. Wolff [...]* (Berlin,

hence be said that Manteuffel's strategic involvement of the young Huguenots not only had an effect on the political purpose of the *Société des Aléthophiles* – Wolff was indeed rehabilitated and re-installed at the University of Halle in 1740 – but he also had an impact on the development of the theological thought of those Huguenots.³¹² At the same time, the commissioned translation work also led to the improvement of their writing and publishing skills, which further boosted their chances of becoming involved in the Republic of Letters. Formey's initiation into the business of a writer and learned man has thus been closely linked to the defence of Christian Wolff's ideas, which subsequently had a huge effect on his more autonomous and often non-theological writings at the Academy and beyond, as we will see below.

As the translation projects of the *Aléthophiles* suggest, Wolffianism of the 1730s and 1740s was a group phenomenon that entangled Formey's generation in the Berlin *Refuge*. Manteuffel's directions might have been important to incite their interest and to bestow it with a political function, yet it seems that then the Wolffian ideas spread almost automatically, as the young men mutually urged and reinforced each other in the practice of 'philosopher à la wolfien'. Jean Des Champs seems to have been a central figure in this. He became acquainted with Wolff's philosophy much earlier than Formey and was fond of it, because he had been Wolff's disciple in Marburg from 1727 to 1729, and had translated Wolff's *Logik*.³¹³ Thus it was mainly him who fashioned the perception of Wolff as the Huguenots' 'Héro de la philosophie' and supported his friend's engagement with Wolff's ideas. After Formey had published something in favour of Wolff's ideas in his literary journal *Mercure et Minerve*, Des Champs did not hide his enthusiasm and promised to personally send Formey's works to their idol:

'Je ne manquerai pas de communiquer à notre «Héros de philosophie» toutes vos pièces qui le concernent dès que j'en trouverai l'occasion. Je suis au reste extrêmement aise que vous ayez enfin pris goût aux ouvrages de M. Wolff; mon zèle pour cet excellent homme acquiert un nouveau degré de vivacité depuis qu'il se sent autorisé et appuié du vôtre.'³¹⁴

Des Champs also vehemently campaigned for the superiority of the philosophical method and system that Wolff had established in order to oppose certain reservations that Formey apparently still had at the end of the 1730s over adopting Wolff's philosophy entirely:

'Vous avez vous-même encore de la peine à estimer M. Wolff autant qu'il le mérite; vous craignez, Monsieur, de l'élever au-dessus de Leibnitz. Mais vous n'aurez pas lû seulement la

1740) and Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle de la Perfection en trois sermons sur St. Matth. Ch. V. v. 48* (Berlin, 1747).

312 For a more detailed account of the Prussian Huguenots' translations commissioned by Manteuffel, see also my article "Politics, philosophy and religion. Translating the sermons of Johann Gustav Reinbeck into French," *Hypothèses* 20 (2016), 335-46.

313 See Janssens-Knorsch, "Jean Des Champs," 255-6.

314 Jean Des Champs to Formey, 23.4.1738, *Lettres d'Angleterre*, 330-1.

moitié de ses ouvrages, que vous conviendrez avec tous les Wolffiens qu'il faut bien plus de supériorité de génie pour composer une philosophie de cette trempe que pour inventer mille choses curieuses, quelque admirables qu'elles puissent être. L'art d'inventer est plus commun que l'art de bien raisonner: de philosopher à la wolffienne.³¹⁵

Moreover, as Des Champs proudly declared in his letters to Formey, he also had inspired their common friends Cabrit and Achard with Wolff's philosophy and regularly discussed the philosopher's ideas with them. In respect to his exchange with Cabrit, Des Champs even suggested that Formey join the discussion so that the three of them could share their views.³¹⁶ Shortly after, in 1740, Formey also seems to have become such a point of reference for Wolffianism in the colony as Des Champs: in his letters to Formey, the pastor Abraham Bocquet of Prenzlau regularly testified their mutual affinity for Wolff's philosophy.³¹⁷ One might, therefore, say that the young Huguenot pastors in Prussia created a philosophical fashion for themselves which animated their social and intellectual exchanges. From what we have seen concerning the theological situation and the learned sociability in the *Refuge*, it seems that Wolffianism in both the ideas and the learned practices that it contained, could tie in with what they knew from their Huguenot background and at the same time was new enough to catch their interest.

The Transition from the Pastor to the Professor of Philosophy

Nevertheless, despite instilling the milieu of young Prussian Huguenot pastors with Wolffianism in the 1730s, and the general taste for practices that were considered to be learned or philosophical, i.e. the discussion of new ideas via letters, journals and in learned societies, it seems that the rules of the religious community did not favour its pastors acting simultaneously as pastors and philosophers. According to the *Discipline ecclésiastique* of the French Reformed Church (1666), which constituted the legal foundation of the churches of the Berlin *Refuge*, the pastoral office was a lifelong commitment to exclusively perform the task of evangelising and to proclaim God's word to the people. Moreover, it prohibited the promulgation of any form of learning that was unusual and not appropriate for edification.³¹⁸ The rules of the *Discipline* also shaped the idea that the pastoral office claimed its practitioners for life as it forbade its pastors to additionally carry out other professional duties such as medicine or law.³¹⁹ Therefore, it was in conformity with the French

315 Des Champs to Formey, 8.11.1739, *Lettres d'Angleterre*, 342.

316 See Des Champs to Formey, 22.10.1739, *Lettres d'Angleterre*, 340 for the exchange with Cabrit and 8.11.1739, *Lettres d'Angleterre*, 342 concerning Achard.

317 See Bocquet to Formey, 5.7.1740 and 26.8.1740 (FF).

318 See "Discipline Ecclésiastique des Églises Reformées de France," §§ XI and XII, *Das Recht der Französisch-Reformierten Kirche*, 71.

319 See "Discipline Ecclésiastique," §XIX, 75.

Church's law that Formey resigned from his office as a pastor in 1739, when he aspired to the chair of philosophy at the *collège français*. However, Formey's case was rather exceptional as he was actually able to make a living out of philosophy so that, despite being legally obliged to quit his pastoral office, he could also financially afford it. If we consider his friends instead, we can see that it was common practice to be an amateur philosopher or learned man while holding the office of the pastor.

Although it does not seem that this practice was persecuted in the mid-eighteenth-century French Church, there remained some instances in which a certain reservation or at least ambivalence concerning the practice shined through. Formey himself, in one of his moral discourses in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, pointed out the inappropriateness of a pastor who indulged in literary criticism and the investigation of nature. He acknowledged that a pastor had to be educated in order to fulfil his office with dignity, but he should not pursue these studies beyond the needs of his office:

'Mais ses [du ministre] premières études lui ayant laissé un goût vif & dominant pour les sciences, il s'y jette à corps perdu, il s'enfonce dans le vaste Ocean de la Litterature & de la Critique, il étudie d'un oeil curieux les secrets de la Nature, c'est un savant distingué, il va prendre sa place au Temple de Mémoire, & son nom sera préservé de l'oubli, auquel le Tombeau condamne les hommes vulgaires. Mais son tems étoit-il à lui pour en disposer de la sorte? Non, sans contredit; & malgré la Renommée qui publie ses talents, je m'écrie encore; Occupation déplacée, tems mal employé.'³²⁰

It is important to note that Formey did not consider *per se* that the pursuit of learned practices or philosophy was as bad; on the contrary, as he said, they were potentially even praiseworthy. What was detrimental was rather the misbehaviour of the preacher who allowed himself to be distracted from his duty through these learned practices.³²¹

Furthermore, the behaviour of the Prussian Huguenot pastors, who were Formey's friends, seems to indicate the existence of a rather ambiguous perception of pastors that had different occupations alongside their office, although the motive that fuelled such perceptions seems not to have predominantly been the neglect of pastoral duties as Formey had insinuated. They instead were predominantly concerned with moral conduct in public. The best example for this might be Abraham Bocquet, who was a pastor in several Brandenburgian towns and later in Magdeburg. In his letters to Formey he enthusiastically emphasised his weakness for philosophy in general, and particularly for Wolff's philosophy,³²² and he described his practices as being characteristic of a

320 Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 11-2.

321 See Formey's general considerations on the relation between duty and conduct, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 10.

322 See Bocquet to Formey, 5.7.1740 (FF)

learned man: he maintained correspondences,³²³ he built up a multifarious library, containing not only theological writings but also the libertine ones typical of the century,³²⁴ he wrote reviews for journals,³²⁵ and he founded an amateur learned society in Magdeburg, the *Société Impartiale*.³²⁶ Nonetheless, it appears as if he disliked to see his name published in writings, particularly if it was a work of a religious nature. In 1741 Manteuffel revealed Bocquet's above-mentioned involvement in the translation of Reinbeck's sermons, apparently without his consent. Bocquet was slightly angry about this because he apparently feared that other people – supposedly of the Huguenot community – would mock him for aspiring to fame in the Republic of Letters through the translation of a sermon: 'Me voila bien payé des railleries que j'ai faites sur ceux qui courent après les occasions de lire leur nom imprimé. J'endevé quand je pense qu'il y aura des gens qui me croiront asses sot que de prétendre quelque rang dans la Rep. des lettres à cause que j'ai traduit un sermon allemand en françois.'³²⁷ Bocquet did not explicitly refer to his duties as a preacher, yet his concern was clearly motivated by questions of modesty and decency, which were important moral characteristics for a pastor to embody. Exactly the same reasoning stood behind another of Bocquet's complaints when another example of his authorship was revealed: in 1754 he appeared as the author of a discourse that he had contributed to the third volume of Formey's *Philosophe Chrétien*.³²⁸ As he reported to Formey, people had really mocked him for this because they assumed that he had longed to be published and because they did not believe that his writing was adequate enough to acquire literary glory through it.³²⁹

Besides the required commitment to the pulpit and questions of conduct, which both potentially impeded the simultaneous execution of the pastoral and the philosophical office, there seems to have also been a sceptical attitude towards philosophy's effect on society and religion. Even Bocquet, who was so enthusiastic about the sociability of the learned man, voiced his concerns in this respect. In 1742, when Formey told Bocquet about his project to write an encyclopedia of philosophy based on the model of Pierre Bayle's famous but controversial *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (which will be the subject of chapter 6), Bocquet was worried that philosophical reflection would automatically lead its practitioners to become sceptics, and instead he claimed to prefer the study of theology:

'Au reste je ne doute pas que l'ouvrage en question [Formey's *Dictionnaire*] ne soit pour vous une occupation très agréable: mais vous me permettrez de ne pas avouer aussi facilement que

323 See Bocquet to Formey, 21.11.1740 (FF).

324 See Bocquet to Formey, 23.10.1741 (FF).

325 See Bocquet to Formey, 3.10.1740 (FF).

326 See Bocquet to Formey, 18.1.1742 (FF).

327 Bocquet to Formey, 23.10.1741 (FF).

328 See Bocquet to Formey, 17.10.1754 (FF).

329 See Bocquet to Formey, 8.4.1755 (FF).

les Meditations auxquelles il vous engage, soient les seules dont on puisse tirer des usages satisfaisans. 1° Y a t'il une seule partie de la Philosophie qui soit entierement audessus des atteintes du Scepticisme? 2° Si mon experience peut entrer en ligne de compte, je vous assure que je n'ai gueres goûté de plus grande satisfaction que dans l'Etude de certaines matieres de Théologie [...]³³⁰

It is certainly true that such fears about the genuine sceptical character of philosophy had been provoked and alimanted by figures like Bayle and Spinoza, who were commonly blamed for the destruction of religion in the name of philosophy and by precisely such conceptualisations of the heretic and immoral *philosophe* as Formey established in several of his writings.

This rather general and vaguely defined 'fear' of philosophy that seems to have still existed to a certain extent in the perception of Formey and his contemporaries doubled when it was put into contact with the *Refuge's* religious practice. In another of Formey's moral discourses in the *Philosophe Chrétien* that explicitly dealt with the duties of the pastor, this fear was voiced through the depiction of a scenario, in which a pastor was similar to, or even became a freethinker because he was appointed to his office too early in life, and without a proper formation:

'Mais de bonne foi, que veut-on que réponde à un Libertin, un Ecclésiastique qui ne vaut pas mieux que lui, ou plutôt beaucoup moins, puisqu'au libertinage il joint l'oubli de son caractère, & la violation de ses engagements? Que veut-on que pense un Troupeau, s'il lui arrive de voir ses Conducteurs, après avoir prêché trente ou quarante ans l'Evangile, en liaison intime avec les plus profanes Ennemis du Sauveur, des gens qui ne savent dire que des blasphêmes ou des ordures?'³³¹

It seems that the concern with renegade pastors contained in Formey's discourse, had not been provoked by one particular event in his immediate context. Yet, it is true that during the first half of the Eighteenth Century, within the French Church's relatively orthodox legal framework, the Berlin *Refuge* rather often witnessed cases of imputations of heresy towards members of the Church, pastors included. The most startling of these cases might have been that of Jean Barbeyrac, the later translator of Pufendorf's natural law, who in the very beginning of the Eighteenth Century had been accused of heterodox ideas and had lost his right to catechise and to instruct his congregation which eventually caused him leave Berlin.³³² In his *Souvenirs*, Formey still recalled this incident although he did not personally witness it, which underlines how strongly rooted Barbeyrac's case must have been in the collective memory of the *Refuge*.³³³ If the experience or memory of the trials on the

330 Bocquet to Formey, 21.5.1742 (FF).

331 Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 2, 383-4.

332 For the detailed reconstruction of Barbeyrac's case and the analysis of the theological and philosophical debates in the first generation of the Berlin *Refuge*, see Palladini, *Die Berliner Hugenotten*.

333 See Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 2, 262-3.

violations of orthodoxy of the late Seventeenth and first half of the Eighteenth Century were joined to the evolving conceptions of a harmful philosophy then it seemed that an association of renegade pastors with such a type of philosophy emerged. We might suspect that as a consequence of this, a pastor that undertook any occupation deemed philosophical would have been viewed as potentially heterodox.

In this light, Formey's professional transition from the office of the pastor to that of the professor of philosophy became a moment that was potentially problematic and needed to be justified to the Huguenot community: Why should somebody who was destined to serve the Church for life quit this job to pursue an activity that had ambiguous connotations in the view of the congregation? Formey's main argument for quitting his pastoral duties was his ill health, which required him to carry out a less physically tiring job than the one on the pulpit. This argument appears in all documents, from his official request to be released from the pastoral office to the King,³³⁴ to his farewell sermon,³³⁵ to his autobiographical writings.³³⁶ This argument facilitated the image of Formey's involuntary resignation from the pastoral office to which he had been destined.³³⁷ Besides emphasising his regret on leaving the pulpit, Formey also tried, through the conceptualisation of the persona of the Christian philosopher, to justify the utmost usefulness of his new office as a philosopher for the Church with respect to both the doctrinal contents and the structure of the colony. Through the conceptualisation of the Christian philosopher when Formey exchanged the pulpit for the lectern, he legitimised what actually was not possible in his contemporaries' perception but what he nevertheless, like many others, embodied throughout his life: to be a philosopher on the pulpit.

In his farewell sermon, Formey translated his depiction of the Christian philosopher first and foremost into considerations on the entangled relation between natural reason and revealed religion. In this respect, it is interesting to observe his line of argument throughout which the determining position between reason and faith seems to shift. At the beginning of the sermon, he highlighted the predominant role of the Christian faith in human life, without which everything else – and in particular the pursuit of reason – would be destructive: 'La Religion, c'est la connoissance & le culte de la Divinité. Et que seroit l'homme, s'il en étoit dénué? Plus malheureux mille fois que les Bêtes, le flambeau de la Raison ne seroit qu'une lumière trompeuse qui le conduiroit au précipice.'³³⁸ Instead, towards the end of the sermon Formey presented the reverse concept of the relation

334 See Request by Formey to King Frederic William I, 21.5.1739, GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 122, 7 a II, Nr.1: Acta betreffend das Französische Gymnasium, vol. 1, fol. 256-7.

335 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Ecriture Sainte* (Berlin, 1739), 144.

336 See Formey, "Notice sur mes ouvrages," 108

337 Formey colourfully drew this image in his farewell sermon, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Ecriture Sainte*, 143-4.

338 *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Ecriture Sainte*, 133.

between the two entities, reason and Revelation: at this point he did not suggest that reason would lead to the downfall of mankind if it was not supported by religion, but he stated that religion would collapse without the foundations of philosophical research. This statement, according to which reason was the prerequisite and guarantee of faith, resulted from Formey's announcement that he would quit the pulpit to become a professor of philosophy, and therefore was used by him as a strategy of legitimisation:

'de ce qu'il ne m'a fait descendre de cette Chaire de Verité, que pour monter dans une autre, où la Verité est objet constant de toutes les recherches, où il s'agit de poser des fondemens, sans lesquels la Religion elle même crouleroit, & de former la plupart de ceux qui conduiront dans la suite nos Troupeaux, de les former, dis-je, à allier les lumieres de la Raison à celle de la Revelation.'³³⁹

This metaphorical depiction of the dependency that existed, in Formey's view, between the pulpit and the lectern contained the concept of a philosophy that explored the Gospel and that taught the co-existence of natural and revealed knowledge. This dependency, as Formey's sermon illustrated, functioned in both ways – philosophy depended on revealed truths and the comprehension of revealed truths depended on philosophy – and thus could be considered mutual. As such it implied a concept of philosophy that merged into theology and vice versa. Such a concept could be embodied by the persona of the Christian philosopher.

At the same time this legitimisation of the Christian philosopher through the concept of a theological philosophy or philosophical theology also contained the essence of Formey's very practical argument of legitimisation: the teaching of philosophy was supposed to be beneficial for the parish, as it would supply it with well-trained pastors who in turn were able to assure the religiosity of the congregation. According to the quoted statement in his sermon, Formey considered it his job to teach a combination of natural and revealed knowledge, and hence he referred to the above-mentioned concept of philosophy as an independent discipline that dealt with all sorts of knowledge. However, given the confessional context in which he exposed this concept and his attempt to justify his transition from a pastor to a professor of philosophy, he particularly emphasised the religious purpose of philosophy. Through this Formey not only portrayed the educational duty as one of the predominant aspects of his role as Christian philosopher, but at the same time he intrinsically linked it to the duty of safeguarding religion inside the confessional community: as Formey depicted it, a (philosophical) education³⁴⁰ served the acquisition of

339 See *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Ecriture Sainte* 144-149 (NB.: there is a mistake in the pagination; it should be 145 instead of 149).

340 I equate education with the teaching of philosophy since in the early modern academic system philosophy was a propedeutical discipline, which served to provide students with the basic knowledge and methodological skills to pursue any further discipline, traditionally law, medicine or theology; see for example L. W. B. Brockliss, *French higher*

knowledge, and knowledge assured the survival of religion. Therefore the professor of philosophy, Formey's new office, achieved essentially the same purpose as his old office as a pastor, just through slightly different means: as a pastor he was directly in charge of the maintaining and increasing the religiosity of the parish through preaching, while as a professor of philosophy he instructed others to do so.

Formey's depiction that the pastor and the professor of philosophy were two offices with closely interlocked goals and duties, which served him to legitimise his transition from the pastor to the professional philosopher, reflected what became common-place in Huguenot educational ideas during the Eighteenth Century. As Ian Hunter has pointed out, already the seventeenth-century German Calvinist academic philosophy was marked by a 'relocation of philosophy in relation to metaphysics and theology' in the sense that philosophy was not considered as a step towards theology but that, through a unification of revealed and natural truths, it was rather seen as a discipline that dealt with 'everything intelligible'.³⁴¹ Philosophy in the Calvinist perspective was hence a discipline on its own, which however could serve purposes of religion, as Formey had emphasised in his sermon. The same emphasis on the religious purposes of philosophical teaching can also be found in the later pedagogical considerations of Jean-Pierre Erman, the principal of the *collège français* in the later Eighteenth Century. The sermon that Erman held at the 100th anniversary of the *collège français* in 1789 has been analysed by Franziska Roosen in her study on the educational system of the Berlin *Refuge*. Erman explained in it the link between (philosophical) education and religion in greater detail as Formey had done.³⁴² The main concept used by Erman in his sermon was the *sagesse humaine*, understood as the knowledge of the Creation, which was acquired through observation and reasoning, the cultivation of which was the main aim of the *collège*. The benefit of the *sagesse humaine* was depicted by Erman to be three-fold: firstly, it would render the pupils susceptible for the divine word and thus conduct them to the practice of religion; secondly, it would show them the limits of natural knowledge which could only be overcome by the Bible; and thirdly via scientific education they would acquire the intellectual qualities to efficiently spread the divine word among the people. Consequently, (philosophical) education served both the individual and the collective religiosity. In a comparison to Formey's sermon in 1739, Erman's sermon suggests that the kernel of this pedagogical doctrine – the utilitarian reconciliation of the cultivation of human reason with Christian faith – was quite stable during the Eighteenth Century.

education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: A cultural history (Oxford & New York, 1987), 185.

³⁴¹ See Hunter, "The University philosopher," 52.

³⁴² Jean Pierre Erman, *Sermon pour le premier jubilé du centenaire de la fondation du Collège Royal François* (Berlin, 1789). For its interpretation see Roosen, *Soutenir notre Église*, 61-67.

This educational doctrine found its institutional application in the structure and curriculum of the *collège français*. On the structural level we can observe that the interdependency between religion and education mirrored the strong entanglement of the *collège* with the other institutions of the French colony, which were all dependent on the church consistory. There existed an academic council that determined the content of the teaching and controlled its application. This council was composed of two ecclesiastics and five laymen who all were directly subject to the King. As Christian Decker has pointed out, although according to these dispositions the *collège* was theoretically relatively independent from the Church, in reality the leadership of the institution was heavily intertwined with it: the entire personnel – teachers as well as inspectors – was recruited from within the French Church or its direct surroundings. Moreover, its close ties to the French Church can also be seen on the spatial level, as the school shared its building with the consistory and the French court.³⁴³ Particularly the chair of philosophy seems to have been closely linked to the clerical realm. As Formey himself underlined in the preface to his *Philosophe Payen* in 1759, all holders of this chair had since the *collège's* foundation previously served in an ecclesiastical position – there had actually been an alternation between converted former monks and ministers.³⁴⁴ Formey's career development, from a pastor to a professor of philosophy, was thus not exceptional and its pattern was carried forward: his disciple and later colleague at the *collège*, Jean Pierre Erman, was likewise a pastor and a professor and – also similarly to Formey – in the 1780s he even became a member of the Academy. Consequently, the personnel of the *collège* formed an ethnically homogeneous group, as Decker points out, which was reinforced by the fact that since Formey's generation, all teachers had previously been students at the school.³⁴⁵

In respect to the curriculum at the *collège français* it has to be said that philosophy was given a predominant place. As I have already said in respect to Formey's own education, philosophy was taught over a two years course that succeeded five years of basic humanist training, and was supposed to prepare the students for their studies. Until 1770 – the date of the foundation of the *séminaire de Théologie* – the French Church did not possess a separate institution for the formation of pastors, and therefore, the course on philosophy served predominantly as the preparation for *proposants*, i.e. graduates destined for theological studies.³⁴⁶ In general, eighteenth-century philosophy courses comprised of the sub-disciplines logics and ethics as practical subjects as well

343 See Decker, *Vom Höfling*, 344.

344 See Formey, *Philosophe Payen*, vol. 1, XV.

345 See Decker, *Vom Höfling*, 383 and 48. This closeness in the *collège's* personnel structure can be translated to the entirety of the colony's institutions which were lead by the same people.

346 See Velder, *300 Jahre*, 132; Roosen, *Soutenir notre Église*, 197, Erman, *Mémoire historique*, 82 indicates that 1772 was the date of the *séminaire de Théologie's* foundation. Yet, despite the foundation of this separate institution Formey's classes on philosophy seem to have also been attended by the students of the *séminaire*.

as metaphysics and physics as speculative subjects.³⁴⁷ Despite the administrative control of education through the Church, there was some liberty in deciding the actual contents of the philosophy lessons. As Ian Hunter has shown for seventeenth-century Calvinist academic philosophy, although there existed a general concept of the discipline of philosophy as a harmonic combination of natural (philosophical) and revealed knowledge, there were no precise instructions on the contents of philosophical teaching in the Calvinist regions. As a result, it depended on regional and/ or personal customs, as to which philosophical doctrines were taught.³⁴⁸ Given the philosophical taste that Formey had developed in his young years, he chose to teach Wolff's philosophy to his students and in 1746, he even composed his own textbook for this purpose which was an extremely shortened version of all of Wolff's Latin works, comprising logic, ontology, cosmology, psychology, practical philosophy and natural theology: the *Elementa philosophiae seu medulla Wolfiana*.³⁴⁹ According to Manteuffel, who claimed to have facilitated Formey's decision to teach Wolff's philosophy and rejoiced at Formey's contribution to the cause of the *Aléthophiles*, Formey lectured four times a week in Latin, and on the fifth day he summarised his lectures in French. These lectures in French were apparently also open to interested members of the public, such as members of the Prussian state administration and amateur philosophers who, according to Manteuffel, attended Formey's speeches in great number and were all enthused with Wolff's ideas.³⁵⁰ Manteuffel certainly considered Formey's lectures on Wolff's philosophy as a political means, yet, it is doubtful whether Formey saw it in the same way. In 1766, in a short treatise on preaching practice, he referred to his work as a professor of philosophy in a way that was not comparable to Manteuffel's zeal:

'je me suis en même tems affermi dans l'idée que je conçus de la Philosophie que j'enseigne dès le premier Cours que j'en fis il y a vingt-sept ans: c'est qu'en ne décidant point sur les dogmes qui font porter à cette Philosophie le nom de Leibnitienne, ou de Wolfienne, en mettant à l'écart toutes les Controverses auxquelles ses dogmes peuvent donner lieu, elle a du moins ce mérite, elle possède incontestablement cette prérogative, qu'elle forme l'esprit humain à la justesse & à l'ordre, qu'elle l'accoutume à cette méthode qui ouvre & applanit toutes les routes, qui apprend à penser & à raisonner conséquemment, à n'admettre aucun terme sans l'entendre, aucune proposition à moins qu'elle ne soit bien prouvée, aucun raisonnement si des prémisses

347 Brockliss, *French Higher education*, 186.

348 See Hunter, "The University philosopher," 51. Although Hunter's findings are linked to philosophical teaching at German universities, they can be considered to give principal indications for the case of the Berlin Huguenots' higher education institutions.

349 Formey, *Elementa philosophiae seu medulla Wolfiana in usum auditorum* (Berlin, 1746). Compare to Formey's own review of this work, "Article XVI. Elementa [...]," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* 2 (1746), 186-9.

350 Manteuffel to Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched, Berlin 17.10.1739, *Johann Christoph Gottsched. Briefwechsel*, vol. 6, 139-40.

évidentes ne menent à une conclusion légitimement déduite.¹³⁵¹

Formey hence explicitly highlighted that his purpose in teaching Wolff's and Leibniz's philosophy as a preparation for future pastors, had never been to present it as a doctrine, through which to take a position in certain philosophical controversies, instead he claimed to have simply taught the epistemology on which this philosophy was grounded. To correctly contextualise Formey's rather sober evaluation of his preaching practice, we, however, have to stress that in 1766 Wolff's philosophy had passed its peak of celebrity, whereas in 1739 when Formey had started to teach it, it was, as I have tried to show, extremely fashionable within the Berlin Huguenot community.

Given the generally important role of philosophy at the *collège* and in supporting the French Church, and Formey's appealing individual practice of it, we have to assume that he acquired an outstanding social prestige which facilitated the construction of his intellectual authority. The social prestige he gained through his office was expressed, besides the mentioned ideological considerations linked to philosophical teaching, in the structural and economic position of the professor of philosophy. According to the statute of the *collège* the professor of philosophy was also the director of the institution, i.e. the head of all the professors and thus the institution's first representative. Instead, the role of the *collège*'s headmaster, who had to manage every-day school-life, was assigned to the professor of elocution, a position held by Erman from 1766 onwards. Both of them, director and headmaster, were part of the aforementioned academic council which was responsible for the curriculum, appointments and the control of the personnel's and students' conduct. Yet, of the two of them, only the director had the right to vote in it.³⁵² Moreover, the high symbolic capital bestowed on the position of the professor of philosophy was expressed in his salary which amounted to 428 Thaler, and thus was by far the highest salary of all the personnel – the headmaster, who had the second highest income, earned only 150 Thaler.³⁵³ Formey also seems to have received this salary even after he retired in 1791,³⁵⁴ a fact that seems to indicate the lifelong character of his position as a professor of philosophy, similar to the lifelong office intended for the French Church's pastors.

The dominant role of the professor of philosophy and the close entanglement of philosophical teaching with religion was intended by the French colony, on the ideal as well as on the structural level. Hence Formey's attempts to legitimise his transition from the office of the pastor to that of the professor of philosophy was not a difficult undertaking; he was able to rely to

351 See Formey, "Discours préliminaire," *Tableau du bonheur domestique, suivi de quelques Discours sur des Vérités intéressantes de la Religion et de la Morale* (Leiden, 1766), XV-XVI.

352 See Decker, *Vom Höfling*, 345. The statute of the *collège* signed by Frederick I in 1703, can be found in Erman, *Mémoire historique*, 132-150.

353 See Schulze, *Festschrift*, 43.

354 See Schulze, *Festschrift*, 55.

large extent on tradition. However, the fact that he had to legitimate his transition suggests that this tradition was beginning to change. As I have tried to show, the impression of new philosophies that were rather critical of religion and the associated negative propaganda that emerged against these forms of philosophy towards mid-Eighteenth Century, helped to create the image of an incompatibility of the religious and 'secular' office among Formey's co-confessionals. What is more, for the template of this image the believers and churchmen could resort to the orthodox conception of the pastoral office in the seventeenth-century *Discipline ecclésiastique*. Formey, as someone who with Wolffian philosophy actually also taught a philosophy that – despite all its resemblances to the Reformed erudition – did not emerge out of the legacy of Formey's first-generation Huguenot teachers, must have particularly felt the need for emphasising the compatibility and almost interchangeability of his old and new office. Brought to a point in his farewell sermon in 1739, his arguments of legitimisation fulfilled at the same time the function of a programmatic declaration of his understanding of the role of the Christian philosopher, and provided the French Huguenot community with a prospect of his future practice as a professional philosopher.

3. Preaching like a Philosopher and Philosophising like a Preacher

Despite the official separation between the office of the pastor and the philosopher – as was required by both the tradition of the *Discipline ecclésiastique* and the ambiguous perceptions of philosophy around the mid-Eighteenth Century – Formey continued to embody both roles,³⁵⁵ which had a significant effect on his writing: Formey broke down the boundaries that separated the specific genres, which were associated with each of these realms, by using them almost interchangeably in preaching and in philosophy. This phenomenon can emblematically be observed in an anecdote on Formey improvising on the pulpit, which Manteuffel narrated in a letter to Luise Adelgunde Gottsched, the wife of the Leipzig literary critic Johann Christoph Gottsched, who was herself a member of the *Aléthophiles*, in November 1740: One Sunday, when he was on duty to preach, Formey had initially planned to re-use a sermon that he had presented two months earlier in another parish, yet, since at the beginning of the service, he recognised his colleague from this same parish in the audience, Formey spontaneously decided to change his plan. Having had just recently prepared a philosophy lecture on the perfections of God's creations, Formey presented this lecture instead of the sermon, in order to avoid being embarrassed in front of his colleague. However, the reactions of his audience were mixed: as Manteuffel reported, the 'gens du métier', i.e. of the philosophical profession, praised the way he transmitted philosophical concepts on the pulpit, whereas the 'non-philosophes' remained rather puzzled by Formey's explanation of philosophical notions with which they were not familiar.³⁵⁶ This anecdote shows that the practice of lecturing philosophy on the pulpit hinged simultaneously on the above-mentioned concept of philosophy as a universal method that comprised all sorts of subjects, God's creation included, and on a concept of theology that also supposedly comprised natural theological explications of dogmatic content. Yet, these conceptualisations seem to have exclusively pertained to the perception of Formey and the more educated members of his audience, while the majority of the audience apparently did not consider religious instruction as interchangeable with lessons in philosophy.

The practice described in Manteuffel's anecdote, i.e. the transformation of philosophy into

355 See above, ch. 2. Additionally Erman to Formey, 27.2.1758 (Slg. Darm.): 'Je crains qu'il n'y ait de l'indiscrétion a vous demander si vous ne pourriés pas donner un sermon pour M. Pelloutier Dimanche en huit. Quelque disposé que vous soiés a vous preter aux besoins de l'Eglise, je sens que vous devez etre las de precher autant que les Pasteurs ordinaires. [...] J'espere [...] qu'on ne sera plus dans la necessité de vous exposer si souvent a un tentation aussi forte que l'est pour vous l'occasion d'edifier le public en rendant service aux particuliers.' Formey hence basically fulfilled the duties of a regular pastor in the late 1750s.

356 See Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel an Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched, 2.11.1740, *Johann Christoph Gottsched, Briefwechsel. Unter Einschluß des Briefwechsels von Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched*, vol. 7, ed. Detlef Döring et. al. (Berlin, 2013), 201-202.

preaching which gave rise to a particular sort of sermon, the philosophical sermon, constituted only one part of the effects that Formey's hybrid role as a philosopher-pastor had: Formey also practised this transformation the other way round and turned sermons into (popular) philosophical writing. As we have already mentioned, the moral philosophical essays of his famous *Philosophe Chrétien* had originally been sermons. The majority of them presumably had an exclusively oral origin, like the 20th essay of the first volume, 'Sur la joye', which Formey must have previously presented in March 1741 as a sermon based on St. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians 5, 16: 'Soyez toujours joyeux.' At the time Manteuffel had reported on this sermon to Reinbeck and had announced that it would be published soon, which, however, according to the records, never was realised.³⁵⁷ Generally, it seems that published sermons rarely received the public's approval in the first half of the Eighteenth Century, which coincided with an increasing difficulty to find publishers for them. This was stressed in a review of one of Formey's sermon collections in 1739 in the *Bibliothèque Germanique*: 'Un Recueil de Sermons trouve rarement grace devant le Public, & les Libraires, naturellement prévenus contre ces sortes de Productions, ne s'en chargent qu'avec peine.' The reason for the public's disinterest in sermons and the reluctance of booksellers to publish them were, according to the same review, the strong competition with other forms of writing, like novels, and the increasing and illegitimate criticism of sermons.³⁵⁸ Therefore it seems that Formey's practice of publishing former sermons in a collection of apparently 'secular' writings, was first and foremost a strategy to circumvent the obstacles that the printing of sermons encountered.

Yet, the high number of printed sermons in Formey's oeuvre suggests that this was only one, although important, aspect of the transformation of sermons into moral philosophical discourses. In Rolf Geissler's bibliography of Formey's writings, there were 23 sermons, although there might be a few double entries since several sermons were published first individually before being re-issued together with others in a sermon collection.³⁵⁹ The publication of sermons was hence not entirely impossible at the time. What is more – and this is the most interesting point – Formey actually re-published some of these already published sermons under the cover of the *Philosophe Chrétien*. Formey's 1739 sermon collection *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte* contained three different thematic series of sermons held in 1736 and 1739 in the Friedrichstadt church in Berlin. The first three sermons, *Sur la nature et les sources du vrai contentement* reappeared in the first

357 See Manteuffel to Reinbeck, 25.3.1741 (UBL Ms 0344 145r-146v). See also Manteuffel to Formey, 22.3.1741 (FF).

358 See [Anonymous], "Article VIII. Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture Sainte par Samuel Formey [...]"

Bibliothèque Germanique 47 (1740), 189. The new competition between sermons and a secular 'moral-aesthetic edification literature' that emanated in the seventeenth and eighteenth century is also mentioned by Albrecht Beutel, "Evangelische Predigt vom 16. bis 18. Jahrhundert," *TRE* (Berlin; New York, 1997), 304-5. He also emphasises the fact that this new type of literature often had its origins in the pastoral milieu.

359 See Rolf Geissler, "Bibliographie des écrits de Jean Henri Samuel Formey," 427-48.

volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien* (1750), the subsequent two sermons, *Le fidèle fortifié par la grace* in the second volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien* (1752), and the last three sermons in 1739, which dealt with the biblical story of Martha and Maria, eventually reappeared in the third volume of the same book (1755). Moreover, there is one of Formey's sermon series that followed a rather extraordinary trajectory of publication and did not enter into the *Philosophe Chrétien*: Formey's series of three sermons, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle de la Perfection en trois sermons sur St. Matth. Ch. V. v. 48*, appeared in 1747 and were subsequently re-published first as an independent philosophical essay entitled *Essai sur la perfection* in 1751 and then they were eventually also published in Formey's *Mélanges Philosophiques* in 1754. This diversified publication history indicates the extraordinary nature of these three sermons that, according to Formey's own statement, were 'Wolffian' sermons. With this evaluation of his own sermons as Wolffian, Formey seems to partially reveal why it was practically possible and also meaningful for him to re-publish his sermons (i.e. sacred literature) as moral philosophical discourses (i.e. 'secular' edifying literature): a closer comparison of the different published sermons with their respective moral philosophical discourses will show that the 'sacred' and the 'secular' texts were extremely similar in form and content. This is due to the fact that the sermons composed by Formey and a large number of Protestant pastors in the 1730s and 1740s had themselves been based on philosophical writing, more precisely on the philosophical writing of Wolff and his followers.

Wolffian Philosophical Preaching

Formey's sermons have to be considered in the light of the development and implementation of the genre of the so-called 'philosophical sermon' ('philosophische Predigt') by the leading German Wolffian theologians in the 1730s and with the (political) help of the *Aléthophiles*. As Andres Strassberger, the most recent historian of this phenomenon, shows, the overall aim of these philosophical sermons was the edification of the believers and it emerged out of the attempt to oppose Lutheran orthodoxy and Pietism alike.³⁶⁰ The edification of the believer was also a central term in Pietist preaching, yet the Wolffian theologians developed this concept further by using approaches from anthropology and Wolffian psychology. As a consequence, the central aim of the 'philosophical sermon' was the soul of the listener, more precisely his understanding and his will: by logically explaining the meaning of the sermon (as inspired by Wolff's demonstrative method), a sermon's doctrinal contents would be properly understood by the believer, and by moderately

³⁶⁰ See Andres Strassberger, *Johann Christoph Gottsched und die "philosophische" Predigt: Studien zur aufklärerischen Transformation der protestantischen Homiletik im Spannungsfeld von Theologie, Philosophie, Rhetorik und Politik* (Tübingen, 2010), 245.

appealing to the believer's feelings, his will would be guided towards the good.³⁶¹ By claiming that Formey's sermons were directly and almost uniquely indebted to Wolffian homiletics I want to add to and slightly adjust Berkvens-Stevelinck's studies on Huguenot preaching, which claimed that Pietism and Wolffianism had a simultaneous and combined influence on eighteenth-century Huguenot sermons.³⁶² In her eyes, between the 1730s and 50s, Isaac de Beausobre and Formey advanced this phenomenon, and when compared to the beginning of the Huguenot diaspora, it was clear that preaching in the *Refuge* had changed significantly.³⁶³ For Isaac de Beausobre's generation it might have also been true that Pietist influences played a role, yet for Formey's generation it seems more likely to me that Pietism did not play any role and that only the new method of the philosophical sermon, which used a different concept of edification to the Pietists, found an entrance into Huguenot preaching.

This new philosophical preaching method was predominantly established and shaped by the Prussian court preacher Johann Gustav Reinbeck, and the Leipzig professor of philosophy and literature Johann Christoph Gottsched, who were both part of Manteuffel's *Société des Aléthophiles*. The latter, at the suggestion of Manteuffel and in close collaboration with Reinbeck, published in 1740 an anonymous homiletic manual which presented the rules that characterised his and Reinbeck's practice of preaching: the *Grund-Riß einer Lehr-Arth ordentlich und erbaulich zu predigen*.³⁶⁴ Simultaneously to the conceptualisation of this method, Reinbeck also used his influence at the court to integrate it into the reform of the Prussian Reformed Church that King Friedrich Wilhelm I was attempting in the late 1730s.³⁶⁵ This was indeed successful: on the 7 March 1739 the King issued a so-called *Kabinettsorder* to the Consistory of the German Reformed Church in Prussia, with the aim to provide a better edification for the believers. With this purpose, the law ordered that sermons should become easier to understand, which meant more 'reasonable, clear and convincing', and less 'oblique, artificial and forced'.³⁶⁶ The actors that were predominantly intended to effect this change were the professors of theology at universities and higher schools as it became their responsibility to instruct the pastoral candidates and students of theology in this new method of preaching. The most explicit and equally most political article of the whole law was the second

361 See Strassberger, *Philosophische Predigt*, 251-4.

362 See Berkvens-Stevelinck, "Entre ferveur et scepticisme," 203-4.

363 See Berkvens-Stevelinck, "Entre ferveur et scepticisme," 200 and 212.

364 [Johann Christoph Gottsched], *Grund-Riß einer Lehr-Arth ordentlich und erbaulich zu predigen nach dem Inhalt der Königlichen Preussischen allergnädigsten Cabinets-Ordre vom 7. Martii 1739 entworfen* (Berlin, 1740). For the genesis of the book and Manteuffel's role in it see particularly Strassberger, *Philosophische Predigt*, 367-78.

365 For the context of the law see also Strassberger, *Philosophische Predigt*, 344-66.

366 See "Allergnädigste Verordnung wegen der Prediger und Candidaten deutlichen Lehr=Art, vom 8. Febr. 1740 nebst Beylage sub A. B. & C.," published in Strassberger, *Philosophische Predigt*, 553. On 8 February 1740 the *Kabinettsorder* was introduced for the Lutheran Churches; in the cited version supplement A consists of the original text for the Reformed Church.

one, which explicitly suggested that future pastors should be instructed in the logics of Christian Wolff. This point not only constituted a political victory for the Wolffian party over its Pietist adversaries within the above-mentioned debate on Wolff's potential rehabilitation in Prussia, it also provoked the equation of a more comprehensible form of preaching with the adoption of Wolffian philosophy to sermons. As Strassberger pointed out, this emphasis on Wolffian philosophy in the *Kabinettsorder* favoured a return to Wolff's concepts and methods in the homiletics and sermons in the middle decades of the Eighteenth Century.³⁶⁷

This phenomenon also spread into the milieu of the French Reformed clergy in Prussia: the *Kabinettsorder* was immediately translated into French and communicated to the French Supreme Consistory.³⁶⁸ Moreover, among the Huguenots in the late 1730s, the time seems to have been ripe for a homiletic evolution as there has been a discussion on reforming pastors' education for almost an entire decade before the *Kabinettsorder*. At the centre of these discussions was the need to improve the pastoral candidates' morality as well as to provide them with a more thorough and professional education in theology, which would then be reflected in a more reasonable and comprehensible preaching. The preliminary end of these discussions that can be retraced in the Prussian state files concerning the French Church's Supreme Consistory, was the agreement on a 'Reglement concernant les Etudiants en Théologie et les Candidats françois, donné à Berlin, ce 13. Novembre, 1736'. The subsequent document in this file is the translated *Kabinettsorder* that was sent to the French consistory on the 19 March 1739.³⁶⁹ Besides the institutional infiltration of the French Reformed community with the new homiletics, there had also been forms of cultural appropriation: not only that Gottsched's and Reinbeck's homiletic manual was apparently read by the Huguenot pastors in Germany,³⁷⁰ but, as we have seen above, the young Huguenot pastors around Formey were also directly acquainted with Reinbeck's preaching through the translation of his sermons into French. That the Huguenots and particularly Formey appreciated the style of these sermons can be seen in Formey's review of two of the above-mentioned translated sermon collections, the Christmas sermons of 1737 and the five sermons translated by Des Champs in 1739, in the *Bibliothèque Germanique*. After having outlined Reinbeck's argument in the first collection, in which he had proven via a rational demonstration that the doctrine of Jesus' birth was true and real, Formey judged that the method that Reinbeck applied was excellent for convincing the faithful, and that it was much more favourable than the common preaching style: 'Telle est la méthode que Mr. Reinbeck suit pour l'ordinaire dans l'exposition des Vérités de la Religion:

367 See Strassberger, *Philosophische Predigt*, 262.

368 See GStA I. HA, Rep. 244, Nr. 82, 158r -162r. The royal letter to the consistory is from 19.3.1739.

369 See GStA I. HA, Rep. 244, Nr. 82, 53r-135v.

370 See Bocquet to Formey, 26.8.1740 (FF).

méthode bien propre à opérer la conviction, & bien différente des vaines & frivoles déclamations de la plupart des Prédicateurs.³⁷¹ In light of this positive evaluation, it is likely that the Lutheran Reinbeck became a role model for Huguenot homiletics. To emphasise the importance of this new preaching method Formey even added an extract of Reinbeck's homiletic considerations to his review, in which the essential traits of philosophical, or Wolffian, preaching were presented: the preacher should not put forward anything on the pulpit without providing his audience with the most distinct notions of it, and he should show his audience the utmost origins or sufficient reason of the truths that he teaches on the pulpit.³⁷²

Manteuffel actively encouraged the Huguenots to adopt this philosophical preaching method. In many ways he acted as the puppet master in his effort to increase Wolff's influence in Prussia; he not only encouraged Formey and his Huguenot friends to translate Reinbeck, he also supported their own attempts at sermon writing. This can be observed particularly in the genesis of Formey's 1739 and 1747 sermon series, which Manteuffel seems to have considered as a means to promote the application of Wolffian philosophy to the pulpit. The publication of the 1739 sermon collection had been 'ordered' by Manteuffel after having heard of the success of Formey's farewell sermon in front of the congregation of the *Friedrichstadtkirche*. Manteuffel suggested to Formey that this farewell sermon should be published together with the sermon series on satisfaction, the content of which had also been inspired by Manteuffel in 1736.³⁷³ Moreover, Formey added two sermons on *Le fidèle fortifié par la grace*, the first of which had already been published in 1736 under the auspices of Manteuffel.³⁷⁴ In contrast, the three sermons entitled *L'idée, les règles et le modèle de la Perfection*, that appeared eight years later, seem to have been published on Formey's own initiative without the assistance of his *Aléthophile* patron. Yet, it seems that Formey wrote them with the deliberate aim to please Manteuffel and his intellectual role model Wolff: in late 1746 Formey presented the text to Manteuffel as his 'sermons wolffiens'³⁷⁵ and he indeed earned his and Gottsched's appreciation,³⁷⁶ as well as Wolff's, who found his own morals and metaphysics applied in the sermons.³⁷⁷ Manteuffel even envisaged having the sermons translated into German and published at his own expense,³⁷⁸ which emphasises his regard for them as a sample of Wolffian preaching, and that he wanted them to be disseminated further.

371 See [Formey], "Article VI. Sermons sur le Mystère de la Naissance de J. Christ [...]" *Bibliothèque Germanique*, 45 (1739), 135.

372 See [Formey], "Article VI," 136.

373 See Manteuffel to Formey, 13.9.1739 (CV), as well as Formey's dedication to *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, (without pagination). See also Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 401-3.

374 See Formey, "Dédication," *Sermon sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*.

375 See Manteuffel to Wolff, 25.11.1746, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, 219.

376 See Manteuffel to Formey, 26.11.1746 (CV).

377 See Wolff to Manteuffel, 7.12.1746, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, 230.

378 See Manteuffel to Formey, 20.12.1746 (CV).

Manteuffel not only supported the publication process of Formey's Wolffian sermons, he seems to have even tried to interfere from time to time in the content of these sermons. A very interesting example of this is his above-mentioned sermon on joy which Manteuffel commented on in both of its forms of appearance: as a sermon in 1741, and as a moral philosophical discourse in 1748. In 1741 Manteuffel had praised Formey for the application of a moral theory based on the idea of self-governance which was, as we will see in chapters 10 and 11, defended by Wolff but that Manteuffel associated in this case with Marie Huber's *Lettres sur la Religion essentielle à l'homme* of 1739/8, a work that was considered heterodox for its elevation of natural religion over revealed religion. More precisely, Formey claimed in his sermon that the feeling of joy, like all other moral feelings, depended on human nature, i.e. on understanding and will, and not on directions given to the individual by somebody else. Therefore, as Formey insinuated, the apostle's exhortation 'be always joyful' sounded like an order, which seemed contrary to human nature.³⁷⁹ However, despite this insinuation and the arguments that Formey provided throughout his sermon to support it, Formey claimed that the apostle's word was true, because it did not mean a simple obligation,³⁸⁰ and that in general religion was the only way that human beings could fulfil their true nature and become perfect and joyful.³⁸¹ Thus, Formey's argument shows the attempt to reconcile philosophical, natural-law-based theories and the praise of religion and God, yet it seems that Manteuffel considered that Formey had done this in a less elegant and clear way. Manteuffel suggested that he pursue another argument that would allow him to reconcile natural moral theories and Revelation: he should interpret the apostle's word rather as advice or as a recommendation (instead of an order), and should claim that the Bible passage simply meant that people should share the feelings of joy that they naturally experienced when discovering truths (especially Christian truths) with others.³⁸² Unfortunately, we do not have the original version of Formey's sermon and can only rely on what appeared later in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, yet from this, it seems that he did not consider Manteuffel's suggestions.³⁸³

In 1748, when Formey sent Manteuffel his manuscript of his *Discours sur la Joye*, which in my view must have been the same version as his earlier sermon, Manteuffel was still concerned with the way in which Formey achieved the reconciliation of philosophical theories and revealed religion, yet he picked up on a completely different point in his writing. Towards the end of the sermon/discourse, when Formey highlighted the superior role of revealed religion in the human

379 See Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 249-50.

380 See Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 250.

381 See Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 261.

382 See Manteuffel to Formey, 22.3.1741 (FF).

383 Manteuffel had also criticised Formey's definition of joy and quoted it to him in his letter. This definition can still be found in the same wording in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 255.

beings' moral conduct, as opposed to the role of philosophy, he strongly discredited philosophy in general: he stated that 'L'école de la Philosophie est une école d'orgueil, où l'homme cherche en vain dans ses propres forces les principes d'un bonheur, auquel la Religion seule peut le conduire.'³⁸⁴ It appears somehow understandable that Formey had written such a sentence in a sermon where he supposedly tried to underline that his purpose was to single out the superiority of religion. Yet, despite the fact that this claim made the above-mentioned beginning of his moral-philosophical argument appear alien, it must have also been perceived rather negatively by the readers, who considered themselves as philosophers. This was presumably why Manteuffel expressed his disapproval of this passage and urged Formey to change it. He pointed in his letter to the different situation in 1741 and 1748, first with respect to Formey's general intellectual standpoint, which according to him had evolved, and second with respect to the audience of his discourse, which had probably also changed.³⁸⁵ Nonetheless, in 1748 Formey once again did not comply with Manteuffel's suggestions for reasons unknown to us. This episode on Formey's *Discours sur la Joye*, however, raises two issues, besides Manteuffel's strong urge to intervene in Formey's writings: first both sermons and moral discourses were supposed to combine dogma and natural knowledge – just as Formey's concept of Christian philosophy provided – however, this argument needed to be presented skilfully in order to not contradict the one by the other. Second, this skilfulness needed to be adapted from instance to instance, and it was this lack of refinement that Manteuffel missed in Formey's writings and therefore asked him to render both the sermon and the moral philosophical discourse in different ways more philosophical.

From the Philosophical Sermon to the Moral Philosophical Discourse

The common goal of sermons and moral philosophical discourses to combine dogma and natural law, was expressed in the quasi-congruency of the two different genres. Such a congruency made it possible for Formey to easily transpose them from one realm to another, although this was not always desirable (or, to put it the other way round: the increasing congruency of the two genres was the result of this habit of mutually transposing them). The changes that Formey undertook in this process only resulted in some structural and stylistic adjustments, while the content of his philosophical sermons and moral philosophical discourses were virtually identical. As Albrecht

384 Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, 260.

385 See Manteuffel to Formey, 10.8.1748 (Slg. Darm.). In this letter Manteuffel made an explicit reference to the conflict that Formey had with Wolff and the *Aléthophiles* in 1741 over the contents of the second volume of his *Belle Wolfienne*, which I will discuss in chapter 8. Formey's negative judgement on philosophy in his *Discours sur la Joye* was also discussed by Manteuffel and Wolff, likewise Wolff shared Manteuffel's disapproval of it; see Wolff to Manteuffel, 22.8.1748, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 227.

Beutel claimed in his work on Protestant preaching in eighteenth-century Germany, its aim was to generate a practical piety in which theological doctrine only played an auxiliary function, while morality was advanced to the centre of religious life and thus of the sermon's content, just as references to the believers' life experiences.³⁸⁶ In line with this general observation, Berkvens-Stevelinck has noted that among the Huguenots in the Berlin colony the preferred sermon topics were by far the life of the believer and Christian charity. She found out that in general the essential doctrines of the Christian faith decreased in sermons whereas the non-essential aspects increased, which gave the sermons a less rigorous appearance.³⁸⁷ This tendency is obvious in Formey's sermons: despite also being Bible teachings, the nature and achievement of human satisfaction, happiness and perfection, which figure among the topics of Formey's sermons, did not belong to the core doctrines of Christianity. At the same time, these topics were at the core of eighteenth-century moral theories. The broad theme that God had provided man with the possibility to better his condition, which was also contained in Formey's sermons, was linked to questions of self-governance, which was an increasingly popular moral philosophical concept in the Eighteenth Century.³⁸⁸

Closely linked to this shift in sermon topics, the importance of the Bible as a textual foundation for these topics decreased in Germany in the first half of the Eighteenth Century.³⁸⁹ Still, the rules of Huguenot preaching contained in the *Discipline ecclésiastique* of the French Church, stated that basing each sermon on a Biblical text was an absolute necessity.³⁹⁰ Yet, in practice Scripture seems to have started to play only a formal role, for it was often cited to serve just as a headline and its content was translated into general (contemporary) human experience. In Formey's sermons on satisfaction, it seems almost as if he arbitrarily picked a sentence from the Bible, detached from any context, and used it as the foundation for his entire three-sermon-long text. The sentence involved here is the one spoken by Paul, addressed to the Philippians: 'J'ai appris d'être content de l'état où je me trouve.' (Philipp. IV, 2). As Formey stated at the beginning of this series of sermons, these few words comprised a universally applicable art – the art of being satisfied with what one had – on which he subsequently would elaborate in detail.³⁹¹ Formally, Formey's

386 See Beutel, "Evangelische Predigt," 305.

387 See Berkvens-Stevelinck, "Entre ferveur et scepticisme," 205.

388 See J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge; New York, 1998), 5.

389 See Pasi Ihalainen, "The Enlightenment sermon: Towards practical religion and a sacred national community," in *Preaching, sermons and cultural change in the long eighteenth century*, ed. Joris van Eijnatten (Leiden; Boston, 2009), 242; Hans Martin Müller, "Homiletik," *TRE* (Berlin; New York, 1986), 537. Both refer to the German lands, and more precisely to the so-called neologists Spalding and Mosheim who published influential homiletics in the second half of the eighteenth century.

390 See *Discipline ecclésiastique*, § XII, 73.

391 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 5.

arguments were strongly tied to Scripture; the reference to the Bible passage on Paul re-appeared throughout the whole text. However, Formey's understanding of Scripture seems to have been historical rather than doctrinal. That means that he allowed his audience to identify with Saint Paul by presenting him as both a contemporary model of conduct³⁹² and a historical witness for Formey's arguments.³⁹³ Moreover, Formey was careful to avoid using the image of the Apostle imposing (divine) laws on the congregation.³⁹⁴ This new use of biblical contents underlines again the increasing importance that was accorded to human experiences in sermons. Consequently, when Formey re-published his sermons as moral discourses in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, which focused on questions of human experience, he did not have to introduce any major changes in the content, as there had taken place a conceptual shift concerning the role of the scriptural foundation of sacred speeches. In his discourses on satisfaction, he retained all the instances in which he referred to Saint Paul as a role model and witness,³⁹⁵ and he stressed this function more than he had done in the sermon: he called Paul in the *Philosophe Chrétien* 'cet Apôtre' instead of 'notre Apôtre' in the sermons, which reinforced the apostle's role as a historical figure instead of being part of a confessional identity;³⁹⁶ additionally he dispensed with his excessive acclamation of Paul that had been present in the sermons.³⁹⁷

Despite the general shift from doctrine to morality in the content of eighteenth-century sermons, exegetical sermons also continued to exist in Formey's preaching. Yet, compared to the relatively easy adaptability of such moral sermons like those on satisfaction, exegetical sermons were far less adaptable to the genre of secular moral philosophical discourses. Nevertheless, Formey also translated this type of sermon into moral discourses without making any major changes to them, as can be seen in the first of his sermons on Martha and Mary, which he had preached in 1739, and re-issued in the third volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien* in 1755. The purpose of this exegetical sermon was apparently to rectify former interpretations of the Bible passage that dealt with the story of these two sisters through a close analysis of the text and its contextualisation within the life of Christ.³⁹⁸ In the corresponding moral philosophical discourse, instead of starting

392 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 16.

393 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 12.

394 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 22.

395 Compare *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 12 and *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 217; and *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 22 and *Philosophe Chrétien*, 227.

396 Compare *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 13 and *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 218.

397 Compare *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 22 and *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 227.

398 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 109-10: 'C'est la, M.F. si je ne me trompe, le véritable sens Historique de ces paroles; & il y a une espece de Fanatisme a y chercher des mysteres, & des Images de la vie contemplative & de la vie active, qui ne s'y trouvent point.' That Formey's interpretation of this Bible passage has been innovative is also suggested by the Genevan pastor Léonard Baulacre who used Formey's sermon as a source for his own considerations on this passage, see Baulacre to Formey, 22.9.1746, *Lettres de Genève*, 159.

with the passage from the Gospel, as in the sermon, Formey started by making some remarks on the general application of the text, i.e. he reflected on the diversity among individuals. Only later did he quote the Gospel as the basis for his considerations.³⁹⁹ All the same, despite this re-arrangement of emphasis, the text did not quite correspond to the genre of secular moral philosophical writing as the public and publisher perceived it. As the book's publisher, Luzac, noted, the stories from the life of Christ fitted the purpose of the *Philosophe Chrétien* less well than texts on morality.⁴⁰⁰ Even Formey himself was aware of the fact that not every sermon could be transformed into a moral discourse, as was clear from the instructions he gave to his friend Bocquet, who was supposed to contribute a piece to his *Philosophe Chrétien*. Formey wanted him to contribute with a sermon that was not too closely based on Scripture for this would make it easier to present the text under a secular topic in the *Philosophe Chrétien*.⁴⁰¹ It appears therefore likely that Formey, despite being aware of the inadequateness of exegetical sermons for moral philosophical texts, published them out of economic reasons, i.e. in order to fill further volumes of his best-selling *Philosophe Chrétien*.

Besides the general disengagement of the sermons' content from core doctrines of Christianity and scriptural roots, which facilitated the transposition of sermons into secular writing, also new sources of knowledge entered into preaching. As we have observed above with respect to Formey's concept of philosophy, he considered natural and revealed knowledge to be epistemic categories that, depending on context, he portrayed either as equivalent (like in his scholarly edition of Pliny the Younger) or as building upon each other with Revelation standing above natural reason (like in most of his essays in the *Philosophe Chrétien*). However, this distinction of epistemic categories pertained not only to the writings that he considered philosophical, but was also – although sometimes in a modified version – present in many of his sermons. In his sermons on satisfaction, as well as in the corresponding discourse in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, Formey depicted how both the observation of nature and human experience could teach people about the cultivation of satisfaction, before he explained the kinds of support that religious doctrine provided to this end: 'Il s'agit aujourd'hui de vous enseigner les moyens d'y [= au bonheur] arriver, & pour cet effet nous puiserons dans trois sources, la Nature, l'Experience & la Religion. Ce sont autant d'Ecoles différentes, ou l'homme peut & doit apprendre à être content de son sort.'⁴⁰² However, Formey also emphasised that these three different sources of knowledge were ordered hierarchically, whereby

399 See Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 3, 203.

400 See Luzac to Formey, 13.8.1754, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 252.

401 See Bocquet to Formey, 29.1.1751 (FF) where Bocquet enumerated several reasons why his sermons would not be suitable for the next volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien*, among others: 'D'un autre côté presque tous mes sermons sont des explications de Textes, tellement liées avec les Termes du Texte sur lequel ils roulent, qu'il ne seroit guere possible de les ajuster même à quelque parallele, bien loin d'y trouver une suite indépenamment de tout Texte.'

402 Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 22.

religion was superior to nature and human experience. In the *Philosophe Chrétien*, he also argued with these three sources of knowledge and also stressed the superiority of religion: 'C'est la religion, qui nous ouvre une troisième Ecole, dont les leçons sont fort supérieures à celles de la nature & de l'expérience.'⁴⁰³ However, in the sermon the statement of this superiority was significantly amplified and embellished: over a whole paragraph, Formey explained that religion as a source of knowledge was equivalent to the voice of God Himself, who wanted to prepare men for eternity and hence that the believers had to carefully listen and respect this voice.⁴⁰⁴ This means that, although religion was flanked by non-sacred sources in sermons and moral discourses alike, its authority over them was still much more strongly highlighted in the sermons.

A similar tendency can be observed in Formey's three sermons on perfection, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle de la perfection*, that appeared ten years later, and his 'secular' *Essai sur la perfection* which corresponded to them.⁴⁰⁵ In the sermons, he first stated – much more explicitly than in the 1736 sermons on satisfaction – the objective equality of natural law and divine Revelation.⁴⁰⁶ On the basis of this claim in the first of the three sermons, he provided an analysis of perfection that was based on natural law alone. However, at the end of this first sermon, he corrected his previous assumption and stated that revealed religion was still superior to nature alone since it was more powerful in inciting and guiding the human pursuit for perfection.⁴⁰⁷ The third and last sermon was then completely dedicated to the elaboration of the instructions that revealed religion offered to the believer; there Formey elevated piety over secular virtue⁴⁰⁸ and portrayed God as a model of human improvement.⁴⁰⁹ The two instances in the sermon collection in which religion's superiority was stressed, i.e. the end of the first sermon and the entire last sermon, were bridged by a sermon that was again based on natural law theories. Consequently, although the three sermons on perfection emphasised revealed religion's superiority as a source of knowledge and morality, they were largely natural-law-based, which enabled Formey to transport them into a non-religious context while keeping their content to a large extent as it was.

As mentioned above, Formey re-published the three sermons on perfection in 1751 under the title *Essai sur la perfection*, a text that was apparently intended for the French market as Formey offered it to the Parisian bookseller Antoine Briasson. It was published together with another of Formey's moral philosophical pieces, the *Système du vrai bonheur*, which was a free translation of a

403 See Formey, *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 238.

404 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 40.

405 For a more detailed analysis on the moral philosophical conceptions contained in these sermons, see chapter 10.

406 See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle de la Perfection en trois sermons sur St. Matth. Ch. V. v. 48* (Berlin, 1747), 7 and 18-9.

407 See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 19-20.

408 See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 43 and 50-1.

409 See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 52.

text by the German theologian Johann Joachim Spalding.⁴¹⁰ Briasson had to publish the two writings under a 'fausse adresse' – the title page reads Utrecht instead of Paris⁴¹¹ – but still, the publication history of the text shows that Formey succeeded in transporting a text that had originally been a Protestant sermon into Catholic-ruled France. This emphasises how minor and almost invisible the Reformed doctrine appeared to be in the text. Moreover, the *Essai sur la perfection* differed from the original sermon text only in the arrangement of its parts. The aforementioned final passage of the first sermon, in which Formey stressed the superiority of revealed religion as a source of perfection, was moved to the end of the whole essay, and hence became a sort of general conclusion that answered the question of what was the perfection of a Christian. This means, that in the *Essai* the authority of revealed knowledge was as visible as in the sermons but it was not anticipated and thus was rather shaped as a punchline at the end.⁴¹² Besides this, Formey curtailed the original conclusion of the sermon in which he had enthusiastically exhorted to lead a pious life by following the example of God.⁴¹³ Hence, the content of the sermons and the *Essai* was the same, it was just presented in different ways.

It was however not only the content of the philosophical sermons and moral philosophical discourses that was basically identical, the style and language of these two genres were also very similar in the Eighteenth Century. Actually, its 'scientific' rhetoric and structure was perhaps the strongest characteristic of Formey's preaching as it was a common feature of his earlier sermons, as well as his 'Wolffian' sermons in 1747. One reason for this, besides the influence of the above-mentioned new Wolffian homiletics, might have also been the continuity of preaching style within the Reformed Church, which had already from its earliest days insisted on simple and quite plain homiletics. First, in Formey's sermons, we can observe quite a significant decrease in Bible quotes, a feature that seems to go hand in hand with the notion of re-directing sermon topics away from their scriptural foundation and towards every-day-experiences. This development meant that Bible quotes basically lost their predominant role as sources of proof. In Formey's three sermons on satisfaction there were approximately a dozen (referenced) Bible quotes that he either deleted⁴¹⁴ or did not indicate as being such in the *Philosophe Chrétien*.⁴¹⁵ In contrast, the seventeenth-century

410 Formey, *Système du vrai bonheur* (Utrecht, 1751) and *Essai sur la perfection pour servir de suite au Système du vrai bonheur* (Utrecht, 1751). See Briasson to Formey, 28.5.1751, *Correspondance passive*, 67. Unlike the *Essai sur la perfection*, the *Système du vrai bonheur* had already been published the precedent year in Germany and had to be adapted by Briasson to suit the new audience.

411 See Briasson to Formey, 20.9.1751, *Correspondance passive de Formey*, 69.

412 See Formey, *Essai sur la Perfection*, 85-90, particularly 89.

413 See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 52-54, particularly 53.

414 See for example Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 11 and compare to *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 216.

415 See for example Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 14 and compare to *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 219.

sermons still largely followed the Calvinist tradition of explaining Scripture through Scripture itself, which led to sermons with about 100 Bible quotations.⁴¹⁶ However, contrary to this practice, the *Discipline ecclésiastique* of the French Reformed churches, which was also composed in the late Seventeenth Century and in Formey's time still served the pastors of the *Refuge*, suggested that pastors avoid the unnecessary over-use of biblical quotes.⁴¹⁷

Second, often there was a tri-partition of the sermon text as we can observe both in the sermons on satisfaction and in those on perfection. The sermons' topics were developed in three steps: after having explained the nature and essential characteristics of his topic, Formey used a second sermon to present an enumeration of the different ways of putting the topic into practice. Then the last sermon in each series, usually dealt more precisely with the Christian application of the topic. The scheme that underlay this tri-partition seems to have been the traditional formal separation of sermons into *explicatio* and *applicatio*, which continued to be used in the Eighteenth Century by Reformed and Lutheran preachers alike.⁴¹⁸ Yet, in Formey's preaching the *applicatio* – the instructions of conduct to the preachers – had a much larger place than the *explicatio*, for it usually consisted of the two last sermons of the series. In the first place this might have been due to the extended discussion that Formey conceded in his sermons to the natural, non-religiously rooted ways of becoming either satisfied or perfect, but also to a reduction of scriptural foundation in the sermons which was traditionally elaborated on in the *explicatio*. As we can see in a two-part essay on patience in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, the *applicatio* was usually the part that survived when a sermon was reconfigured for the genre of moral philosophical discourses. Since this discourse was not derived from a part of the Scripture, it was sufficient to simply add a short explication on the concept of patience at the beginning of the first discourse. In addition to this, Formey explained, as usual, the 'natural' means of becoming patient in the first discourse, and then, in the second discourse, he explained the religious means.⁴¹⁹

Third, the logical division of the sermon text and the clarification of the ideas proposed in it, which was required according to the Wolffian style of preaching, established that Formey used a certain meta-language. Such a meta-language enabled him to guide the congregation through the different parts of the sermon series that, in their oral presentation, were often separated by several weeks. A typical introductory sentence that emphasised the division between the rather theoretical

416 See Nicholas Must, "Huguenot Preaching and Huguenot Identity: Shaping a Religious Minority through Faith, Politics, and Gender, 1629-1685" (McMaster University, 2014), 59-60 who quotes the examples of two Genevan sermons from the 1660s and 1670s.

417 See *Discipline ecclésiastique*, 28-29.

418 See for example for Gottsched's variation of the traditional scheme of *explicatio* and *applicatio*: Strassberger, *Philosophische Predigt*, 224-232; more generally, see Müller, "Homiletik," 537.

419 See Formey, "Discours XXI" and "Discours XXII," *Philosophe Chrétien*, vol. 1, 263-294. For this discourse I did not find an equivalent sermon and hence we cannot exclude the possibility that it never existed.

first part and the practical second part, was for example: 'Entrons donc dans ses vuës [celles de Paul] salutaires, & pour cet effet commençons par nous former dans ce discours une idée du contentement, réservant pour une autre occasion l'étude des moyens propres à nous y conduire.'⁴²⁰ He used a similar introductory rhetoric in the 1747 sermons,⁴²¹ yet there it was preceded by a notification to the audience, whom were exhorted to listen carefully because of the difficulty of the arguments to come:

'je vais travailler à la [= la Maxime que la perfection est fondée dans la loi naturelle ainsi que dans la révélation] développer; & nous ne devons regretter, ni vous qui m'écoutez, l'effort d'attention, ni moi qui vous parle, l'effort de méditation qu'exige nécessairement un sujet de cette nature. Il vaudroit mieux ne faire jamais choix de semblables matières que de les traiter superficiellement; puisqu'on ne sait par là que multiplier les idées confuses, dont le nombre n'est déjà que trop grand chez les hommes.'⁴²²

It seems that Formey was already well aware of the potential problems of understanding that his philosophical explanations would pose to the ordinary audience of his sermon. Instead, when he converted the sermons into another genre, he often deleted this kind of advisory language.

Formey's advice to the congregation reveals the indebtedness of his preaching to the above-mentioned homiletic rules that Reinbeck had established on the basis of Wolff's metaphysics and logics, which basically suggested that preachers appeal to the believer's understanding. Therefore it is not surprising that Formey shared the same language of truth claims on the pulpit as he did in his metaphysical treatises which were also inspired by Wolff's methodological considerations. The main feature of this language of truth claims was an emphasis on the thoroughness and probative force of the ideas that were put forward, which was supposed to avoid false knowledge or to rectify certain wrong ideas. Such a language can also be found in Formey's academic treatises on the proofs of God's existence, with which I will deal in more detail in chapter 7. When Formey presented these proofs in an academic setting he blamed philosophers for defending what were in his view, weak arguments for God's existence, as this would provide the sceptics with the means of rejecting the truth of God's existence. Similarly, he accused superficial preaching of enhancing the confusion and obscurity of believers' ideas on God, which – as Formey stressed in his 1753 homiletic textbook – gave grist to the mill of those who considered religion to be charlatanry:

'Mais je vous avouë que je ne mets pas la Prédication au nombre des moyens qui y sont propres [à l'éclaircissement de la paroisse]; & que sur le pied où je la vois, elle me paroît au contraire très capable d'obscurir le peu de connoissances que les Membres de nos Eglises

420 Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 4.

421 See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 7.

422 Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 7. A similar meta-consideration can be found in the second sermon on the Bible passage about Martha and Mary, see *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 120.

peuvent avoir acquises par d'autres voyes, & en même tems tout à fait propre à décréditer la Religion aux yeux des Incrédules, que [sic] ne cessent de se récrier que tout nôtre fait n'est que charlatanerie.⁴²³

As a solution to this deficit in preaching Formey called for – as in his academic discourses – a mastery of the common notions and the method of a thorough logic.⁴²⁴ Consequently, in Formey's sermons and in his academic discourses alike, we discover his conviction in the correlation between the rightness of a doctrine or truth and the application of a thorough logic in which every assertion is dissected into its tiniest components.

As a result of this conviction, Formey's sermons bore a strong commitment to detailed analysis: there are many traces of a scientific demonstration that followed the scheme of hypothesis, evidence and proof in his sermons. Even in his rather exegetical sermons on the Bible passage about Martha and Mary this scheme can be found. In the second of these three sermons Formey sets out to prove the necessity and the utility of reaching salvation, two aspects that he calls 'deux grandes veritez'⁴²⁵ which require a demonstration to be proven: 'Pour proceder avec quelque ordre, & pour former une espece de Démonstration, (car il ne faut pas moins qu'une Démonstration, pour engager les Hommes à quitter le présent pour l'avenir, le [sic] Terre pour le Ciel,) commençons par définir le mot de *nécessaire*, & en fixer l'idée.'⁴²⁶ Hence, the demonstration should begin with two steps: it should start with a definition of the key categories of the subject matter - 'necessity' in this context – and then determine its meaning. As the sermon proceeded, Formey first cited and rejected the, in his eyes, wrong ideas concerning the topic, which in turn led him to pose a problem. In the case of the sermon on Martha and Mary, the problem was the following: Considering that Providence put us in a situation on earth which seems to require many different necessities (ex.: the necessity to eat or to fulfil our worldly tasks), how can Jesus then require that we should strive for only one unique necessity, which is salvation?⁴²⁷ To prove Jesus' word right, Formey developed the different kinds and sub-kinds of necessities, and he asked his audience to trade them against each other in order to discover which of them opposed the other, and thus which was the most essential necessity.⁴²⁸ After a whole body of elaboration, informed by several every-day-examples, Formey eventually concluded his discourse by stating: '...telles sont enfin les principales preuves, dont je voulois former une Démonstration abrégée de la Verité de mon Texte: c'est que l'Ouvrage du salut, plus nécessaire que tous les autres, lorsqu'il va de concert avec eux, le devient uniquement quand ils ne

423 See Formey, *Lettres sur la prédication* (Berlin, 1753), 41-42.

424 Formey, *Lettres sur la prédication*, 68.

425 Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 115.

426 Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 118-119.

427 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 120.

428 See Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 121.

peuvent plus s'accorder ensemble.⁴²⁹ This conclusive remark with its reference to his point of departure resembles much the 'Quod erat demonstrandum' that can be found at the end of a mathematical proof, and hence marks a similarity between sermons and 'scientific' writings.

Different Genres, Same Audiences?

This analysis of the language and style of Formey's sermons has revealed how, via the new Wolffian homiletics that were developed among German Lutherans in the 1730s and 40s, new rhetoric and structural elements entered the Huguenot preaching. This contributed to the steady formal convergence of sermons and moral philosophical and even metaphysical treatises. Together with the increasing alienation of traditional sermon topics from their doctrinal and biblical roots and their 'outsourcing' to secular moral philosophical writings, it seems that two genres of writing emerged that were basically interchangeable but – given their co-existence – still claimed to evolve in distinct contexts and to appeal to different audiences: Formey, who mastered both genres, and his contemporaries perceived that sermons remained a sacred genre, which was directed at ordinary people in a confessional setting, while moral philosophical discourses became the sermons' secular equivalent, which were directed to a slightly more educated ordinary audience and were read outside of a religious setting. This implied that, although sermons and moral discourses were perceived as different types of writings, Formey's works in both genres were at the end read to a large extent by the same people.

That Formey's sermons and moral philosophical discourses (which were collected in the *Philosophe Chrétien*) shared the same audience, was also stated by some of his close correspondents. Yet, they stated this issue because of different motives. Élie Luzac, the publisher of the *Philosophe Chrétien*, after having read the manuscript of the first volume, feared that the book would attract a rather limited audience. In his eyes, only 'les personnes pieuses et vouées au christianisme' would read it. His judgement concerning the potential audience of the *Philosophe Chrétien* seems to have been based first and foremost on the style and the structure of Formey's manuscript, which he described as being too sermon-like. By this he meant that the essays were reduced 'en «chefs»' (to main points), and contained too many expressions which were only adequate for the pulpit and that Formey used Bible passages unnecessarily.⁴³⁰ Luzac, obviously motivated by economic reasons, wanted to appeal to the largest possible readership with the *Philosophe Chrétien*, not only a pious Christian readership, and therefore he advised Formey to

429 Formey, *Sermons sur divers textes de l'Écriture sainte*, 128.

430 See Luzac to Formey, 2.6.1749, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 64.

purge his moral philosophical discourses from their sermon-like elements: he wanted him to substitute the Bible quotes with verses from famous poets and to extend the choice of topics.⁴³¹ A different recommendation concerning the manuscript was given to Formey by his close correspondent Jean Peschier, a pastor in Geneva. Formey apparently had already sent him some manuscripts in 1746 with the purpose of inquiring which of the pieces were appropriate for a collection of moral philosophical discourses à la *Philosophe Chrétien*, and which should rather be published as sermons. Peschier seems to have grounded his recommendation on the topics of the different pieces, for he claimed that certain topics were very good for a moral discourse, whereas he hesitated for certain others:

'Je vous suis très obligé de vos Ms, je les lirai avec beaucoup de plaisir, j'ai lûs ceux qui regardent la femme vaillante de Salomon dont j'ai été enchanté, il est certain que cette matière convient mieux à des discours moraux qu'à des sermons mais p[ou]r les autres sujets il me semble à vûe de païs que leur première forme seroit plus du goût du public, je ne decide cependant encore rien.'⁴³²

Peschier's indecisiveness underlines the above-mentioned quasi interchangeability of the contents of the two genres. For him, unlike for Luzac, this was yet not a reason to further 'secularise' Formey's manuscript. On the contrary, in his second letter concerning Formey's manuscript he advised him to simply transform his sermon-based discourses again into sermons. Peschier was aware that both types of writings, sermons and sermon-like moral discourses, were difficult to sell. Yet, when faced with the choice between sermons or their 'secularised' alternative, this awareness made him opt to remain with the traditional sermons. Peschier obviously had, unlike Luzac, no economic interest in Formey's manuscript; his sole concern must have been to guarantee that the message in Formey's manuscript could be transmitted. Being a pastor he generally must have preferred sermons over moral philosophical writings, although he thought that the readers would be satisfied by either of them.⁴³³ This shows that he assumed that both genres of writing would be read by the same people. This was certainly the case for the majority of Formey's sermons and his *Philosophe Chrétien*, although one can assume that the latter was not read by all those who commonly read sermons, but rather by such people who were also used to reading texts that went beyond devotional use.

Instead, Formey's above-mentioned sermons on perfection of 1747, which he had secretly called his 'sermons wolfiens', were conceived as rather inappropriate for the common congregation;

431 See Luzac to Formey, 2.6.1749, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 65-66. In regard to the introduction of more 'profane' verses into Formey's essays, Luzac suggested to let them be followed from time to time by Bible passages in order to demonstrate the latter's superiority over the first. By this he attempted to underline that his propositions resulted not out of his rejection of the Scripture or Christian faith, but rather his support for it.

432 Peschier to Formey, 16.8.1746, *Lettres de Genève*, 151-52.

433 See Peschier to Formey, 23.9.1746, *Lettres de Genève*, 161-2.

their reception among the readers reflects the reactions of the congregation concerning Formey's lecture on philosophy, which he had held on the pulpit in 1740, as Manteuffel described in the anecdote quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The reviewers of the sermons on perfection essentially approved the content, yet criticised the consequences of the abundant and thorough metaphysical considerations in the sermons. Formey's friend and enthusiastic supporter of Leibniz' and Wolff's philosophy, Emer de Vattel, generally appreciated Formey's application of Wolffian philosophy in these three sermons, and he particularly supported Formey's approach to counter orthodox defenders of Christianity, by grounding God's existence in nature; yet he doubted the sermons' intelligibility to the congregation precisely because of the exploration of Wolffian metaphysics in it:

'je vous sai gré entr'autres de la liberté avec laquelle vous frondez les fausses vertus des cagots, qui prétendent se faire un grand mérite par des actions, ou des abstinences, directement contraires aux vuës de la Nature, ou p[ou]r mieux dire, de son Auteur. Ma critique, puisque vous en voulez, se bornera à deux remarques générales: Je ne sai si le 1er sermon n'étoit pas bien abstrait pour les 99. 100èmes de vos auditeurs & un peu chargé de termes metaphysiques; & le 3e ne m'a pas paru de la force des deux précédens [...] ouvrage, dans lequel j'ai été charmé de voir la philosophie wolfienne développée avec netteté & revêtuë des ornemens de l'éloquence. Vous avez fait en prédicateur ce que j'ai essayé de faire en homme du monde & même en homme galant...'.⁴³⁴

A similar position was held by the reviewer of Formey's Wolffian sermons in a learned periodical from Hamburg, who appreciated the profound and clear ontological considerations contained in them but argued that this was only appropriate for philosophical discourses and not for sermons. He concluded from this that only 'thoughtful philosophers' would read these sermons, yet that they would not need them for their edification, as such individuals were already able to form the thoughts, which were expressed in the sermons.⁴³⁵ Both Vattel's and the German opinion on the Wolffian sermons captured the audience's division that Manteuffel had noticed in the anecdote on Formey's preaching: the learned man in the congregation enjoyed it while the common man remained puzzled by it. Even Wolff himself found the philosophical rigour of Formey's sermons to be misplaced in the genre of sermons: he confessed to Manteuffel that in Formey's place he would have chosen to ground his arguments in Scripture as it was suitable for sermons, but not directly in philosophy, as Formey had done. Unlike Vattel and the Hamburgian reviewer, who had primarily

434 See Vattel to Formey, 28.4.1747, *Emer de Vattel à Jean Henri Samuel Formey*, 79-80.

435 See *Freye Urtheile u. Nachrichten zum Aufnehmen der Wissenschaften und der Historie überhaupt. XVI. Stück, Hamburg, Freytags, den 24 Februar 1747*, 123-24. For a similar opinion, see Friedrich Wilhelm Kraft, "L'Idée, les Regles, et le Model de la Perfection en trois sermons sur Matth. V, 48, par Samuel Formey [...]," *Friedrich Wilhelm Krafts Neue Theologische Bibliothek, darinnen von den neuesten theologischen Büchern und Schriften Nachricht gegeben wird* 17 (January 1748), 556.

voiced a concern that the congregation would not understand the sermons, Wolff referred in his evaluation to the Christian devotion that could only be incited in the believer if the sermon was based on Scripture.⁴³⁶ Therefore, it might be just to say that Formey's effort to strictly apply the homiletic requirements established by Wolffian theologians was considered as slightly over the top by a variety of actors, from the simple believer to Protestant philosophers themselves who also were concerned that the majority of people should receive clear Christian instruction.

Still, after Formey's three Wolffian sermons had been transported to a more exclusive context, i.e. that of more highly educated people or even scholars, they encountered no opposition. In the eyes of the reviewer of Formey's *Essai sur la perfection* in the *Journal des Sçavans*, it was a 'traité réfléchi et divisé' that contained excellent considerations on morality.⁴³⁷ Similarly when the *Essai* was assessed by the Dutch bookseller Élie Luzac, he apparently did not realise that the *Essai* was a product of the same type of transformation as the moral philosophical discourses of the *Philosophe Chrétien*, since he mentioned that the *Essai* was a positive counter-example to, in his taste, the too sermon-like *Philosophe Chrétien*.⁴³⁸ Eventually, it has to be underlined that Formey's so-called 'trois sermons wolffiens' and their conversion into the *Essai sur la perfection* constituted an extreme example of his rationalist preaching practice. Already in their form as sermons they hardly appeared as such, and it is even not possible to establish if or when they were ever presented to a congregation.⁴³⁹

Moreover, it seems that they remained the exclusive example of Formey's thorough application of Wolffian homiletics and that he himself later was rather critical of them, which suggests that he might have learned from the reception that his work encountered among his readers.⁴⁴⁰ Several years later, in Formey's own homiletic considerations in 1753 and 1766, he maintained the general guidelines of the philosophical preaching, but slightly hedged them and warned against their excessive use. In his homiletic handbook in 1753, the *Lettres sur la Prédication*, Formey emphasised the need to accommodate one's preaching to the taste and intellectual capacities of the majority of one's audience. He admitted that some audiences might just not be captured by a cold and simple reason, and thus had to be convinced with the aid of a particular rhetoric that was able to touch and to affect the listeners: 'Il faut aller au coeur; & quoiqu'on ne doive jamais y aller, sans passer par l'esprit, il y a pourtant des routes particulieres, qui

436 See Wolff to Manteuffel, 7.12.1746, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, 230. Manteuffel shared Wolff's opinion: 9.12.1746, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, 232.

437 See *Journal des Sçavans*, Juillet 1752, 488 and 493.

438 See Luzac to Formey, 12.10.1754, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 257.

439 Unlike the other printed sermons by Formey, they do not bear the date of their preaching on the first page.

440 In addition to this it has to be said that generally the criticism against the Wolffian 'philosophical' sermons increased after mid-eighteenth-century; see Strassberger, *Philosophische Predigt*, 483-534.

sont réservées à la vraie Eloquence, il y a des moyens d'arracher à leurs égaremens des hommes obstinés qui n'auroient jamais cédé à une Raison froide & tranquille.⁴⁴¹

In 1766, in an essay on homiletic questions that Formey published in a collection of religious and moral philosophical discourses, he eventually put the preaching style that he ought to pursue in a nutshell: it was the 'genre didactico-pathétique' which consisted of clear and simple explanations that were understandable to all listeners.⁴⁴² He still fiercely defended that having a profound knowledge of the contents and methods of philosophy was a condition for good preaching, yet, unlike in his sermons on perfection or his preaching in 1740, as reported by Manteuffel, he considered philosophy to be out of place if it was transmitted directly from the pulpit:

'Il est incontestable que la Philosophie a une union si étroite, non seulement avec la Théologie, mais avec toutes les Sciences qu'on ne sçauroit en traiter aucune méthodiquement & utilement, à moins qu'on ne soit guidé par le flambeau philosophique [...] L'Orateur Philosophe dévient un vain discoureur, s'il porte en Chaire des leçons de Philosophie proprement dites, s'il se sert, soit par ostentation, soit par inadvertance, de termes inconnus au vulgaire, s'il fait des raisonnemens trop abstraits pour être saisis, surtout en aussi peu de tems qu'on en met à les écouter, s'il s'enfonce dans des spéculations où il n'y a que des Philosophes qui peuvent le suivre. Quand même ce ne seroit pas là cette fausse Philosophie que l'Apôtre rejette, c'est toujours une Philosophie déplacée, faite pour une autre Chaire que celle de J.C.'⁴⁴³

After years of experience as a preacher and a professor of philosophy, Formey had hence become careful to distinguish between actually harmful philosophy that ran contrary to revealed religion, and philosophy that was true but inappropriate for the pulpit because of its complexity. It was only this latter philosophy, the true but complex one that Formey claimed for himself and with his homiletic considerations, he probably admitted that he was guilty of having sometimes communicated it in the wrong contexts. In this sense, Formey's considerations underline the pitfalls of his double role as a pastor and a professor of philosophy, which had fostered his practice to bring philosophical sermons to the pulpit and sermon-like moral philosophical discourses to the study of educated people. The quasi-congruency of these forms of writings with respect to content and style can be considered as an expression of the interchangeability of Formey's different roles, which were contained in the persona of the Christian philosopher. Animated by the same motive, i.e. to demonstrate and defend the truth of religion, he mixed the message of the Bible and the philosophical method.

441 See Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 69-70. For a more precise description of the mentioned rhetoric see p. 95.

442 See Formey, "Discours préliminaire," *Tableau du bonheur domestique*, LXVII.

443 Formey, "Discours préliminaire," LVIII- LX.

4. The Target of Formey's Writings: Moral Decline in Church and Republic of Letters

Formey's aim to support and defend religion, which to a large extent motivated his behaviour and writings as a Christian philosopher, was fuelled by an experience of disintegration of institutions that had previously been stable or controllable. The two main institutions that in Formey's view, were gradually disintegrating were the French Reformed community in Brandenburg-Prussia that constituted his intellectual and social starting point, and the European Republic of Letters, the imagined space of learning in which most of his activities as a writer and philosopher had evolved. Both of these institutions underwent significant changes during Formey's lifetime: the confessional community in the diaspora gradually dissolved as they assimilated into their host culture, while the Republic of Letters was in Formey's view increasingly flooded by 'dangerous' books, i.e. books that questioned traditional, moral and religious ideas. Formey translated these experiences of disintegration into a multifaceted narrative of moral decline, which helped him to fashion his practice as a Christian philosopher: He conceived of his diverse writings as being part of a campaign against this moral decline, and at the same time this allowed him to appear, in reverse, as the most moral. In the following, I will analyse Formey's narratives of moral decline within his confessional community, as well as among the writers and booksellers in the Republic of Letters, and as such I will trace these narratives' roots in contemporary culture and politics.

The Context of the French Church: Moral Decline and Disintegration of the Colony because of Bad Preaching

In the previous chapter, we observed the sources, nature and effect of Formey's most crucial practice: the moral instruction of people from both the pulpit and the lectern. Directed to a largely Huguenot audience, this practice connected with the need that Formey had singled out in this (local) confessional context: the protection and reinforcement of the believers' creed and the Christian morality which he judged was being threatened by outsiders' increasing prejudices towards religion and the Church and by their overt demonstrations of unbelief. This perception in particular, constituted the foundation of his preaching practice, which Formey indicated in his above-mentioned homiletic manual *Lettres sur la Prédication* that appeared in 1753. There he portrayed his philosophical preaching method, i.e. the endeavour to clearly explain the truth of religion, as a means to make religious dogma appealing to the congregation, even though this dogma was

depicted as being scandalous or crazy by many people:

'Quiconque voudra envisager avec moi la Prédication comme un Exercice de Pieté, destiné à expliquer les Verités de la Religion, à en persuader les Devoirs, à porter la lumiere au fonds des esprits les plus grossiers, & la conviction dans les coeurs les plus endurcis, à rendre aimable & respectable cette Doctrine descenduë du Ciel, que son opposition avec les préjugés & les passions fit autrefois, & fait encore regarder par tout [sic] de gens, comme un *scandale*, ou comme une *folie*.⁴⁴⁴

This external threat to religion, which, as the quote shows, Formey perceived as being a constant problem throughout Christian history, was however only one part of the problem that he attempted to overcome with philosophical preaching. It was paired, in Formey's view, with the rather recent devastating situation within the confessional community which he first and foremost described as a misuse or erroneous style of preaching: 'La Prédication est actuellement sur un pied très mediocre. Cela seroit fâcheux, quand il ne s'agiroit que d'un Art profane; mais cela l'est infiniment plus, quand on pense que le dégoût de la Religion & le triomphe de l'Incrédulité en tirent tous les jours de sensibles accroissemens.'⁴⁴⁵ Mediocre preaching could in Formey's view increase the pre-existing tendencies of non-belief in society and as such was unacceptable to him.

Formey believed that mediocre preaching and its harmful effect on religion was the result of a moral decline within the colony, to the extent that it had impacted ecclesiastics' and laymen's attitude towards religious practices, and consequently Formey wanted to reform the Huguenot preaching. He outlined this problem by first referring to the dishonourable motives that had animated his contemporary preachers in the Berlin French colony. According to him, a lot of the pastors misjudged the real purpose of their office and saw it either as a mere livelihood, or as a diverting performance through which they were able to obtain recognition:

'Il est rare que la Prédication soit autre chose qu'un spectacle ou un métier; & dès-qu'elle est l'un ou l'autre, il n'y a plus de fruit à en attendre. Elle est un spectacle pour ceux qui s'y devoüent dans l'intention de briller, & de se faire une réputation de Prédicateur. [...] Dès qu'il est question surtout de paroître devant une Cour, on [sic] dans un Auditoire fort brillant, on ne pense guères qu'à plaire.'⁴⁴⁶

Formey attributed this craving for admiration predominantly to the very young preachers who were prone to the vice of vanity, and as a result he made a plea for installing ministers of a later age to the pastoral office.⁴⁴⁷ This low moral disposition that Formey attested certain groups of preachers was

444 Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 91.

445 Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 40.

446 See Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 42-43. See also "Discours préliminaire," *Tableau du bonheur domestique*, VIII-IX where Formey confirmed his perception and underlined particularly the habit among preachers and audience alike to consider preaching as a show.

447 See Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 43.

supplemented and enhanced, in his view, by the immoral behaviour of the congregation. Formey accused them of attending the Sunday service only out of curiosity for a new or foreign minister who was supposed to preach: 'J'ai en vérité honte pour l'Auditoire, quand je vois cette affluence de monde dans un Temple pour l'ordinaire vuide, & cet empressement pour voir en Chaire une figure qu'on n'y a pas encore vüe; car voilà au fonds à quoi tout se réduit.'⁴⁴⁸ When the initial curiosity had passed people stopped coming to listen to this minister.⁴⁴⁹ Consequently, as Formey noticed, the churches generally became ever emptier, a fact that he ascribed to the reduced or lost interest for preaching itself (as opposed to an interest in the person of the preacher), as well as the practice of faith within the generation that was born and raised in the *Refuge*. In Formey's view, the peace and comfort that was experienced in the diaspora was the reason why people no longer searched for spiritual support in church services.⁴⁵⁰ In sum, Formey's depiction of the mediocre state of preaching and the scarce or misguided attendance of sermons compounded each other, and were caused by a morally deficient behaviour by which preachers and congregation alike were affected.

Formey was neither the first nor the only one to recognise the lamentable state of the congregations and ministers of the French colony in Berlin during the middle of the Eighteenth Century. In 1708, Jean Barbeyrac had already voiced a similar criticism of young pastors' vanity and its bad impact on their preaching, and had even inserted it into the preface of his translation of the Anglican Archbishop John Tillotson's sermons.⁴⁵¹ Moreover, in the 1760s and 1770s, Formey's colleagues complained from the pulpit about the miserable state of the believers in Berlin, which they called 'half-heartedness' (*tièdeur*) in comparison to the zeal that their forebears had shown in times of persecution in France. Antoine Achard dedicated a whole sermon to this subject and although unlike Formey, he did not observe any empty churches, he assumed that the people did not attend services for the 'right' reasons: in his view, people's attendance to a sermon was not the result of a true conviction and desire to obtain religious instruction; instead he thought that they only went to church out of habit and the need to safeguard the exterior image of their morality.⁴⁵² Also Balthasar Catel complained in a letter to Formey in 1764 that his congregation showed an increasing reluctance towards preaching.⁴⁵³ Hence, it seems that there was the perception of a real decline in religious practice within the Prussian Huguenot colony, and especially in the moral motives that motivated this practice; in the view of theologians and pastors, this decline lasted

448 Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 48.

449 See Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 49.

450 See Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 50.

451 See Palladini, *Die Berliner Hugenotten*, 399-401.

452 See Antoine Achard, *Sermons*, 2 vols., (Berlin, 1774), quoted in Myriam Yardeni, *Le Refuge Huguenot: Assimilation et Culture* (Paris, 2002), 91.

453 See Balthasar Catel to Formey, 30.12.1764 (FF).

throughout the century and peaked in Formey's generation.

The complaints about the decline of religious practice and morality held such a strong presence in Formey's and his contemporaries' narratives because it was considered to be one of the signs that heralded the gradual dissolution of the colony at large. The Church and the practice of the creed were after all the nucleus of the colony as a cultural and political entity within the Prussian state and hence, everything that morally or physically diminished its power was a reason for concern.⁴⁵⁴ In studies on the Huguenot diaspora, the dissolution of the diaspora and its identity is usually equated with the assimilation of the migrant population into the host country on different levels: political, economic, cultural, social and of course confessional. The almost autonomous legal status that the Huguenots had been granted by the Prussian sovereign on their arrival, and which was abolished only in 1809, seems to have initially favoured the conservation of the colony's identity, yet this extraordinary status was after the mid-century already a meaningless indicator compared to the increasing cultural, social and confessional assimilation.⁴⁵⁵ The replacement of the French language and particular cultural identity of the Huguenots with the German language and identity is a better indicator for assimilation, but this aspect evolved rather slowly: as Susanne Lachenicht has shown, in the 1760s and 70s in Brandenburg, the third generation of the *Refuge* expressed a concern about keeping French as their every-day-life-language.⁴⁵⁶ A similar development can be noticed in respect to the increase of mixed marriages in Berlin and Brandenburg, which became visible only from mid-Eighteenth Century onwards, but then after 1780, such marriages consisted of more than 60% of the *Refuge's* overall marriages.⁴⁵⁷ The religious assimilation of the Huguenots is usually measured through conversions to the Churches that existed in the host country, which in Brandenburg were the German Reformed and the Lutheran Church;⁴⁵⁸ according to Lachenicht the number of communicants in the French Church had already decreased in Berlin by the 1720s, and the membership of the colony also decreased from the 1740s onwards which was mostly a result of the believers' moving over to other confessions.⁴⁵⁹ The expression of Formey's and other pastors' discontent with the behaviour of the preachers and congregations was hence founded on a real multifaceted process of disintegration.

According to Lachenicht, Formey's and his fellow pastors' and theologians' strong concern

454 See Yardeni, *Refuge Huguenot*, 84.

455 See Fontius, "Privilegierte Minderheiten," 19 and 21.

456 See Lachenicht, "Étude comparée," 292. For a more detailed analysis from a linguistic perspective which also includes a comparison between Berlin and the Prussian province, see Manuela Böhm, *Sprachenwechsel: Akkulturation und Mehrsprachigkeit der Brandenburger Hugenotten vom 17. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin; New York, 2010).

457 See Lachenicht, "Étude comparée," 290-1.

458 See Yardeni, *Refuge Huguenot*, 83.

459 See Lachenicht, *Hugenotten in Europa und Nordamerika*, 327.

(compared to the colony's average members) over all these aspects of assimilation was due to their function as gate-keepers of the colony. As I have mentioned above, gate-keepers contributed to and controlled the construction of the French colony's identity and were usually part of its elite.⁴⁶⁰ The Huguenot elite, to which Formey as a professor of philosophy, a pastor and a member of the consistory belonged, hence had a particular interest in counteracting the assimilation of the individuals that constituted the colony.⁴⁶¹ Moreover, very often the narratives that these gate-keepers established on themselves and on the colony – which are usually the only written testimonies that we have of the time – purported a certain continuity of the Huguenot identity that did not correspond to the actual practice of the majority of the colony's members.⁴⁶² Formey and the other figures of the colony's elite, therefore, seem to have performed a kind of balancing act: on the one hand they noticed and accused the symptoms of the colony's disintegration, and on the other they maintained the narrative of its integrity. This is why in respect to the religious assimilation, Formey not only spread criticism of the contemporary situation, but also provided suggestions for a reformation of the colony's structures and practices.

Besides proclaiming a particular philosophical style of preaching that was supposed to stop the disintegration of the congregations, Formey also engaged in the institutionalisation of the education of preachers within the French colony. In his homiletic manual, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, this endeavour, which required political support, becomes visible by the fact that Formey dedicated it to Baron Danckelmann, the Prussian state minister of education and ecclesiastical matters. Moreover, in his *Lettres sur la Prédication* Formey did not only make a general plea to provide future pastors with better training, but he also explicitly argued for the establishment of a preacher seminar.⁴⁶³ This seminar eventually became reality in 1770, through the engagement of Jean-Pierre Erman, the principal of the *collège français*, and Paul Lorient d'Anières after four years of negotiations within the colony.⁴⁶⁴ As a professor of philosophy at the *collège*, Formey was most likely personally involved in this process. After its foundation, Formey seems to have remained in charge of teaching philosophy and theology to future pastors, a task that he had already achieved at the *collège*. It seems that in comparison to teaching philosophy at the *collège*, where not all of the students necessarily pursued a pastoral career afterwards, this teaching was much more targeted.

However, in addition to creating structures and rules for the education of the future custodians of the French Reformed community, Formey enacted processes that were designed to

460 See Lachenicht, "Étude comparée," 279.

461 See Lachenicht, "Étude comparée," 280 and 289.

462 See Lachenicht, "Étude comparée," 294.

463 See Formey, *Lettres sur la Prédication*, 73-74.

464 See Roosen, *Soutenir notre Église*, 195. See also Rosen-Prest, *L'historiographie des Huguenots*, 79.

impede the assimilation of the *Refuge* into the host country. He did this not only through his sermons but also through a secular edification that his moral philosophical discourses were supposed to provide. It seems that with the spread of two quasi-identical genres of writing, he wanted to foster in his co-confessionals a morality that was informed by secular and sacred principles alike and that had the purpose of positively affecting the religiosity of the congregation. However, as the historian of the Huguenot diaspora, Miriam Yardeni claims, a confessional assimilation into the host country was often fostered by processes of secularisation. With secularisation she mainly means the decreasing importance of the Church as an institution for the believers – as I have also noticed in Formey's perception – and the increasing association of religion with the task of praising and safeguarding the State.⁴⁶⁵ To these expressions of secularisation we might add the changing concepts of philosophy and revealed religion, especially the detachment of Christian doctrine from sacred sources as we have observed in both Formey's sermons and moral philosophical discourses; hence Formey's preaching also supposedly contributed to the assimilation of the Huguenots as Yardeni described. Moreover, it seems that the endeavour to maintain the people's interest in dogma and religious practice via an association with new, natural-law-based ideas was prone not only to cause the Huguenots' assimilation into the religion of their host country; it also potentially favoured their turning away from religion in general. Formey's philosophical preaching and his moral philosophical discourses, i.e. secularised sermons, presumably accelerated the churchgoers' lack of interest in sermons: Formey's philosophical explanations on the pulpit were too complex for them to follow and the entertaining literature of edification alienated the readers from the traditional sermon.

Does this mean that the practice that Formey had conceived in order to overcome the crisis of the Huguenot community, actually reinforced this crisis? The answer to this question depends on our point of view. Historical actors like Formey and the other pastors of the *Refuge* did not see it this way: they did not causally link the increase in secular writing to the decrease of interest in sermons. On the contrary, for them, the decreasing interest in sermons and preaching had emerged from the moral decline that Formey's popular moral philosophical writings actually remedied. The success of his *Philosophe Chrétien* definitely reinforced Formey's impression that his philosophical and theological endeavour was correct. Moreover, as we will see in more detail in chapter 5, his fellow Huguenots in the *Refuge* and Calvinist co-confessionals constantly emphasised the value and efficiency of his engagement as a Christian philosopher for religion and Church. Also from our modern point of view the thesis that Formey's works enhanced the dissolution of the creed among the Huguenots cannot entirely be defended. As we have already mentioned in respect to the

⁴⁶⁵ See Yardeni, *Refuge Huguenot*, 84 and 88.

narrative of the undeliberate marginalisation of religion by the pious and clericals themselves during the Eighteenth Century, it is not true that religion and belief vanished during the enlightenment. Furthermore, the case of the Huguenots has shown that the perception of preachers' and the congregation's moral misconduct and the perception of the external attack on religion were stable features of Huguenot culture (and Christian culture in general) over the centuries. Therefore, Formey's emphasis of this decline in mid-Eighteenth Century has to be considered with caution: to a certain extent it might be an expression of rhetorical tradition instead of an indication of the new quality of the immorality and dissolution of the congregations. However, having said this, it can not be denied that there were tensions between Formey's purposes and the results of his practices: instead of instructing the common believer in a reasonable belief and morality, several of his writings were only accessible to a learned public and, as we have seen in his later homiletic writings, he probably was to a certain extent aware of this. However, these tensions do not allow us to claim that by making his sermons 'more philosophical', he contributed to the marginalisation of religion in the Eighteenth Century.

The Context of the Republic of Letters: Moral Decline and Lack of Sufficient Censorship

Moral misconduct was also Formey's main argument against the authors that he considered to be his adversaries in the Republic of Letters. As we have seen, in the introduction of the *Philosophe Chrétien* Formey advanced his conceptualisation of 'true' philosophy, when he portrayed himself as opposing the 'wrong' philosophers who pursued a separation of philosophy and Christian dogma. His denunciation was targeted predominantly at the French authors that promoted deistic and sometimes also materialist and atheist ideas, such as Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot and La Mettrie, who he perceived, like many of his contemporaries, as being a more or less homogeneous group – the *philosophes*. It was against these *philosophes* that Formey's arguments were more or less overtly directed towards, and against whom he tried to protect the religious community in the *Refuge* and those beyond it from external influences that could potentially harm their belief and religiosity. In the moral philosophical discourses that he assembled in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, just as in many of his academic writings, Formey tried to counteract the potentially harmful influence of the *philosophes* positively by applying and promoting his concept of philosophy in which reason and Revelation were almost equal epistemic categories. Besides this, he also published other writings that had the same purpose, i.e. to defend 'true' philosophy as way to eventually defend religion, but which additionally also explicitly condemned the ideas of his adversaries. These writings which I will refer to as *refutations*, as that was how they were referred to in the Eighteenth Century, usually

discussed selected arguments from the *philosophes'* publications, and were largely directed towards a popular, confessional audience. At the same time, however, these works also rejected the authors of whose arguments they refuted. Moreover, and this is interesting for us, Formey's refutations hint in a relatively open way the reasons why the authors and their arguments in question were flawed and dangerous, and how one should deal with them.

Throughout his career Formey's refutations were diverse but interestingly the author that he discussed most often was Rousseau, who after his famous answer to the essay contest of the Academy of Dijon in 1749, had become very famous in the Republic of Letters. Formey wrote a sort of free, not text-bound, refutation of this writing, known as Rousseau's *Premier Discours*, which Formey entitled *Examen philosophique de la liaison entre les sciences et les moeurs* and published in the Academy's *Mémoires* in 1755.⁴⁶⁶ Instead, Formey's refutations of Rousseau's novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which Formey refuted in 1762 under the title *L'Esprit de Julie*,⁴⁶⁷ and of Rousseau's *Émile*, which appeared in several versions and editions in 1763 and 1764, were very closely connected to the original texts: first, in 1763 Formey published an *Anti-Émile*, a one-volume work that contained quotations from the original together with Formey's comments on them.⁴⁶⁸ One year later, by the request of the Dutch bookseller Jean Néaulme, Formey's four-volume *Émile Chrétien* was published, which was basically a full copy of Rousseau's original work, enriched by the comments made in the *Anti-Émile* as well as a lengthy defence of Christianity meant to substitute for the famous *Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard* of the *Émile*.⁴⁶⁹ This part, entitled *Profession de foi du Vicaire chrétien*, was also subsequently used by Formey for an individual publication together with a critique of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*.⁴⁷⁰ Formey's extensive critical engagement with Rousseau seems at first sight strange since, as Formey himself noted in his preface to the *Profession de foi du Vicaire chrétien*, Rousseau was one of the fiercest critics of the *philosophes* and other irreligious writers. The problem however with Rousseau's work (and particularly the *Émile*) was, as Formey explained, that through the depiction of his deist views he

466 Formey, "Examen philosophique de la liaison réelle qu'il y a entre les sciences et les moeurs," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin*, 1753 (Berlin, 1755), 397-416. The piece also appeared in 1755 independently, once with "Avignon" as the place of publication and once without any indication. Formey's arguments against Rousseau's *Premier Discours* will be discussed in more detail in chapter 11.

467 Formey, *L'Esprit de Julie, ouvrage utile à la société et particulièrement à la jeunesse* (Berlin, 1762). There existed apparently a second edition by the same publisher, J. Jasperd, only one year later.

468 Formey, *Anti-Émile* (Berlin, 1763). A corrected and augmented edition appeared in the same year, which was followed by a second edition in 1764, both with Joachim Pauli in Berlin.

469 Formey, *Émile chrétien, consacré à l'utilité publique*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1764).

470 This work appeared in two versions with different booksellers in the same year. It seems that they even both appeared in Berlin, due to the temporary move of the Dutch bookseller Jean Néaulme, who had commissioned and printed the *Émile chrétien*, to Berlin in the beginning of 1764. Formey, *Profession de foi du Vicaire Chrétien et le Tableau abrégé du Contrat social* (Berlin, 1764) and *Défense de la Religion et de la Législation, tirée de "L'Émile Chrétien" pour servir de suite à l'Anti-Émile* (Berlin, 1764). The first was published by Néaulme and the second by Pauli.

provided weapons to the 'libertins de coeur'.⁴⁷¹ Moreover, it might have been precisely Rousseau's deistic views, paired with his criticism of the clergy and the Church as an institution, which had the biggest chance to affect the opinion of the common people for whom atheism was still unthinkable. This potential danger of Rousseau's ideas must have been very concrete for Formey and his contemporaries considering the huge popularity that Rousseau's novels, the *Émile* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, in particular, enjoyed among the people of the lower ranks and women, as we will see below (p. 129).

Besides his various writings against Rousseau, Formey also refuted Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*, which, in contrast to Rousseau's deistic ideas, were openly atheistic and for this reason had a more 'dangerous' but a less effective impact on the common people. Formey counteracted Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques* in 1749, in a 200 page work entitled *Pensées raisonnables opposées aux pensées philosophiques*. The appendix of the *Pensées raisonnables* contained still another refutation, namely Formey's *Essai de critique sur le livre intitulé 'Les Moeurs'*, which was directed against the work of another collaborator to the *Encyclopédie*, François-Vincent Toussaint, which had appeared in 1748 and, as with Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*, had immediately been prohibited in France.⁴⁷² Moreover, in 1750, Formey published a fictional letter, the *Lettre de M. Gervaise Holmes*, by which he refuted Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles*, the writing for which Diderot had been detained in Vincennes for three months.⁴⁷³ Except for Rousseau's *Premier Discours* and his *Nouvelle Héloïse*, all of Formey's refutations generally dealt with books that had been prohibited but nevertheless widely circulated in Europe, which leads me to the assumption that the origin of Formey's concept of refuting 'dangerous' books lay at least partially in the contemporary system of censorship and its alleged flaws.

In mid-eighteenth-century Europe, the system of publishing and censorship was rather complicated and the possibilities by which to circumvent the latter were rather diverse. Edoardo Tortarolo described the situation, which eventually led to the collapse of censorship and the insertion of the freedom of the press into the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789, as a junction of 'functional ambiguity' and 'participatory freedom'.⁴⁷⁴ Since the late Seventeenth Century, France had had a centrally organised and strong (in terms of punishment) state system of control over the book market. It was exercised by the *bureau de librairie*, which issued (sealed)

471 Formey, *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, VI.

472 Formey, *Pensées raisonnables opposées aux 'Pensées philosophiques', avec un Essai de critique sur le livre intitulé 'Les Moeurs'* (Berlin, 1749). The book appeared under a wrong indication; in reality it had been published by Luzac in Leiden. It was re-edited in 1756 and 1758.

473 Formey, *Lettre de M. Gervaise Holmes à l'auteur de la 'Lettre sur les aveugles'* (Cambridge, 1750). The place of publication was likewise fictional, as the book was actually published in Berlin.

474 See Edoardo Tortarolo, *The Invention of Free Press: Writers and Censorship in Eighteenth Century Europe* (Dordrecht, 2016), 154-63.

print permissions and privileges (and hence exercised a pre-publication control). Moreover, this system involved a couple of other juridical institutions, such as the lieutenant of the police, the *parlement* and the *conseil d'état*, which surveyed the observance of the rules (and hence in most of the cases acted after a book had illegally appeared in print).⁴⁷⁵ Nonetheless, in practice, the control over the press only had a limited effect in eighteenth-century France, in the sense that books that contained politically, morally and religiously subversive opinions, and even forbidden books were still able to circulate widely. This situation caused and was facilitated by a decreasing strictness in the states' application of its censorship laws. The reasons for this were multiple: first, there was a rather large demand within the French public, especially in the higher ranks of society, for books that did not obtain print permission, and this demand has been supplied by peddlers who illegally sold prohibited books. These illegal books were printed either in the French provinces, abroad or in clandestine print offices in Paris.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, the popularity of certain books seems to have even been enhanced by their prohibition.⁴⁷⁷ For example, Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques* appeared anonymously and without royal permission in spring 1746 in France; it subsequently was forbidden on the 7 July 1746 by the *parlement* of Paris, but it continued to circulate clandestinely with huge success.⁴⁷⁸ Similarly, Rousseau's *Émile* appeared in France on the 22 May 1762 with the printer's mark of Jean Néaulme in The Haye, although it was clandestinely printed in France, and banned on the 9 June by the *parlement* of Paris. The original Dutch edition of the *Émile* by Néaulme appeared only one month later and was equally forbidden by the Dutch states on the 30 July 1762. In the same time period a Lyonese counterfeit was also disseminated which demonstrates the high public demand for this book.⁴⁷⁹ Such a huge illegal book market was simply too difficult for the authorities to control.⁴⁸⁰ Besides this, the censorship authorities to a certain extent also deliberately reduced their control, due to economic reasons, as clandestine books from abroad harmed the domestic booksellers. These political and economic reasons were accompanied by a change in the conceptions that underlay censorship: the censors' perception of which contents posed a danger to the established order became more equivocal over time, and as concepts of free speech became

475 For the genesis and structure of the Parisian system of censorship in the second half of the Eighteenth Century see Nicole Herrmann-Mascard, *La Censure des livres à Paris à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: 1750-1789* (Paris, 1968). For the distinction and sometimes conflicting relationship between the different institutions and actors in the process of censorship, with a focus on the different kinds of rhetoric that they used in their practice of censoring, see Barbara de Negroni, *Lectures interdites. Le travail des censeurs au XVIII. Siècle, 1723 - 1774* (Paris, 1995).

476 See Herrmann-Mascard, *La Censure des Livres*, 97-112.

477 See Negroni, *Lectures interdites*, 15-6. For the clandestine book market see Darnton

478 See Robert Niklaus, "Pensées Philosophiques," *Dictionnaire de Diderot*, ed. Raymond Trousson and Roland Mortier (Paris, 1999), 390.

479 See Bernard Gagnebin, "Notices Bibliographiques," in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 4 (Paris, 1969), 1860-61.

480 For an analysis of the market of clandestine books in France see the major works by Robert Darnton: *Edition et Sédition: L'univers de la littérature clandestine au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1991) and *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York, 1995).

more widespread. This was facilitated by the fact that many of the censors forged friendships and shared ideas with the writers who they were supposed to control.⁴⁸¹

These multiple factors contributed to the 'functional ambiguity' of the censorship system in France, in the sense that officially the system upheld its strict rules but also provided opportunities to circumvent or soften them. The best example of this is the introduction of a new form of print authorisation around 1715 – la *permission tacite* – which came without the royal seal and did not state that its content was approved by the state. Even so it ensured that whoever published the work would not face punishment. The *permission tacite* was issued by the *librairie* and tolerated by the *parlement*. It was mainly given to foreign books (which had no other way of legally entering the French market) and French editions of foreign books (in order to support the French printing market).⁴⁸² Thus over the course of the second half of the Eighteenth Century, the opportunity to pass content that ran contrary to the established religious and moral norms became quite good in France. In response to the state's decreasing vigilance in condemning and amending such content, public opinion increasingly took over the task. As Negroni emphasises, during the Eighteenth Century, a new concept of a text as an object of rational discussion and reflection emerged and gained popularity.⁴⁸³ As a result, the practice of 'censoring' was increasingly considered to be the task of the public sphere, which can be observed by the fact that in mid-eighteenth-century France the increase of apologetic writings correlated with the increase of heretical books.⁴⁸⁴ This development describes the element of 'participatory freedom' that is contained in Tortarolo's definition of the situation of censorship in the Eighteenth Century, not only in France but in the whole Europe except for the Netherlands.⁴⁸⁵

In comparison to France, this situation supposedly prevailed to an even larger extent in Frederick II's Prussia; particularly Berlin, as it was a hub for writers and booksellers, was considered to be a place of a free press.⁴⁸⁶ State-organised censorship did exist, but from 1749

481 See Hermann-Mascard, *La Censure des Livres*, 113. The example most often cited in respect to this is Malherbes, who was director of the *librairie* from 1750 and was a friend of the editors of the *Encyclopédie*. He made sure that this controversial work maintained its privilege in 1752 despite objections from the Church and *parlement* (see p. 52-4).

482 See Hermann-Mascard, *La Censure du Livre*, 114-9.

483 See Negroni, *Lectures interdites*, 278-9. In her book as a whole she tries to solve the apparent contradiction between strict censorship rules and the huge spread of controversial books with reference to the emergence of this new concept of text. This was opposed to the traditional concept of a text as a secret thing that was reserved for a limited class of people which for a long time justified the pre-publication censoring measures of the French *librairie*.

484 See for example the quantitative analysis of the French book market by Henri-Jean Martin, "La Tradition Perpétuée," in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, vol. 2: *Le livre triomphant 1660-1830* (Paris, 1984), 175–85. Formey himself spoke in the introduction to his *Anti-Émile*, 8 of a general revolt against anti-religious writings in recent years.

485 See Tortarolo, *The Invention of Free Press*, 156.

486 See Tortarolo, *The Invention of Free Press*, 145.

onwards it was not centralised under one institution and it relied, like everywhere in Europe, on a very large definition of what was allowed to be printed ('everything that was not against religion, the state and good morals'), which permitted the censors to adopt looser interpretations. More importantly, the censorship in Prussia was based very much on informal practices: censoring a book was negotiated on a case-by-case basis and depended on the relationship of the persons involved. Since the appointed censors were very often writers and learned men themselves, they often had rather liberal views on what could be spread in public and what could not, and for this reason many books that in France were forced to circulate clandestinely faced no such problems in Prussia.⁴⁸⁷ Basically, as Totarolo summed up, censorship in Prussia and more precisely in Berlin, functioned smoothly through the cooperation of writers, state officials and publishers in which everybody was supposed to obtain a satisfying outcome.⁴⁸⁸ This caused a different concept of censorship or freedom of the press to evolve: a censorship that was carried out by the actors of the public sphere, as a form of negotiation, via literary criticism or auto-censoring. This model of self-regulation was based on the idea of the Republic of Letters, in the sense that it required equality and reciprocal confidence among the learned men that constituted it.⁴⁸⁹ Before 1749, in a brief two year period, Frederick II had tried to implement a more centralised system of censorship by charging the Academy to exercise a pre-publication control of the book market, yet it failed for more or less the same reasons that it did in France.⁴⁹⁰ However, during its brief existence, Formey also experienced the difficulties that the implementation of censorship through the Academy caused: in late 1747 he had been assigned to check some manuscripts that were to be printed by the Berlin publisher Ambrosius Haude, yet he had to report to Maupertuis that he had already found these writings in the press.⁴⁹¹

Formey hence was familiar with the experiences of a state censorship official, as well as of an author in a self-regulating public sphere. This is why, when it came to his own practice as a writer within this public sphere, he seems to have taken an intermediary position between the two different concepts of how opinion should be (not) passed on to a public: he defamed the circumvention of the state censorship and portrayed his refutations as executing the premises of these politics, while at the same time he seems to have adhered to the ideal of a self-regulated censorship through public discussion among authors, and shaped his refutations as elements of such

487 See Tortarolo, *The Invention of Free Press*, 146-7 and 149.

488 See Tortarolo, *The Invention of Free Press*, 148.

489 See Edoardo Tortarolo, "La Censure à Berlin au XVIIIe Siècle," in *La Lettre Clandestine, n°6, 1997 : Avec les actes de la journée de Créteil du 25 Avril 1997 : Censure et clandestinité aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, ed. Olivier Bloch and Antony McKenna (Paris, 1998), 261. In contrast to this practice of self-regulated freedom of the press after mid-Eighteenth Century, discussions about absolute freedom of press became only common in the 1780s in Berlin, see Tortarolo, *The Invention of Free Press*, 150-1.

490 See Tortarolo, *The Invention of Free Press*, 146.

491 See Formey to Maupertuis, 28.11.1747 (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Nachlass 218).

a discussion. In an essay on the morality of authors, which Formey wrote in 1755 but was published only in 1782 in the Academy's *Mémoires*, he highlighted, very similarly to the aspects raised in modern scholarship, the reasons for the dysfunctionality of state censorship: the subjectivity of the censors, the importation of illegal writings from other countries and, in addition, the unscrupulousness of booksellers to publish against censorship law.⁴⁹² Despite the deficiencies in the execution of censorship, Formey however strongly supported the idea on which these measures were based, namely a state's need to suppress everything and everyone that harmed the foundation of society, i.e. the authority of God, the sovereign and moral laws.⁴⁹³

That Formey's refutations were motivated by the idea which stood behind state censorship can be observed in his writings against Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques* and Rousseau's *Émile*, which circulated widely in Europe despite their official prohibition. In the introductions to his refutations Formey claimed that the prohibition of Diderot's and Rousseau's books was more than legitimate, given that they presented a threat to the state and society.⁴⁹⁴ Moreover, he placed the *Anti-Émile* and the apologetics of religion that he pursued with it, in an explicitly political discourse by dedicating it to Prince Ferdinand of Prussia, the brother of Frederick II and major general of the Seven-Years-War: Formey introduced this dedication with the significant sentence: 'Défendre la cause de la Religion, c'est défendre celle des Princes, dont le Trône n'a point de plus ferme appuie que cette doctrine céleste, destinée à rendre les hommes vertueux & heureux.'⁴⁹⁵ As we can see, Formey highlighted the role of religion, in particular, as an element that assured the maintenance of society and the (monarchical) state: according to this, religion was a safeguard of the civil society to ensure its positive effect on the virtue and satisfaction of its members.⁴⁹⁶ Furthermore, Formey's emphasis on the social and political functions of religion was so strong that it incited him to relegate the question of the truth of religion to the margins of his interest: even if religion was only a fiction it would still be necessary because of its beneficial influence on society.⁴⁹⁷ Similarly, he conceded to atheists to believe or not believe what they wanted, if only they could keep their opinions private instead of spreading them in society.⁴⁹⁸ Consequently, it seems legitimate to say that Formey

492 See Formey, "Essai sur la morale des auteurs," *Nouveaux Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres*, 1782 (Berlin, 1784), 363-403. Formey had originally offered the *Essai* to Briasson in Spring 1755 to be published, which however never seems to have happened, see Briasson to Formey, 11.4.1755, *Correspondance passive*, 81. For the criticism of contemporary censorship contained in it, see particularly p. 77-8.

493 See Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 376.

494 See Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, 56; *Anti-Émile*, 3-4.

495 Formey, "Dédicace," *Anti-Émile*, no pagination.

496 See also Formey, *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, 112-13: here Formey quoted the Protestant theologian Jacques Abbadie who emphasised the favourable function of religion for the state in a similar way. For Abbadie, people's shared belief in Christianity created strong links that could guarantee the coherence of civil society better than any law.

497 See Formey, *Anti-Émile*, 9. A similar reference is made on p. 14.

498 See Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, 57-58.

adopted the motives that stood behind state censorship as the main goal of his refutations of anti-religious books, and his writings in general, almost all of which contained apologetic elements. At the same time however, as his comment on the private belief of atheists shows, he seems to have held on to the idea of freedom of thought.

Moreover, the observation that Formey adopted the arguments of state censorship should not lead us to the conclusion that he defended, like Hobbes, the idea that thought and the press had to be controlled by the state at all cost.⁴⁹⁹ On the contrary, he seems to have endorsed the ideal of the Republic of Letters as a democratic and free space of intellectual production and exchange, where learned men autonomously assured the decency and moral integrity of the ideas that were shared in public, an ideal that must have been partially motivated by his experience of the public sphere in Berlin. However, he perceived this ideal to be increasingly less true, and therefore censorship became a necessary tool in his eyes as he underlined in his refutations. The reason why Formey believed that the Republic of Letters was dysfunctional and why he engaged in his refutations seems to have been the immorality of the authors and publishers at the time. Formey also described this problem in his *Essai sur la morale des auteurs* and suggested that an intervention was needed to overcome it. First of all, Formey underlined that, against all perceptions, writers did not differ so much from the average human being: the majority of the people were not truly moral because, in Formey's conception, morality was linked to intellectual capacity that the average person did not possess. However, the majority of writers also did not possess this true morality, since the intellectual superiority that they were supposed to have over others, was an illusion.⁵⁰⁰ Due to the openness of the Republic of Letters, anybody could become a writer, independently from his knowledge and capacities:

'Le savoir n'est point le motif le plus commun & le seul déterminant qui engage à devenir Auteur. La République des Lettres est un État démocratique, & en a tous les inconvénients. Chacun s'y produit, & y aspire à tous, sans avoir le plus souvent de quoi légitimer le moins du monde ses prétentions. On seroit donc bien éloigné de son compte, si l'on s'imaginait que tout Auteur est un homme qui s'est moralement assuré de sa vocation à écrire, & qui a pris des mesures pour le faire d'une manière convenable à tous ses devoirs. Pour un seul de cet ordre, il y en a cent qui sont poussés par l'orgueil, par la malice, par le libertinage, & par les motifs les plus honteux.'⁵⁰¹

Additionally, Formey claimed that genius and greater knowledge even reinforced the immorality of those who were vicious by nature, and hence also the apparent geniuses and important men of

499 See Tortarolo, *Invention of Free press*, 1-5. Tortarolo considers Hobbes' view on the necessity of state control as the basis of absolutist conceptions of censorship, and opposes it with Spinoza's claim for the freedom of speech.

500 See Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 384-5.

501 Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 385.

letters engaged in rivalries and jealousy that characterised the anarchical state of the Republic of Letters.⁵⁰²

From this statement of the flawed nature of the community of writers at large, Formey turned to an explanation of the immoral motives of the individual author. In his view, the motives for taking the pen were the desire to become publicly known or famous, to obtain advantages in the state or community of scholars of which one was a part, and to make money.⁵⁰³ This list suggests that Formey seems to have condemned every motive of writing that was not linked to the content of writing and knowledge itself (but to the person of the author) as immoral. Moreover, the content of books itself, or the act of writing a book, was often marked by signs of immoral behaviour in Formey's view: he particularly denounced the vice of pedantry, by which he meant the habit to continuously and exclusively pick upon one's own favoured topic, and to be convinced that they were the first and only expert scholar in the subject with which they were dealing, for this provoked and fuelled vicious rivalries with other scholars.⁵⁰⁴ Formey's description of the immoral nature of most of the contemporary writers owes some similarities to his above-mentioned description of the misconduct in the preaching of many Huguenot pastors: he blamed both writers and pastors for craving for admiration from their respective audiences, as it was motivated by vices such as vanity and pride. Also in the *Essai sur la morale des auteurs*, like in the *Lettres sur la prédication*, Formey attributed these vices particularly to the young writers.⁵⁰⁵ In Formey's view the bad – because it was alimented by immoral feelings – state of preaching and publishing seems to have been generally due to a universal moral decline of humanity.

However, in Formey's considerations on the writers that constituted the Republic of Letters, he singled out one particular vice which had the harmful effects on society that he himself wanted to counteract in his function as a Christian philosopher. This was the practice of certain writers to (further) corrupt the morals of their readers through the contents of their writings, either deliberately, as a means to gain fame, or unwittingly because of ignorance and superficiality:

'De tout ce qui l'homme peut faire, il n'y a rien de plus bas, de plus lâche, de plus déshonorant, que le rôle, ou le métier de Séducteur, de Corrupteur. L'innocence est le plus précieux joyau de la créature; le lui enlever, c'est être mille fois pire qu'homicide. C'est pourtant à quoi travaillent sans relâche une infinité d'Auteurs, qui tirent même leur réputation des succès dont leurs Ouvrages sont couronnés. Ceux qui le font de propos délibéré sont les vrais compagnons du Démon, puisqu'ils ne cherchent comme lui qu'à grossir le nombre des méchants & des misérables. Mais ceux qui par foiblesse, par précipitation, par aveuglement, se rendent

502 See Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 368.

503 See Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 386-8.

504 See Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 389.

505 See Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 367.

coupables du même crime, ont tant de moyens de s'apercevoir de son énormité, qu'ils me paroissent à peu près aussi inexcusables que les premiers.⁵⁰⁶

It was precisely this crime against innocent people that Formey criticised in his attacks against the *philosophes* and their testimonies of non-belief. In his refutations Formey usually linked this argument to a plea for the cause of the common people's happiness: in his view, with their criticism of religion, the *philosophes* would incite an existential crisis in their readers by causing them to doubt a hitherto stable worldview and hence, steal the basis of their happiness from them.⁵⁰⁷ This argument was based on Formey's opinion that to be guided by religion or any other law was a human being's natural need.⁵⁰⁸ Consequently, authors like Rousseau and Diderot were in Formey's view first and foremost guilty of recklessness and hate towards the common people. According to him, the most reprehensible part of the *philosophes'* harmful behaviour towards their readers was that they did not make any effort to provide a substitute for the doctrine that they destroyed; for Formey, this was a sign of total carelessness.⁵⁰⁹ By raising these points, Formey saw himself as a defender of religion, and religion as a means of safeguarding human happiness.

Besides generally condemning the publication of ideas that in Formey's view harmed the individual and society at large, Formey also highlighted why this behaviour was so harmful in his days: the contemporary authors tried to penetrate even the lowest and least educated parts of society with their dangerous ideas. In the introduction to the *Émile Chrétien*, Formey illustrated this through a comparison between traditional and contemporary attacks on religion. In Formey's eyes, both the attacks against the Christian creed and their counterarguments persisted for a long time; however it was only in recent times that the impact of anti-religious authors had increased on every level of society, which was mainly due to the genre of writing and language that they applied.⁵¹⁰ Formey compared the danger of the anti-religious writings of the Seventeenth Century with those that had appeared in his own lifetime: the books of Spinoza, Hobbes and Vanini had been written in such a learned style that they were accessible only to learned men.⁵¹¹ In contrast, the 'modern unbelievers' were using vulgar language, a pleasing style and fictional genres in order to be read by those, who in Formey's eyes should be least exposed to their ideas, i.e. women, young people and people of a lower social origin.⁵¹² It is very likely that with this criticism Formey had Rousseau in mind, not only because it was in the preface of his refutation of Rousseau's *Émile*, but also because Rousseau's novels in general experienced a huge success among these groups of society. For

506 Formey, "Sur la morale des auteurs," 398.

507 See Formey, *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, VI and 128-29; *Anti-Émile*, 7.

508 See Formey, *Anti-Émile*, 9.

509 See Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, 59 and *Anti-Émile*, 12.

510 See Formey, *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, VI.

511 See Formey, *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, V.

512 See Formey, *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, VI.

instance, the *Nouvelle Héloïse* appeared in 70 editions before 1800, and as Robert Darnton notes, its reading sparked an almost unprecedented reaction in the audience: people became so passionate about the novel's plot that they identified with the main characters and Rousseau himself.⁵¹³ Women were considered by their contemporaries to be particularly prone to the content of novels. Rousseau himself was even aware of this and to a certain extent seems to have shared his contemporaries' anxiety regarding the negative influence that reading novels could potentially have on women's morals and through them on society at large.⁵¹⁴

Formey's concern that Rousseau's and similarly authored books were widely accessible to women and the common people in general expressed one of the major misdoings of these authors: with their writings they had quit the circumvented space of the Republic of Letters in which a self-regulated freedom of thought could take place among the learned. To confront the common people with religiously and morally ambiguous contents was not an option for people like Formey, simply because these common people were in his view not able to engage in such discussions. Generally, Formey seems to have had a rather negative image of the common readership, emphasising that their keenness to consume them enhanced the number of dangerous texts. By also criticising the role played by readers and publishers in the Republic of Letters, Formey drew a similar criticism to his one of preaching: he depicted the picture of a mutual responsibility for the extension of immorality in society. In his *Essai sur la morale des auteurs* Formey mentioned the public's role in the genesis of dangerous books only in passing by claiming that authors should not align the contents of their books with the unstable and heterogeneous taste of the public, but instead listen to the few morally integral judges in the Republic of Letters.⁵¹⁵ Compared to Formey's rather generic comment on the unreliability of the contemporary readers' taste, the comment by his Genevan correspondent, the natural philosopher Charles Bonnet concerning Formey's *Anti-Émile* was much more explicit about the actual depravity of the public. In his letters to Formey in 1764 Bonnet repeatedly emphasised that it was already too late to refute Rousseau due to the great popularity of his book: 'Votre *Émile* ne préviendra pas les mauvaises suites de l'*Émile ruffique*. Vous avés beau rendre le vôtre chrétien; on lir[a] toujours celui qui ne l'est pas.'⁵¹⁶ For Bonnet it was obvious that the people would be attracted by the infamous contents rather than the good Christian ones.

513 See Robert Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, ed. Robert Darnton (New York, 1984), 215–56; see particularly 242–9 and 251. See also Claude Labrosse, *Lire au XVIIIe siècle. La Nouvelle Héloïse et ses Lecteurs* (Lyon, 1985).

514 See William Ray, "Reading Women: Cultural Authority, Gender, and the Novel. The Case of Rousseau," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27, no. 3 (1994): 421–47.

515 See Formey, "Essai sur la morale des auteurs," 369.

516 Bonnet to Formey, 5.6.1764, *Lettres de Genève*, 635. See also 30.3.1764, *Lettres de Genève*, 624: 'Vôtre *Émile* sera surement mieux élevé que celui de Rousseau, mais le contre-poison viendra trop tard, et ceux qui veulent être empoisonnés ne le prendront point.'

Actually, Formey was well aware of the problem raised by Bonnet. Already in the preface to his *Pensées raisonnables* in 1749, he had claimed that books that discredited religion were increasingly sought by contemporary readers, particularly if they were written in an interesting style.⁵¹⁷ It was for the same reasons that Formey was doubtful about the success of apologetic writings in general and his own in response to the *Émile* in particular. In his introduction to the *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien* he suggested that 'bad' books like Rousseau's *Émile*, sold so well because of their controversial and vicious content.⁵¹⁸ As a result, Formey assumed that it was difficult to attract a large readership for his refutation of Rousseau: the largest part of the contemporary readership was in his view already morally corrupted, and therefore he claimed that his work would only address the remaining small number of virtuous readers that were still interested in the good of religion.⁵¹⁹ This rather negative opinion on the motives and behaviour of the reading public suggests that Formey did not only consider a certain group of writers – the *philosophes* – to be responsible for the religious and moral decline that was fuelled by certain writings but also the readers themselves.

Besides writers and readers, Formey seems to have also conceived of a third group of actors who were responsible for the spread of dangerous books: the booksellers and printers. The role of booksellers and printers in the process of publication was very powerful as they ultimately assured that certain ideas became public, very often in the face of certain censorship regulations or prohibitions. Formey's opinion on the role of booksellers and on the liberty of the press, for which many of them argued, became evident in a debate that he had with his long-term publisher and close correspondent Élie Luzac in Leiden. In the first years of their collaboration, in 1749/50, they disputed Luzac's choice to publish La Mettrie's controversial materialist account on human nature, the *Homme machine* in 1747.⁵²⁰ Luzac justified his decision to print this book in the *Avertissement* to it, which however did not protect him from being convoked to the consistory of the Walloon Church in Leiden, as well as encountering harsh criticism from members of the international diaspora of Huguenots. The French pastor Pierre Roques from Bâle was one of the people who publicly condemned Luzac's behaviour: he published his criticism of Luzac in Formey's journal *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* in 1749.⁵²¹ Motivated by the idea of journalistic impartiality, and as Luzac's friend, Formey also allowed Luzac to publish his defence against Roques' criticism

517 See Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, VII-VIII.

518 See Formey, *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, VII. Similarly in "Avertissement," *L'Esprit de Julie*, VI.

519 Formey, *Profession de foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, VII.

520 For the details of the incident, including a summary of Roques' criticism and Luzac's counterarguments, see Wyger R. E. Velema, "Introduction to Élie Luzac's 'An Essay on Freedom of Expression' (1749)," in *Early French and German Defenses of Freedom of Press. Elie Luzac's "Essay on Freedom of Expression" (1749) and Carl Friedrich Bahrdt's "On Freedom of the Press and its Limits" (1787) in English Translation*, ed. John Christian Laursen and Johan van der Zande (Leiden; Boston, 2003), 14-19.

521 Pierre Roques, "Article VII. Examen de l'avertissement de l'imprimeur qui a publié le livre intitulé l'Homme machine," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique*, 5 (Octobre 1748 – Décembre 49), 328-57.

in the *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique*. However, he added some of his own reflections on the liberty of the press. With these reflections, Formey made it clear that he did not support Luzac's arguments for publishing the *Homme machine*, and that in general he supported the moral obligation of the bookseller towards society, over claims for the freedom of the press. More precisely, he stated that freedom of the press was supposed to be regulated by either civil law or morality, the first type of regulation being assured by the censorship authority – to which booksellers should obey – and the latter depending uniquely on the conscience of the bookseller who decided to put a text on the market.⁵²²

According to Formey, the conscience of booksellers was to be guided by certain principles: First and foremost, booksellers as members of society had to actively contribute to the safeguarding of the foundations of the society, i.e. religion and morals, and hence they should not publish anything that could have even the slightest negative effect on these foundations: 'Que tant qu'on veut être regardé comme Membre d'une Société qui a pour arcbutans principaux la Religion & la Morale, on ne doit faire quoi que ce soit que tende à ébranler ces deux bases, quand même il n'y auroit rien que d'innocent dans le fond des choses qui produisent cet effet.'⁵²³ Moreover, Formey stressed that particularly if the printer/ bookseller was aware of the danger that certain manuscripts contained he could be considered as guilty of spreading them as the author himself.⁵²⁴ Formey's arguments were all directed at one claim, i.e. that the bookseller was also morally responsible for the content of the books that he printed and therefore the excuse that he merely carried out a technical job did not count.

Luzac was angry about Formey's public reflections on the freedom of the press, as he understood it as a direct attack against himself. He did not try to engage in the moral aspect of this issue but simply denied that the printing of the *Homme machine* had a detrimental effect on religion and morals.⁵²⁵ Even before Formey wrote his reflections on this matter, i.e. in their correspondence in 1749, Luzac disclaimed all responsibility for the effects of the book: in his view the publication itself did not *per se* cause any harm, instead the harming effect depended rather on the readers' appropriation of the book.⁵²⁶ However, immediately after the publication of Roques' criticism of him, in March 1750, Luzac justified his behaviour to Formey by referring to the rules of moral conduct, more precisely by referring to the concept of the *honnête homme*. He wrote to Formey that his intention had not been to become known through the publication of irreligious contents, and that

522 See Formey, "Article XIV. Réflexions sur la pièce suivante," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique*, 6 (Avril, Mai & Juin 1750), 429.

523 See Formey, "Article XIV," 430.

524 See Formey, "Article XIV," 431.

525 See Luzac to Formey, 9.8.1750, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 134.

526 See Luzac to Formey, [July 1749], *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 75.

he stood above all aspirations to glory. Moreover, he also claimed that his behaviour towards La Mettrie, i.e. his support of his writing, had been inspired by morality: he portrayed his consent to publish La Mettrie's book as an act of altruism, in the sense that he claimed that he wanted to help a friend who had been discarded by everyone else.⁵²⁷ For Formey, this justification was apparently not acceptable, as was indicated by one of Luzac's comments in a letter in April 1750: 'Vous dites, Monsieur, [...] que je suis la dupe d'un faux héroïsme de morale qui n'est qu'un phantome si on le separe de la religion.'⁵²⁸ From this we might conclude that Formey had blamed Luzac for a misuse or misdirection of moral imperatives and that in his view morality was not possible without religion.

Thus for Formey there was a particular – religiously founded – moral aspect to everything that happened in the Republic of Letters: writing, reading and publishing, especially if it dealt with subjects that impacted the pillars of civil society. To reveal these moral aspects and especially to denounce their increasing abuse in his time seems to have been a crucial element of the self-fashioning in his role as Christian philosopher, which served to legitimate his own practice. I would argue that almost all of Formey's writings and particularly his refutations were motivated by and contained the trope of his own moral superiority in the midst of a moral decline that allegedly marked his time. Yet, it was not only through his own practice as an author that he wanted to overcome this decline. He also suggested that there was a need for a structural reform of censorship, in a similar way to his campaign for the establishment of a preacher seminar in order to prevent a moral decline among the French colony's pastoral offspring. The model that he proposed in his *Essai sur la morale des auteurs* was more formal and specialised at an institutional level while being more liberal in terms of religious questions. More precisely, he suggested that the practice of censoring be carried out by an assembly of professional and paid scholars where each member evaluated the texts that fell in his field of expertise, but the print permissions were ultimately decided in the plenum.⁵²⁹ This plenum of censors should work to fiercely oppress all contents that were harmful to the three key elements of a stable society: religion, political constitution and morality. Particularly they should pay attention to not being fooled by fictional texts in which harmful content was only alluded to but not made explicitly, as in Formey's view, such works were even more dangerous, because they had subtle and hidden effects on the public than openly critical treatises.⁵³⁰ Despite this general strictness towards any kind of contents that dissented from the norm, Formey apparently wanted to avoid excessive severeness towards treatises that dealt with religion. According to him, philosophers and writers should be allowed to depart from the dominant

527 See Luzac to Formey, [March 1750], *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 101.

528 Luzac to Formey, 11.4.1750, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 114.

529 See Formey, "Essai sur la morale des auteurs," 379.

530 See Formey, "Essai sur la morale des auteurs," 379-380.

and established opinions on revealed and natural religion in order to discover new ideas, and to rectify potential misunderstandings; the only limit for writings of this sort should be the fundamental truths of doctrine that were not to be scrutinised.⁵³¹ Actually, this idea seems to have been inspired by the arguments employed by the pastor Pierre Roques in the above-mentioned debate on Luzac's responsibility as the publisher of the *Homme machine*.⁵³² Formey, hence, conceived of a sort of reasonable censorship that did not rigorously suppress everything that was linked to alternative views on religion, but proceeded selectively based on expert knowledge and moral integrity.

Besides the plea for a structural and conceptual reform of censorship Formey also raised ideas about how to improve the self-regulation of the Republic of Letters via literary criticism and refutations, a practice that he carried out himself a lot. In his 1755 essay on the morality of authors, Formey argued that the practice of curtailing dangerous books through critical comments and reviews bore several defects. He condemned, in particular, all the short pamphlets and 'pièces fugitives' that were released on mass every time a controversial writing appeared. In his view they were not only of poor quality and attested to their authors' 'demi savoir' and bad passions;⁵³³ on the contrary, they only enhanced the celebrity of the dangerous book that they were supposed to oppress, and did not succeed in having a lasting impact on the audience.⁵³⁴ Moreover, as emanates from a complaint he voiced against another author in a letter to the President of the Academy, Maupertuis, Formey was critical about refutations in which the original 'dangerous' text was printed above its criticism.⁵³⁵

The opinion that refutations should be issued moderately seems to have been quite common in the Protestant theological circles around Formey. Also the Huguenot pastor Jérémie Bitaubé, who published against the irreligious content of Rousseau's *Émile*, had also been concerned with this issue: he particularly emphasised that there was nothing new to be added to the arguments against the *Émile*, and as a result, the public would more likely be annoyed rather than instructed by the constant refutations.⁵³⁶ The Genevan theologian Jacob Vernet, who, due to his origin and function, seems to have felt a particular urge to pen a defence of Christianity against the *Citoyen de Genève*, considered more refutations simply superfluous.⁵³⁷ Already in May 1763 he reported to Formey that

531 See Formey, "Essai sur la morale des auteurs," 381.

532 See Roques, "Article VII," 329.

533 See Formey, "Essai sur la morale des auteurs," 373.

534 See Formey, "Essai sur la morale des auteurs," 374.

535 See Formey to Maupertuis, 28.11.1747 (Stabi Nachlass 218). Formey complains here about a refutation issued by his academic colleague Johann Peter Süßmilch against Johann Christian Edelmann who was considered to be an atheist by many of his contemporaries.

536 See Jérémie Bitaubé, "Avertissement," *Examen de la confession de foi du vicaire savoyard contenue dans Emile* (Berlin, 1763), III-IV.

537 The *Histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de J.J. Rousseau*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1821), 404-409 mentioned 28 French works

he saw no further need to refute Rousseau because there were many efficient critical works that already existed. He predominantly mentioned the works of two other Huguenots, the *Examen de la confession de foi du vicaire savoyard* by Jérémie Bitaubé and La Beaumelle's *Préservatif contre le déisme*.⁵³⁸ Moreover, he believed that Rousseau had rebutted himself through his *Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont*, as well as through his renunciation of his Genevan citizenship.⁵³⁹

Compared to the critical opinion that Formey and other Huguenot writers had concerning the efficiency of criticising or refuting dangerous books, Formey's own measures as an author appear rather harmful. We might think that for example his repeated refutations of Rousseau's *Émile*, or his general polemics against the 'dangerous' authors, which were omnipresent in his works, constituted precisely the form of behaviour that he criticised. Moreover, many of his refutations used precisely the same technique that he had blamed others for, i.e. to reproduce the content of dangerous books together with his criticism of them. Yet, in Formey's own presentation of his writings against the *philosophes*, they were different. In his introductions to the *Pensées raisonnables* and the *Profession de foi du vicaire chrétien* (which was identical to that of the *Émile Chrétien*), he outlined his concept of a strategic refutation according to which the less dangerous assaults against religion and society – which were in the majority according to Formey – were to be ignored, while from time to time and in case of especially dangerous arguments a fierce opposition had to be raised. In his *Pensées philosophiques* Formey presented his strategy in the following way:

'Il ne faut donc pas s'étonner si l'on ne prend pas à tâche de réfuter toutes les Productions des Incrédules; ce seroit couper les têtes d'une Hydre toujours renaissante. Il convient d'en laisser mourir le plus grand nombre de sa belle mort, de mépriser une infinité de traits qui s'emoussent & tombent amortis aux piés des murs inébranlables de la Vérité. Mais, comme un trop long silence pourroit paroître une espèce de prescription contre la Vérité, & que les Libertins aiment beaucoup à triompher de la moindre ombre d'avantages, il convient aussi de leur faire voir de tems en tems, combien il en coute peu à un homme, qui a quelques principes, de les convaincre de ces défauts qui règnent dans tous leurs Ecrits, de cette folle présomtion avec laquelle ils soutiennent les choses les plus insoutenables, ils posent des principes qui n'eurent jamais de réalité [...] ils entassent en un mot toutes les espèces des Sophismes avec autant de confiance que si toutes les Règles de la Logique étoient pour jamais anéanties.'⁵⁴⁰

which criticised Rousseau's *Émile* in one way or another. Most of them appeared two to three years after the original's publication.

538 Jérémie Bitaubé, *Examen de la confession de foi du vicaire savoyard*; Laurent Angliviel La Beaumelle, *Préservatif contre le déisme ou Instruction pastorale de Monsieur Du Mont ministre du Sainte Évangile à son troupeau, sur le livre de M. J. Jacques Rousseau, intitulé Emile, ou de l'Education* (Paris, 1763). The same two books were also mentioned in a letter by the Abbé Trublet to Formey, 14.-23.9.1763, *Correspondance passive*, 349. To this he also added two other refutations of the *Émile*, by the Abbé Yvon and by a so-called François-Louis-Claude Marin.

539 See Jacob Vernet to Formey, 27.5.1763, *Lettres de Genève*, 607.

540 Formey, *Pensées raisonnables*, VIII-X, compare to *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Chrétien*, IV-V. Although Formey's argument is basically the same in both of these writings, he seems to be more optimistic on the success of this

The interesting point of this depiction is Formey's portrayal of how the refutation of the dangerous opinions was supposed to be: in his view it should proceed by demonstrating the intellectual flaws of their arguments. Hence, he used a reference to his above-mentioned concept of philosophical/scientific apologetics to demonstrate the advantage that his approach to heretical writings had compared to the mass of refutations. Moreover, this commitment to a philosophical or scientific method in apologetics supposedly also entailed the necessity to quote the arguments that he wanted to prove wrong – a practice that he had criticised in other authors' refutations. This suggests two things: first in using this scientific method in his own writings Formey may not have been aware of the potential risk of replicating dangerous ideas, and second that he believed that, compared to other authors, his arguments against these dangerous ideas were more convincing. Such a belief is very probable considering that his Wolffian concept of the philosophical method was able to demonstrate everything through a rational deduction from first notions.

Despite Formey's own positive view on the effect of his refutations, we can observe similar tensions between his purposes and the results of his practices, as was the case in his practice to secularise dogma through philosophical preaching and edificational literature. His purpose was to protect the common people from irreligious and immoral ideas, which could only have been carried out through measures similar to those of state censorship. Yet, the measures that he applied via his refutations of the *philosophes* and Rousseau seem to have been inspired by the ideal of rational discussion, i.e. self-organised censorship among writers and learned men, excluding the common people altogether. As in the case of his excessive philosophical preaching, which failed to capture the common believer, Formey seems to have been partially aware of this tension, as his considerations about literary criticism show: instead of being able to compete with the popular writings of the *philosophes*, the learned criticism of them – that was difficult for the common people to understand – helped only to further disseminate their dangerous ideas. Yet, Formey did not project this criticism onto himself: it seems almost that his ideal of a universal rational method, on which he founded his identity as a Christian philosopher, made him feel immune to any of the criticism that he applied to others. It apparently did not occur to him that his works also potentially transported dangerous contents to the common people, or enhanced the dangerous authors' popularity; perhaps precisely because he was constantly moving between the learned and the more popular sphere. Moreover, he seems to have been unaware that his rational arguments themselves – and the possibility they bore to further curtail Christian doctrine – were potentially more harmful to religion when they reached the people that were able to handle them. This is precisely the argument that Antony McKenna advanced concerning rational, as he calls such texts 'Malbranchean'

method in 1749.

apologetics: he claims that rational Christian apologetics, through their endeavour to strengthen the reasonableness of Christianity, provided arguments that in turn were used by the freethinkers to deny the truth of Revelation.⁵⁴¹ It is important to emphasise (again) that this is a retrospective view on the situation which definitely did not affect Formey's behaviour or thought.

To sum up, not only was Formey's description of the French colony's and the European Republic of Letters' problems similar, but his solutions to these problems were also of a similar nature, and they bore the same tensions with respect to their purposes: the increasing dissolution of his confessional community and the increase in harmful writings to religion and state had in his view ultimately moral origins. Therefore to combat these phenomena became an expression of high morality which Formey claimed for himself as a Christian philosopher, and the weapon in this combat was philosophy, that he perceived as a science of reason.

The Power of the Booksellers

Besides Formey's moral convictions that animated his work, there certainly also existed to a certain extent economic factors that affected the form and content of his writings. Formey had often been blamed for acting merely out of economic incentives, particularly with respect to his refutations of the well-known and widely read *philosophes*.⁵⁴² Instead, I do not think that economic reasons were the determining factor for Formey's writings because of the predominant moral foundation of Formey's role, the extent of which I hope to have clearly demonstrated above. This moral foundation was not only an element of self-fashioning, but relied on the moral theory that was inspired by Wolff and to which Formey adhered. These points will be explained in greater detail in chapters 10 and 11. Therefore I would argue that Formey acted out of conviction when he wrote against the immorality of his age, which however does not mean that the intention to sell books did not play any role at all. The economic aspects behind some of his writings are in my view best described as constraints that his publishers and booksellers imposed on him out of economic reasons. In most of the cases, Formey seems to have given in to the booksellers' requirements concerning the content and style of his writings in order to have them printed. This shows of course that Formey accepted the rules of the market, but more than anything else it shows the driving force

541 See Antony McKenna, "Deus Absconditus," and Id., "Le dilemme de l'apologétique au XVIIIe siècle."

542 See Voisine, "J. Formey (1711-1797). Vulgarisateur de l'Oeuvre de Rousseau," 146. Rousseau himself, in his *Les Confessions de J.J. Rousseau*, in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin, Marcel Raymond, and Robert Osmont, vol. 1, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade (Paris, 1959), 540 described Formey as a thief who made a living out of other person's works by publishing the texts of others under his own name. Rousseau made this comment in respect to a letter concerning Providence that he had written to Voltaire, and which Formey had published without his consent in 1759, but he certainly referred at the same time also to Formey's *Anti-Émile* and *L'Esprit de Julie*.

that publishers and booksellers exerted behind certain of his writings.

In respect to Formey's *Philosophe Chrétien*, I have already alluded to the important role that Élie Luzac played as the publisher of the book. He criticised the parts of Formey's manuscript that appeared him to be too sermon-like and had suggested concrete means to remedy this problem, especially to curtail the Bible quotes in his writing. Luzac had already acted similarly and with success in the very first book that Formey published with him, his refutation of Diderot, i.e. the *Pensées raisonnables*. As emanates from one of his letters, Luzac had convinced Formey to remove every Bible quotation or mentioning of Jesus from the introduction to his writing. According to him, it was not necessary to use the whole repertoire of biblical expressions in order to sell 'good philosophy', as opposed to the 'wrong philosophy' of the French *philosophes* such as Diderot. The people would also appreciate these refutations without concrete apologetic rhetoric, and furthermore, Bible quotes were generally ill used in other works, which (according to Luzac) would rub off on the reputation all works containing them.⁵⁴³ Indeed, as I have mentioned above, Formey grounded his apologetic argument in the *Pensées raisonnables* predominantly on the lack of a thorough logic in Diderot's original and not on dogma or theology.

Also in respect to the first volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien* Luzac seems to have felt that his suggestions to adapt Formey's writing style and content to fit the taste of a larger (secular) public had been fairly successful: after the first volume had appeared the Dutch bookseller was full of praise for Formey, although he still made a comment concerning the sermon-like style of the essays.⁵⁴⁴ Also the sales figures of the first volume and the opinion of well-to-do people ('personnes de jugement') were very good.⁵⁴⁵ However, Luzac became increasingly less satisfied with the sale of the book the more the publication process advanced, and he seems to have used this as an argument to force Formey to change his style. Indeed, in the subsequent volumes of the *Philosophe Chrétien* the number of theological pieces and recycled sermons not only grew, but also became more visible to the buyers in the wording of the individual titles. Luzac linked this development to the declining sales figures of the book's later volumes. On the eve of the publication of the third volume, in August 1754, the Dutch bookseller harshly raised his concerns with Formey who seemed to have been sure of the book's success:

'La reimpression du premier volume ni les contrefaçons ne peuvent non plus servir de fondement à juger du succès. Voici ce qui est certain: c'est que le 2e volume n'est, à beaucoup près, pas si goûté que le premier et je vends souvent le premier sans le second. Le 3e volume peut dans le fonds surpasser les deux autres, mais sûrement les titres des discours rebutront

543 See Luzac to Formey, 11.2.1749, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 42.

544 See Luzac to Formey, 27.3.1750, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 106.

545 See Luzac to Formey, 1.2.1751, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 167-8.

plutôt les acheteurs qu'ils ne l'attireront et je suis moralement persuadé qu'avec tout le bon et l'excellent que peut contenir ce 3e volume, l'ouvrage n'auroit pas réussi si nous avions commencé par là.⁵⁴⁶

Although Formey apparently did not give in that much to Luzac's requirements after the first volume of the *Philosophe Chrétien*, it is impressive how directly and persistently Luzac tried to intervene in his productions, which emphasises the publisher's important role in the genesis of eighteenth-century writings.

Luzac's strong endeavour to influence Formey's works might have been also due to the particularly close professional and private relationship that Formey maintained with him compared to the majority of his booksellers. This can be observed on a quantitative level through their correspondence: foreign publishers like Luzac constituted a significant number of Formey's contacts. Among his 55 close correspondents there were five foreign publishers: Fortunato Bartolomeo di Felice in Yverdon, Pierre Rousseau in Liège and later in Bouillon, Claude-Antoine Briasson in Paris, Johann Schreuder in Amsterdam and Leipzig, and lastly Luzac in Leiden. Formey's relationships to these publishers were, above all, determined by commercial aspects and thus had a very irregular character, i.e. they were very intense during the process of publishing a book or journal, and ceased almost completely after the completion of the project. Formey's correspondence with Luzac was constant over 23 years, and 213 of the letters that Luzac sent to Formey have been preserved, which ranks him as the fourth most frequent person that Formey corresponded with. This is not surprising, for Luzac published six of Formey's works between 1749 and 1765,⁵⁴⁷ and issued the journal *Bibliothèque Impartiale* with Formey between 1750 and 1758.⁵⁴⁸ These numerous professional engagements also caused the two men to discuss issues that differed from their commercial affairs. Moreover, Luzac was not only a publisher and bookseller, he was also the author of several treatises and books on moral-philosophical and metaphysical topics, which demonstrate his inclination towards Wolffianism. Thus, the relationship between the two men was also a 'correspondance en philosophes' in which Luzac addressed Formey in his function as a professor of philosophy.⁵⁴⁹

546 See Luzac to Formey, 27.8.1754, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 253. See also the precedent letter from 13.8.1754, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 252 in which he described the third volume as being even more theological than the second and criticised that the topics treated in it would not match the title of the whole work.

547 These were: *Pensées raisonnables* (1749; N.B.: according to the title page it was published by Voss in Berlin, yet this should only cover the real publisher Luzac, see correspondence and Formey, "Notice de mes ouvrages," 117); *Le Philosophe Chrétien* (1750-1757); *Mélanges philosophiques* (1754); *Le Philosophe payen* (1759); *Principes de morale, déduits des facultés de l'entendement humain* (1762); *Principes de morale appliqués aux déterminations de la volonté* (1765), see "Introduction," *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 17.

548 See Jacques Marx, "La Bibliothèque Impartiale: Étude de contenu (Janvier 1750-Juin 1754)," in *L'étude des périodiques anciens. Colloque d'Utrecht*, ed. Marianne Couperus (Paris, 1972), 89-107.

549 See Luzac to Formey, 22.8.1749, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 80-81.

Although Luzac seems to have frequently and strongly tried to influence Formey's writings due to their relationship, still his requirements as a publisher and bookseller were similar to those of his colleagues: it seems that there was a general tendency to convince authors such as Formey to use a less clerical or sacred style, which however was not necessarily linked to the personal religious convictions of the booksellers. When Formey sent the manuscript of his *Consolations raisonnables et religieuses* (1768) – one of the follow-up-books of the *Philosophe Chrétien* – to his publisher Fortunato Bartolomeo di Felice, the latter confronted him with exhortations over Formey's sermon-like style that were very similar to those made by Luzac.⁵⁵⁰ The case of di Felice is curious but at the same time significant for the situation between eighteenth-century authors and publishers. Di Felice, who is best known for his Protestant counterfeit of the Parisian *Encyclopédie*, and to which also Formey contributed, was anything but an 'enemy of religion'. In a letter from November 1765 he suggested that Formey make a case for revealed religion by refuting the natural one: 'Un in12° ou in8° de votre plume, Monsieur, sur la verité de la Religion seroit un bien infini à la Religion; mais je crois qu'avant de venir au preuves de la Religion, il faudroit s'etendre à demontrer l'insufficence de la Religion naturelle, et la necessité de la Revelation.'⁵⁵¹ Nevertheless, at the same time, he raised the concern to Formey that a work like his *Philosophe Chrétien*, no matter how much he liked it himself, would not be appreciated in a time when Voltaire and other such authors enjoyed a high reputation.⁵⁵² It is this kind of apparent inconsistency which we often encounter in considerations on the publication of theological or apologetic works. Booksellers and authors knew that these kinds of publications were not *en vogue* in a time when freethinkers flooded the market with their exciting new ideas – which very often were packaged into nicely written novels or satirical treatises – yet, they did not want to cede the field to them without fighting. Still, Luzac did not present himself as a defender of freethinkers' ideas, despite his aversion to publishing religious writings and his publication of La Mettrie's *Homme machine*.

While Luzac's and di Felice's examples mainly depict the general decrease in interest of religion at large, the case of Pierre Rousseau, another publisher with whom Formey closely collaborated at the end of the 1750s and beginning of the 1760s, points to the problem of inter-

550 Formey had announced that he would send the manuscript to him by the end of 1767, see Felice to Formey, 6.11.1767 (CV). Felice welcomed the idea of this writing but exhorted him at the same time to use a less sermon-like style: 'Je prends la liberté de vous prier de faire attention à la precaution que vous même jugeates necessaire, lorsque vous publiates le Philosophe Chretien, de lui oter tout air de sermons.' This exhortation apparently annoyed Formey: see Felice to Formey, 2.12.1767 (CV): Formey had not sent him the manuscript with his next letter but only after Felice had begged pardon for his comment.

551 Felice to Formey, 19.11.1765 (FF).

552 See Felice to Formey, 21.5.1765 (FF). Felice actually wanted to publish a new edition of the *Philosophe Chrétien* but at the end it were not only his concerns with the public's taste that made him abandon this enterprise. His reason was rather the fact that Luzac did not have yet sold out all copies from the book's third edition in Leiden; see Felice to Formey, 2.7.1765 (Slg Darm.).

confessional publication. Rousseau, who published the *Journal encyclopédique* in Liège from 1756 acquired Formey as a collaborator to this journal thanks to Formey's good reputation as a journalist of the *Bibliothèque impartiale*.⁵⁵³ In the first briefing with his new collaborator in February 1758, Rousseau made it clear that he would not accept any article related to religion.⁵⁵⁴ However, unlike Luzac, Rousseau did not try to justify his rejection of religious subjects due to the general taste of the public. Instead, his rejection stemmed from the existence of a strict Catholic censorship; Rousseau's working place was not quite as liberal as the Low Countries and his journal was predominantly aimed at the French public.⁵⁵⁵ In order to prevent any kind of criticism by the clergy of Liège, with whom he had already previously entered into conflict, he urged Formey to avoid any 'discussion dogmatique' in his articles. By this, he seems to have primarily meant anything of a Protestant content, which supposedly would not obtain a permission in Catholic France. Pierre Rousseau was not the only one who exhorted Formey to avoid certain content in his works, as it might be rejected as being anti-Catholic in France. When his *Émile Chrétien* was published, Formey's close correspondent who provided him with literary news from France, the Abbé Trublet, was the official tasked to check the work for the French market. He reported to Formey that he had passed the book despite there being some anti-Catholic remarks contained in it, yet he argued that it would sell better without them.⁵⁵⁶ Concerning the spread of explicitly Protestant content in Formey's writings that were destined for a French market, we also find an interesting remark in the eulogy that his academic colleague Bernard Merian gave on him, in which he stated that Formey, thanks to his *Philosophe Chrétien* had successfully transported his (Protestant) sermons to France.⁵⁵⁷ Merian's statement implies that the stylistic adjustment of the sermons contained in the *Philosophe Chrétien* might not only have been necessary in order to fit the public's taste, as Luzac emphasised it, but also that it would surmount Catholic censorship.

Thus the constraints that publishers and booksellers imposed on Formey had multiple reasons but they almost always wanted to limit dogmatic contents and religious style in the writings that Formey offered them for publication. This factor has to be taken into account when reflecting on the nature of Formey's writings and self-fashioning. Formey's conception of philosophy and its apologetic functions, the influences of his (intellectual) socialisation in the Berlin Huguenot *Refuge* and of Wolffianism, his constant shift in practices (and audiences) between the pulpit, the lectern

553 See Pierre Rousseau to Formey, 17.1.1758 (FF).

554 See Pierre Rousseau to Formey, 24.2.1758 (FF): 'A l'exception des matieres de Religion, toutes me sont indifférentes...!'

555 At this time Rousseau lived and worked in Liège, until he had to flee in 1758. Liège was a principality of the Holy Roman Empire under Bavarian reign.

556 See Trublet to Formey, 25.3.1764, *Correspondance passive*, 361. Compare this to Luzac's concern of how to make Formey's *Morale pratique* pass into France in 1764: Luzac to Formey, 6.3.1764, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 369-70.

557 See Merian, "Eloge de Formey," 55.

and the Academy, and the disintegration that he seemed to notice in both the colony and the Republic of Letters certainly all contributed to the general nature of his oeuvre as a Christian philosopher. Depending on the context, certain aspects of this nature stood out more than others. Without the support of publishers however, it would have been much harder to divulge the identity that he had created for himself and therefore the influence of the book market and the economic considerations that were behind it should not be neglected when we try to account for the persona of the Christian philosopher.

5. Between Apologist, Moral Role Model and Scholar, or How Did Formey's Contemporaries Perceive Him?

So far I have tried to account for Formey's role in shaping the Christian philosopher and the complex web of motives, conditions and practices that potentially affected him in this process. In so doing the multi-sidedness in this process of self-fashioning has already become tangible at one point or another. However, one crucial aspect of Formey's self-fashioning has still to be observed: the perception of Formey by his contemporaries. The perception of a persona comprises two closely linked components: the immediate reactions to certain moments of his self-presentation and his behaviour and the general expectations which were addressed at him. Such reactions to particular writings and expectations whether made directly or indirectly, had an effect on Formey's self-perception and self-presentation, which ultimately made the process of self-fashioning circular. Moreover, the reactions and expectations of Formey's contemporaries were themselves very much contingent on the immediate context in which they were voiced, as well as on the origins and personal life stories of those who judged Formey and the relationship they maintained with him. This means that the perception of Formey by his contemporaries was *per se* very individual and can hardly be defined by distinct social, confessional or professional groups – also because these groups themselves were very heterogeneous. It seems thus more convenient to follow certain tropes and patterns of reception as were voiced by individuals in Formey's correspondence and to create a spotlight-like map of the perception of the Christian philosopher. Nonetheless, by following the individual and context-based opinions on Formey, certain communities of perception will emerge, which often but not always correspond to confessional, national or professional communities. All this will also enhance our knowledge of the individuals that constituted the fabric in which Formey was woven.

Formey as the Author of the Philosophe Chrétien

Very often the perceptions of Formey by his contemporaries were explicitly linked to the notion of the Christian philosopher that he had made the subject of his famous work *Le Philosophe Chrétien*. It seems that many of the readers of the book appropriated his statement on the persona of the Christian philosopher who united Christian dogma with a philosophical method and incorporated it into the image that they had of Formey and his role. In my view, applying such a notion of the Christian philosopher to Formey had been facilitated by the fact that the book's title consisted of a

personification – *Le philosophe chrétien* instead of *la philosophie chrétienne* – for this allowed for a smooth rhetorical association of Formey's personality with his moral philosophical book. This can be observed immediately after the publication of the first volume of the book, in a letter by Formey's close Huguenot correspondent Abraham Bocquet in which he apologised for not being able to communicate his remarks of the book because his wife had 'seized' it after its arrival. He wrote to Formey: 'Mais au deffaut de remarques sur le Philosophe Chretien imprimé j'en ferai avec votre Permission, sur celui dont je parcours actuellement la lettre.'⁵⁵⁸ That this rhetorical association of Formey's role with the title of the *Philosophe Chrétien* was a rather stable practice over time can be seen in a comment on Formey's oeuvre by one of his Genevan correspondents, the physicist and professor of mathematics George-Louis II Le Sage, in 1766: 'Le titre de *Philosophe chretien*, que vous avés si bien rempli, Monsieur, dans celui de vos ouvrages qui le porte, dans plusieurs autres ouvrages, et dans toute vôtre conduite; un autre philosophe chrétien, l'adopta l'année dernière pour mettre à la tête de très bonnes *Lettres sur la vérité et la nécessité de la religion*.'⁵⁵⁹ Le Sage's comment highlights two things: first, the title of Formey's book, which appeared in several volumes in the 1750s, became a common term to describe his written oeuvre as a whole as well as his character and conduct; and second, the notion of Christian philosopher was universally applicable to other writers and their works. However, the examples that were given by Bocquet and Le Sage only testify to a rhetorical use of the notion of Christian philosopher without providing any detailed insight into the meaning that this notion had for them.

The definition of a Christian philosopher that some of Formey's readers formed in respect to him, seems to have also emerged directly on the basis of Formey's book. This was indicated by the conclusive remark provided by the Genevan professor of literature (and later of theology) Jacob Vernet after having praised Formey's two moral philosophical writings *Le Système du vrai bonheur* and *Le Philosophe Chrétien*: 'Continuez, Monsieur, vos sages & pieux travaux; & puissiez-vous fournir une longue carrière, en tenant ainsi d'une main le flambeau de l'Évangile & de l'autre celui de la bonne philosophie. Personne n'a encore fait un meilleur usage que vous de l'un & de l'autre.'⁵⁶⁰ Vernet's statement seems to have been inspired by the rhetoric of Formey's conceptualisation of his persona in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, for it contained the trope of Formey uniting both the teachings of Revelation and philosophy. Furthermore it referred to the notion of a 'good' philosophy as opposed to the bad philosophy of certain *philosophes*, which was the same argument that Formey

558 Bocquet to Formey, 30.12.1750 (FF).

559 Le Sage to Formey, 3.6.1766, *Lettres de Genève*, 692. The 'other Christian philosopher' mentioned by Le Sage, i.e. the author of *Le Philosophe Chrétien ou Lettres sur la vérité et la nécessité de la religion*, was the Abbé Pierre Sigorgne, a Parisian physicist who engaged in the dissemination of Newton's ideas and published several apologetic works.

560 Vernet to Formey, 28.1.1751, *Lettres de Genève*, 296.

had employed. This suggests that Vernet had adapted the concept of a harmonic co-existence of revealed and natural knowledge that Formey had developed in so many of his works, but particularly in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, to his description of Formey as a Christian philosopher. Generally, the perception of Formey as a reconciler of reason and faith can be found predominantly among his Huguenot and Calvinist correspondents and more precisely among the pastors and theologians among them, which seems to correlate with the observation that they composed the main readership of Formey's *Philosophe Chrétien*. Unlike Formey's correspondents from France and the most part of the scholars whom he corresponded with on issues of the Academy, his Huguenot and Calvinist correspondents commented extensively and mainly positively on the book.⁵⁶¹ The professor of theology at the Academy of Geneva, François de Roches, told Formey in 1753 that the *Philosophe Chrétien* was in everybody's hands in Geneva. He likewise revealed the understanding of Christian philosophy that he found in Formey's book: for him it was a version of Christianity that was presented in such a reasonable and pleasant way that it could easily be liked.⁵⁶² Behind de Roche's concept of Christian philosophy clearly stood the wish to safeguard and enhance the popularity of religion, which was also one of Formey's motives for the concept, but which was perhaps not stated so clearly in his *Philosophe Chrétien*.

This congruency of Formey's motives and those of his Swiss Calvinist readers has been underlined by André Bandelier and Christian Sester. They believe that the generation of the Genevan clergy after Jean-Alphonse Turretini, the famous reformer of Calvinist theology, had a strong inclination towards natural philosophy and particularly Newtonianism. According to Bandelier and Sester, the Genevan theologians, contrary to how certain French philosophers like Voltaire appropriated this new science, instead focussed on the apology of Christianity contained in it and applied natural philosophical arguments against Deism and materialism.⁵⁶³ In Bandelier's and Sester's view, this Genevan attitude concerning the relation between religion and science was reinforced by Formey's works, and his strong epistolary exchanges with several Genevan pastors, theologians and philosophers.⁵⁶⁴ Yet, Formey's notion of Christian philosophy replied not only to a shared conceptualisation of religion and philosophy or science, but it also emerged out of shared or similar experiences that the pastors and learned men of the Reformed confession in Europe had in the middle of the Eighteenth Century. Not only in the *Refuge*, where the survival of religiosity was threatened by an increasing assimilation into the host country, but also in the heart lands of

561 For the good reception of Formey's works in general see André Bandelier and Christian Sester, "Science et Religion Chez Quelques Correspondants Genevois de l'Académie de Berlin," in *L'Encyclopédie d'Yverdon et Sa Résonance Européenne. Contextes - Contenus - Continuités*, ed. Clorinda Donato et al. (Paris, 2005), 31–54, 49.

562 See De Roches to Formey, 29.11.1753, *Lettres de Genève*, 383.

563 See Bandelier; Sester, "Science et Religion," 43-7.

564 See Bandelier; Sester, "Science et Religion," 51.

Calvinism like Geneva, the decline of religion and the increase of dangerous books was perceived and bemoaned.⁵⁶⁵ With the difficult situation of religion forming a kind of pressure in their backs, the theologians within Formey's readership particularly stressed the advantages for religion that sprang from Formey's works as a Christian philosopher. François de Roches equated these advantages for religion even with those that rose out of Formey's previous profession as a clergyman. More precisely, he believed that Formey's 'new' occupation, i.e. a writer of moral philosophical works, had the merit of bringing Christianity to solidity and excellence; in his view the good of Christianity was as well served by such works as it had been when Formey was still a pastor.⁵⁶⁶ Such a view suggests that the persona of the Christian philosopher seems to have also been a good compromise for Formey's readers and close correspondents, who were concerned about the fate of the Christian religion, and who possibly had regretted Formey's withdrawal from the pastoral office.

The religious purpose was hence the main aspect that Formey's Calvinist readers picked up from the *Philosophe Chrétien*. Also another Genevan pastor, Formey's close correspondent Jean Peschier, considered the *Philosophe Chrétien* as a book that was predominantly an expression of Formey's religious zeal.⁵⁶⁷ He was well aware that Formey's moral philosophical discourses were former sermons and expected that the book would fulfil a missionary function. He claimed, 'vous avès rendu au public un des plus grands services que vous puissiés lui rendre, bien des gens qui n'auroient pas daigné ouvrir un volume de sermons ont lû vos discours avec empressement et je ne doute pas qu'ils n'en aient retirè beaucoup de fruit.'⁵⁶⁸ Thus Peschier, who, as we have seen above, knew about the decreasing popularity of sermons, believed that Formey could succeed in spreading Christian values and dogma to a public that was generally less keen on reading sermons, and by this serve the good of the Church. Given Peschier's and others' considerations on the utility of Formey's *Philosophe Chrétien* in terms of missionary work, it is not surprising that pastors and theologians also exhorted Formey in a similar way to the book's publisher Élie Luzac in respect to the sermon-like style of the discourses. On the eve of the publication of the book's third volume, the Genevan theologian Jacob Vernet asked Formey, on behalf of their friends, to return to the style by which his first volume had been characterised, i.e. a style that did not resemble sermons.⁵⁶⁹ The reason behind such a request seems to have been, unlike Luzac's presumably commercial motives, precisely the

565 See McNutt, *Calvin meets Voltaire*, 130-44. At the same time McNutt emphasises the difficulties in assessing the true degree of religious decline in eighteenth-century Geneva as bemoaned by the Genevan clergy. In her view complaints were a necessary means to incite measures of reform in the clergy (133-4).

566 See De Roches to Formey, 27.2.1751, *Lettres de Genève*, 303.

567 See Peschier to Formey, 8.1.1751, *Lettres de Genève*, 290.

568 See Peschier to Formey, 11.3.1755, *Lettres de Genève*, 429.

569 Jacob Vernet to Formey, 18.6.1753, *Lettres de Genève*, 371.

expectation that Formey's work would strengthen religion as Peschier's comment has suggested.

Formey as a Defender of Religion in Church, Literature and the Society at Large

The perception of Formey's behaviour and task, in reply to his *Philosophe Chrétien* already corresponded to a large extent with the assessment of Formey's function as an author before the publication of the book. Thus the *Philosophe Chrétien* must be seen as a sort of initial peak of Formey's self-fashioning that had been nourished by the expectations of his environment, and in turn it reinforced and expanded these expectations after its publication. In the 1740s, when Formey started to write and become known beyond the confined space of the Berlin Huguenot colony, several of his correspondents seem to have conferred on him in various ways the task of a supporter and defender of religion. Such was the case for the Swiss philosopher Jean Pierre Crousaz with whom Formey corresponded because he had made an extract of Crousaz's treatise against Pyrrhonism. Crousaz believed that Formey's task to support and defend religion evolved and was directed at a large public sphere that extended even beyond the Republic of Letters. In 1743, after Formey's wife had died and he had taken time out from his work as writer, Crousaz voiced his fears of Formey potentially taking a longer retreat from the Republic of Letters: 'je crains pour une perte qui vous afligeroit extrêmement & qui retardant vos travaux feroit un grand prejudice non seulement à la République des Lettres, mais à tout le Public lui meme dont la Religion à besoin de deffenseur dans un temps ou toutes les especes d'incrédules & les Pyrrhoniens en particulier se multiplient excessivement.'⁵⁷⁰ In Crousaz's view, Formey had to defend religion against the increasing number of unbelievers and sceptics and it seems that he supposed him to do this as an author in the Republic of Letters. In a similar situation to the one in which Crousaz had voiced his expectations towards Formey, the pastor Peschier raised Formey's importance exclusively among the Reformed congregations rather than a large public sphere. After having heard about the health problems that Formey faced in 1751, which had caused him to refrain from all his offices for a time, Peschier was mainly afraid that he would neglect his duty of edifying and instructing people from the pulpit: 'vivès donc pour répondre à vôtre destination, vivès pour l'instruction de vos semblables et pour leur édification, plus vous vivrés plus vous procurerés leur avantage [...] si je ne connoissois vôtre zèle à cet égard je crainderois pour le troupeau et en particulier pour Mrs les étudiants qu'on ne fut privé dans la suite entièrement de vos sermons.'⁵⁷¹ Peschier, who like Crousaz defined Formey's role through his contribution to the good of religion, seems to have associated his

570 Jean Pierre de Crousaz to Formey, 10.11.1743 (FF).

571 Peschier to Formey, 29.8.1751, *Lettres de Genève*, 342-343.

role still more with the pastoral office rather than with that of the writer. This was certainly due to Peschier's personal social background and self-perception: he was a simple pastor and, as he stressed in his second letter to Formey, his interest was entirely dedicated to religion and he therefore preferred instruction in theology and not in philosophy.⁵⁷² As such Peschier's profile differed significantly to Crousaz's who was a Cartesian and a professor of philosophy in Lausanne and through his various writings was himself very much engaged in the debates within the Republic of Letters. The different foci of the two men's assessment of Formey's role as a supporter of religion were hence presumably determined by their own roles.

However, there were also cases where the perception of Formey was not so unambiguously situated in either a religious or a literary/ scientific context. Rather often, people stressed both of these sides, which was as much due to the multi-sidedness of Formey's own practices as to that of his correspondents. Jacob Vernet was such a case, as he had been a pastor, but from his early forties onwards he became a professor at the Academy of Geneva, first of literature and later of theology. The hybridity of Vernet's position towards religion is best comprehended through the debate in which the two historians, Graham Gargett and David Sorkin, engaged over him: the first considered him to be a Socinian whose philosophical views did not essentially differ from those of Voltaire and d'Alembert, whereas the latter classified him as an example of a moderate, religious enlightenment.⁵⁷³ In his very first letter to Formey, in January 1749, Vernet highlighted that he generally considered Formey's role as a defender of religion to be directed at the religious community; he praised his capacity to adapt the elements of philosophy, reason and knowledge, to preaching: 'C'est une chose bien satisfaisante de voir qu'un aussi bon philosophe et un aussi delicat humaniste que vous l'etes, porte ses talens en chaire, et fait si bien servir la raison & le savoir à la defense de la religion. J'appliquerois volontiers à l'esprit ce qu'Horace dit des richesses; il est beau d'en avoir, mais il est encore plus beau d'en savoir faire un bon usage.'⁵⁷⁴ Only a few months later, on the publication of Formey's refutation of Diderot, the *Pensées raisonnables*, Vernet instead stressed that Formey's task should be to defend religion to a larger public in his function as learned man and writer who enjoyed a certain authority among the other philosophers in the Republic of Letters:

'Il est tres à propos que des savans bien reconnus par [les] philosophes defendent la cause de la religion; ils le font avec plus de succès, parce qu'ils ont un système de theologie plus

572 See Vernet to Formey, 22.9.1741, *Lettres de Genève*, 8.

573 See Graham Gargett, *Jacob Vernet, Geneva, and the philosophes* (Oxford, 1994); and Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 68-111. As a reply to Sorkin's criticism of his limited and false assessment of Vernet, Gargett reaffirmed his position, based on further research in Vernet's theological writings, in Graham Gargett, "Jacob Vernet and 'The Religious Enlightenment': 'Rational Calvinism', the Pastors of Geneva and the French Philosophes," *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 4 (Mai 2014): 561-97.

574 Jacob Vernet to Formey, 16.1.1749, *Lettres de Genève*, 217.

raisonnable, & que leur autorité frappe plus que celle d'un theologien titré. Ainsi, Monsieur, vous etes l'homme qu'il nous faut, & je vous sai tout le gré possible de vous mettres si courageusement à la tâche. [...] Il y a une mode en cela comme en autre chose, & le beau role sera toujours de ceux qui savent tenir un milieu entre l'impieté & la superstition.⁵⁷⁵

Both of Vernet's statements show that he considered Formey to be a philosopher, a function that he associated with knowledge and reasonableness, yet not necessarily with the support for religion. The distinguishing feature of Formey's function as a philosopher was according to Vernet that he supported religion and that he was able to do it in both the Church and the Republic of Letters.

This distinction of Formey's multiple fields of action was apparently not uncommon and it was also enhanced by a third component, society in general. Formey's former student Jacques Auguste Rousseau, who thanks to Formey's support worked from 1750 as a tutor of the princes at the court of Gotha (which attracted visits from several famous writers and political figures like Voltaire, Baron von Grimm and the Prussian King Frederick II), described Formey to be useful for the Church, the Republic of Letters and society.⁵⁷⁶ Rousseau seems to have associated this concept of multiple usefulness with Formey's practice as a critic of allegedly 'dangerous' books as he voiced this opinion at the occasion of Formey's *Examen philosophique*, his above-mentioned criticism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Premier Discours*. In the eyes of Formey's former student, books like the *Premier Discours* were examples of 'mauvais goût' which penetrated all realms, amongst others religion. Formey's refutations would serve as a 'barrière' against this development. Interestingly Jacques Auguste Rousseau referred here to the notion of 'mauvais goût', an aesthetic category that was increasingly used in the eighteenth-century literary scene. However, this category comprised several not genuinely literary connotations, and therefore Rousseau's reference to this notion suggests that his perception of Formey's usefulness went beyond the usual focus on religion. According to Carine Barbaferi's considerations, the notion of *mauvais goût* developed in the aftermath of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, and it seems that it was rather applied to the immoral behaviour of authors, in the sense that having *mauvais goût* meant to enjoy things that others found repugnant, and was often inspired by aspirations to become famous.⁵⁷⁷ Hence, Jacques Auguste Rousseau most probably understood Formey's opposition to the *mauvais goût* of their times as an opposition to the diffusion of content that violated decency and against the immorality of authors that diffused such content.

What is common between Vernet's second statement in 1749 and Rousseau's statement in

⁵⁷⁵ See Jacob Vernet to Formey, 25.5.1749, *Lettres de Genève*, 235.

⁵⁷⁶ See J. A. Rousseau to Formey, 13.8.1755 (CV).

⁵⁷⁷ See Carine Barbaferi, "Du goût, bon et surtout mauvais, pour apprécier l'œuvre littéraire," *Littératures classiques*, no. 86 (May 2015), 135-6.

1755 is that they emerged in reaction to two of Formey's refutations and as such they linked an additional trope to the notion of Formey as a servant of religion and society at large, namely that of him as an opponent of the *philosophes*, more precisely an ideal censor of their books, i.e. someone who would rectify certain of their ideas. This notion of Formey's role was put in a nutshell by the Genevan mathematician Gabriel Cramer in his comment to Formey's refutation of Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*. Cramer considered Diderot's text to be dangerous because it mingled bad and good ideas, up to the point that the bad was hidden by the good. Therefore the text needed 'la censure d'une personne aussi éclairée & aussi judicieuse' as Formey.⁵⁷⁸ Interestingly, Cramer, unlike Vernet and Peschier, did not refer explicitly to ideas that were linked to religion as a target of Formey's 'censorship', which must have been due to his different professional background – he was neither pastor nor professor of theology. Cramer simply did not detail his notion of 'bad' ideas, nor did he reject Diderot's work as a whole, and by this, he referred to a selective refutation, just as Formey had done in the case of the *Pensées philosophiques* and later for Rousseau's *Émile* and *Nouvelle Héloïse*. We can hence suppose that there had been a correlation between Formey's practice of writing refutations and the concepts of his correspondents concerning them. Yet, the perception of Formey as an ideal censor of certain content was not just linked to his writings that belonged to the genre of refutations. For example, Jean Peschier believed that several of Formey's writings tacitly 'censored' or criticised other writings. He shared this theory with Formey after having read his moral philosophical treatise *Le Système du vrai bonheur* in 1750, which he presumed to be a secret reply to Maupertuis' *Essai de philosophie morale* that had appeared one year earlier. Peschier wrote: 'J'ai remarqué plus d'une fois que lorsqu'il paroît quelque ouvrage qui mérite la critique ou la censure, vous la faites comme *icognitò* en en donnant un autre qui sert de préservatif, c'est là la bonne façon de soutenir la vérité sans qu'il s'y mêle de personnalité.'⁵⁷⁹ A similar assessment of Formey's alleged strategy to pose a counterweight against the 'frivolous' opinions that circulated in their times was also given by Jean-Laurent Garcin, a Huguenot pastor and preceptor in Holland, who had collaborated with Formey in the publication of the *Émile Chrétien*. With reference to Formey's *Discours moraux* of 1764, the follow-up book to his *Philosophe Chrétien*, he claimed that Formey's writings served not as the model for 'frivolous' authors but as their 'censure'.⁵⁸⁰ Considering Peschier's comment on this strategy to 'positively' counteract dangerous writings, i.e. without explicitly directing criticism at specific authors, it seems that in his contemporaries' perception this was preferable for reasons of moral conduct: refutations and controversies often contained personal verbal attacks against other authors, which was

578 See Cramer to Formey, 10.8.1749, *Lettres de Genève*, 243.

579 Peschier to Formey, 4.8.1750, *Lettres de Genève*, 271.

580 See Garcin to Formey, 11.8.1764 (FF).

considered to be a violation of the decency that was expected of a man of letters.

Questions of moral conduct and decency generally held the utmost importance in the Eighteenth Century and as we have seen, Formey not only wrote and preached on moral philosophical subjects but when he presented himself as an author, he always did so modestly, contently and servilely. Therefore, Formey's moral image supposedly resulted from his correspondents' occupation with moral questions, which likewise reinforced this image. There are numerous instances in which Formey's correspondents evoked the image of him as a morally superior individual who was known for his patience, sober-mindedness and faculty to support even the most painful or difficult situations thanks to his reliance on Revelation. Often they linked this moral concept directly to the notion of the Christian philosopher. Jacob Vernet, who was apparently motivated by the same judgement of the potential immorality of refutations as Peschier, assessed Formey's behaviour within one of the biggest controversies that afflicted the Berlin Academy in mid-Eighteenth Century. Between 1751 and 1753 there was a dispute between the Academy's President, Maupertuis and the German mathematician and external member of the Berlin Academy, Samuel König, as he claimed that Leibniz had been the real inventor of the principle of least action that at the time was attributed to Maupertuis. This dispute had provoked a public scandal that occupied whole Europe.⁵⁸¹ In all this trouble Formey, as the Academy's secretary, had not taken an official position on either of the two sides, which made Vernet assess that his behaviour was virtuous as befitted a Christian philosopher: 'Vos lettres nous ont un peu soulagé; néanmoins vous y paraissez assez calme, en *philosophe chrétien*.'⁵⁸²

This reference to the Christian philosopher's alleged virtue of being able to temper his passions was not only applied to situations of scholarly interaction, but also in situations of personal pain. In the letters that the Genevan natural philosopher Charles Bonnet wrote to Formey we find two references to the moral concept of the Christian philosopher in the context of human challenge, i.e. in times of war and of death. In respect to the short Russian occupation of Berlin during autumn 1760, the Swiss natural philosopher commented: 'La lettre que vous avés écrite à Mr. le pasteur Peschier sur l'invasion des Russes, m'a appris vos épreuves, la fermeté avec laquelle vous les avés soutenües, et les consolations que la divine Providence vous a accordées. Votre fermeté et vôtre resignation ne m'ont point surpris; l'auteur du *Philosophe chrétien* pouvait-il en manquer?'⁵⁸³ A very

581 For more details on this affair see Ursula Goldenbaum and Frank Grunert, *Appell an das Publikum: die öffentliche Debatte in der deutschen Aufklärung 1687-1796* (Berlin, 2004) and Ursula Goldenbaum, "Das Publikum als Garant der Freiheit der Gelehrtenrepublik gegen Maupertuis und Friedrich II. im Jahre 1752," in *Kultur der Kommunikation. Die Europäische Gelehrtenrepublik im Zeitalter von Leibniz bis Lessing*, ed. Ulrich Johannes Schneider (Wiesbaden, 2005), 215–28.

582 Vernet to Formey, 18.6.1753, *Lettres de Genève*, 367.

583 Bonnet to Formey, 13.2.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 526.

similar tone can be found in a letter that Bonnet wrote a year and a half later, after two of Formey's children had died of smallpox:

'à quelles épreuves cruelles & multipliées la PROVIDENCE a-t-ELLE mis votre constance et votre résignation! Mais l'excellent auteur du *Philosophe chrétien* a appris à l'école du SAUVEUR du monde cette philosophie chrétienne, qui peut seule triompher de la chair & du sang, et qui en élevant nos esperances, nous donne cette fermeté d'âme, ce courage d'esprit qui subjugué l'affliction de maitrise qui le déchire'⁵⁸⁴

Both of Bonnet's comments on Formey's emotional stability and resignation seem to have been inspired by the content of the moral philosophical discourses that were assembled in the *Philosophe Chrétien*, among which several dealt with death, sickness and consolation. Moreover, Bonnet stressed that he considered the origin of Formey's Christian philosophy to be Christian doctrine; in his words it was the Christian teachings that uniquely formed Formey's particular moral character as a philosopher. Such an exclusively religious notion of Formey's morality in situations of human challenge was however only one possible explanation. The French philosopher Charles Marie de La Condamine also commented on Formey's attitude during the war, yet, unlike Bonnet, he incorporated it into a secular philosophical tradition by referring to the calm temper of Archimedes: 'J'admire, Monsieur, votre tranquillité philosophique au milieu des troubles présents: elle est comparable à celle d'archimede, mais elle sera plus heureuse.'⁵⁸⁵ Although they linked it to different origins, Formey's correspondents generally described their notion of Formey's morality in terms of dispassionateness.

The (Christian) Virtues of a Learned Man

It was not only Formey's engagement in the apology of Christianity, as well as his opposition to the 'dangerous' ideas which according to him and his contemporaries characterised their time, and his outstanding moral character in situations of conflict and challenge, that marked his correspondents' and readers' perception of him. There were also many occasions in which his capacities as a scholar were particularly highlighted and praised. This was often the case for those of his correspondents that he contacted over issues relating to the Academy or his journals. It seems however, that the positive assessment of Formey's behaviour and his impact as a man of letters by his judges was informed – besides their evaluation of his scholarly work – either by perceptions of him as a theologian and a pastor or by the fact that they shared common confessional roots with him. At the same time Formey's allegedly excellent capacities as a learned man seem to have positively

⁵⁸⁴ Bonnet to Formey, 15.9.1762, *Lettres de Genève*, 583.

⁵⁸⁵ La Condamine to Formey, 28.9.1759 (A).

influenced the image of his theological position. This becomes particularly obvious in Formey's exchange with Charles Bonnet, who in 1760 had published an *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme*, which contained a physiological description of the human soul based on both an empirical conception of science and a finalism that was directed towards a superior being.⁵⁸⁶ In June 1760, Bonnet sent this treatise to Formey in his function as the secretary of the Academy, with a request to submit it to the judgement of the institution's metaphysicians, most probably with the aim of obtaining an affiliation to the Academy.⁵⁸⁷ In turn, the Academy had apparently charged the mathematician Leonhard Euler and Formey himself with the assessment of the *Essai*, a choice that Bonnet appreciated very much.⁵⁸⁸ Formey, however seems to have postponed his own judgement for several months and finally declared to Bonnet that he considered himself to be not in the position to judge 'une production aussi relevée'; we cannot tell whether this statement was a real demonstration of modesty or whether Formey only lacked the time or the interest to comment on it.⁵⁸⁹ Be that as it may, Bonnet replied to Formey's humble refusal with an expression of his esteem for Formey's capacities as a philosopher: 'Vous êtes trop modeste vis-a-vis de moi, mon cher confrere: *Domine non sum dignus*, me dites-vous: quoi! l'auteur de tant de bons ouvrages de philosophie n'oseroit pas juger de mon *Analyse*! assurément il peut et doit en juger, et son jugement sera pour moi d'un grand poids. [...] Vous n'etes pas de ces lecteurs dont j'ai à redouter la precipitation et les préjugés. Vous sçavés lire et mediter.'⁵⁹⁰ As we can see, Bonnet founded his notion of Formey's scholarly excellence, first on Formey's expertise in philosophy that stemmed from his authorship of so many good philosophical works, and second on Formey's impartiality and reflectiveness.

As Bonnet insinuated in this statement, he generally expected reservations ('préjugés') towards his *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme*, yet not by Formey because of his scholarly virtues (impartiality and reflectiveness). Some lines later in the same letter, Bonnet came back to this point and declared that his *Essai* indeed contained quite a few controversial ideas on the mechanical nature of the human being which would most probably fuel the criticism of some older Swiss theologians. Also at this point he stressed that he did not fear the same sort of criticism from Formey, and he again highlighted Formey's virtues as a philosopher that would prevent him from an orthodox criticism although he was a theologian himself:

'Je ne vous reponds néanmoins, que tous nos theologiens goûteront mes principes sur la

586 Charles Bonnet, *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'ame* (Copenhagen, 1760). See Roselyne Rey, "La Partie, le Tout et l'individu: Science et Philosophie dans l'oeuvre de Charles Bonnet," in *Charles Bonnet: Savant et Philosophe, 1720-1793 : Actes du Colloque International de Genève, 25-27 Novembre, 1993*, ed. Marino Buscaglia et al. (Geneva, 1994), 70.

587 See Bonnet to Formey, 13.6.1760, *Lettres de Genève*, 514.

588 See Bonnet to Formey, 13.2.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 527.

589 See Formey to Bonnet, 13.5.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 535.

590 Formey to Bonnet, 17.6.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 545-546.

mechanique de nôtre être. [...] En vous disant cela j'oublie que vous êtes vous-même theologien, mais je sçais que vous êtes theologien philosophe. Soit donc que vous me jugiés comme theologien ou comme philosophe, je recevrai toujourns avec plaisir et reconnoissance toutes les remarques que vous voudrés bien me communiquer.⁵⁹¹

Bonnet's remark is very interesting because it shows not only that he conceived of theology and philosophy as separate, yet reconcilable fields that could fruitfully influence each other – just as Formey perceived of his Christian philosophy. It also shows that Bonnet perceived that Formey's double training as a theologian and philosopher was a positive quality especially in the context of physio-theological questions such as those in Bonnet's *Essai*, which in his opinion placed Formey's virtues as a philosopher to a particular advantage. In his reply to Bonnet, Formey confirmed Bonnet's perception and fashioned himself as a proud theologian who was able to judge as a philosopher, for in his view the two things did not exclude each other.⁵⁹²

Another of Formey's Reformed correspondents, Fortunato Bartolomeo di Felice, the publisher of the Protestant *refonte* of the Parisian *Encyclopédie* made a similar comment to Bonnet's in respect to the advantage of being a philosopher in addition to a theologian. This comment is interesting as di Felice had converted from Catholicism to Protestantism and fled Italy after a moral affair, and as such tried to avoid discussions on orthodox religious questions of all sort. In a debate that he had with Formey on the sin of lying (which I am not able to retrace in detail), Felice stressed that he did not want to engage in such a debate on a theological level because for him 'every man who thought' – in the sense of reflecting – had to abstain from discussion on such religious matters. He hence basically claimed that theological doctrine and philosophy, understood as the practice of human reason, excluded each other; yet he underlined that Formey was an exception in this respect as he was a theologian who had begun as a philosopher: 'Vous me citéz, Monsieur au Tribunal Theologique pour rendre compte de ma façon de penser sur la turpitude du mensonge. Ce tribunal ne sera jamais le mien, comme il ne le sera jamais de tout homme qui pense, à moins qu'un pareil tribunal ne soit composé de Formeys, c'est à dire de Theologiens qui aient commencé par etre Philosophes. Mais ces Theologiens sont rares.'⁵⁹³ In di Felice's eyes Formey occupied a rather particular position as a hybrid between a theologian and a philosopher, and it seems that he drew positive conclusions from this hybrid position regarding Formey's opinion on doctrinal content. In a similar way Bonnet considered that Formey's capacity as a philosopher contributed to his supportive attitude towards philosophical content that other contemporaries might have judged as being unorthodox.

591 Bonnet to Formey, 17.6.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 546-547.

592 See Formey to Bonnet, 18.7.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 548.

593 See Bartolomeo di Felice to Formey, 23.2.1768 (CV).

At the same time it seems that the perception of Formey's hybridity as a theologian-philosopher functioned not only as an advantage for judging on questions of doctrine or potentially unorthodox theological content. Particularly in Bonnet's case there is reason to think that he did not only consider Formey's 'philosophical side' as being positive in respect to theological discussion, but also the other way round, that he saw his Christian side as a factor that increased his reputation as a philosopher. Both Formey and Bonnet were convinced of the truth of Revelation, and in their correspondence they also shared practices of Christian piety. For example, when Bonnet's father died Formey applied his faculties as a preacher by emphasising the redeeming virtue of religion as opposed to philosophy that could not help in such situations: 'Que sert la philosophie, que sert la vie, que sert tout sans la religion? Elle seule réalise notre être, qui sans cela n'est que misère et néant. Elle seule nous dédommage de toutes nos pertes en nous faisant tout retrouver en Dieu, au delà de ce que nous pouvons désirer.'⁵⁹⁴ Therefore, it was not just Formey's qualities as a philosopher, it was also his practice as a Reformed theologian and pastor that shaped Bonnet's idea of Formey's reputation in the Republic of Letters, especially at the Academy. Such a reputation helped to forge a link of trust between the two men that served as a basis for their exchange as scholars. Bonnet underlined his preference for Formey over the other members of the Berlin Academy by claiming that he did not care for the indifference or criticism that Euler, Merian and Sulzer had demonstrated in respect to his *Essai*; Formey's judgement was the most important for him, which was also certainly due to the good publicity that Formey was able to provide for his book outside of the academy, in the learned press.⁵⁹⁵

A similar perception of Formey's hybridity as a theologian-philosopher that had positive effects on his potential role in both realms, seems to have also come from scholars of different confessions, such as the mainly Lutheran German University professors with whom Formey conducted epistolary exchanges. An outstanding example in this respect is the case of Georg Mathias Bose, who was a professor of physics at the University of Wittenberg, and who maintained a short but intense correspondence with Formey in the 1750s. As in Bonnet's case, their contact was initially determined by Formey's function as the secretary of the Academy. Via Formey, Bose exchanged scientific findings with the natural philosophers at the Berlin Academy to which he was not officially affiliated. Consequently, he saw Formey first and foremost as a collector and distributor of knowledge on nature to whom he could communicate all of his own discoveries and

594 Formey to Bonnet, 14.1.1762, *Lettres de Genève*, 563.

595 See Bonnet to Formey, 23.12.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 561. Euler and Sulzer had criticised Bonnet's work and although Merian was favourable to its content, he did not declare his opinion publicly. Moreover, Formey had written several *extraits* of the *Essai* for the *Journal encyclopédique*. For the reception of Bonnet's *Essai* in the Berlin Academy see also André Bandelier, *Des Suisses dans la République des lettres: un réseau savant au temps de Frédéric le Grand* (Genève, 2007), 119-123.

those of his correspondents.⁵⁹⁶ Linked to the distribution of natural philosophical knowledge to the Academy, Bose also used his connection with Formey to have his writings advertised in the *Bibliothèque Germanique*. In this respect Formey's correspondence with Bose followed the same patterns as those that Formey maintained with other German university professors who contacted him only in cases of professional need. Formey was a francophone organiser of knowledge in Prussia, and he helped to promote the German university professors' ideas among a French public and to provide them in turn with news from this part of the Republic of Letters.⁵⁹⁷ Even though the German university professors' letters did not contain any confessional aspects, Formey's reputation as a predominantly Christian citizen of the Republic of Letters became of crucial importance for Bose when he was criticised for anti-Lutheran writings in Wittenberg.

By the end of 1749, Bose was accused by the theological faculty at the Wittenberg University of having violated his religious oath as a Lutheran by praising Pope Benedict XIV as a great patron of the sciences in one of his writings. Being initially only an issue of censorship, the affair soon escalated to a trial because, with the aid of his associates, Formey included, Bose had disseminated the writing in question, and the theological polemic that evolved in Wittenberg to several European journals. Besides the mere logistical benefits that Bose expected to receive from Formey's journalistic contacts in this affair, he deliberately involved Formey in it for his moderate theological position:

'Je vous savois theologien. Je sais de plus par la suite entiere de l'histoire ecclesiastique, que Mssrs. du Clergé s'entreaident mutuellement de tout leur pouvoir. C'étoit donc un peu téméraire, je l'avoue, que de m'adresser à un Theologien contre Mssrs. ses Confreres; mais le coeur me dicta avec pleine confiance, que je trouverois en Vous un honnette-homme, un vrai ami, [...], un theologien moderé, et équitable, à distinguer le Souverain du catholique; le savant du Pape; et la complaisance de la religion.'⁵⁹⁸

It seems that Bose had chosen to involve Formey in his process because he saw him as a man of reasonable faith who was free from dogmatic exaggerations, which thus enabled him to understand Bose's behaviour. However, Bose was equally concerned with Formey's moral reputation, which can be seen in the description of Formey as an *honnête homme*. Since the Seventeenth and throughout almost the whole Eighteenth Century, the notion of *honnête homme* delineated a universal ideal of a person with a good moral conduct that included attributes such as sincerity,

596 See Bose to Formey, 29.10.1747 (Slg Darm.).

597 The other German university professors who figured amongst Formey's correspondents, but who wrote fewer letters than Bose, were: Johann Jakob Hentsch, professor of mathematics in Leipzig, Ludwig Martin Kahle, professor of law and philosophy in Göttingen, Hermann Friedrich Kahrel, who had the same position in Herborn and Marburg, Gotthelf Abraham Kästner, professor of mathematics in Leipzig and Göttingen or Johannes Kies, professor of mathematics and physics in Tübingen.

598 Bose to Formey, 26.3.1750 (FF).

humanity, reasonableness and sometimes even piety. However, this notion of the *honnête homme* also co-existed throughout the Eighteenth Century with a notion that elevated the outward appearance of a person, which was linked to politeness, the sociability of *salons* and high society and elitism, over inner moral qualities.⁵⁹⁹ In Bose's case, it seems that he referred rather to the first notion and more precisely to one particular feature which was comprised in this notion: as Anne Goldgar described it the 'ethos of mutual help in learned society'.⁶⁰⁰ This means that Bose, due to his scholarly collaboration with Formey, also expected the latter to help in an issue that was not directly linked to their scholarly collaboration. Additionally, another aspect that seems to have motivated Bose was Formey's writing against the Catholic Cardinal Quirini, in which he had defended Luther, despite being of the Reformed confession, and in respect to which Bose praised Formey's liberal confessional standpoint.⁶⁰¹ This writing seems to have also been an important reason for Bose to use Formey as a witness in the trial that the Lutheran theologians conducted against him in 1751: 'Voiant qu'un homme, tel que vous, si célèbre dans l'empire des lettres qui defendit si victorieusement le merite du Grand Luther, parloit de mon affaire [...] on n'osa plus se declarer ouvertement contre un homme qui se pouvoit glorifier de Vôte Egide...'⁶⁰² The other important reason was, according to this quote, Formey's widespread reputation as a learned man ('si célèbre dans l'empire des lettres'). It was thus the combination of his publicly declared apologetics and his eminent reputation as a scholar which determined Bose's perception of Formey and animated him to rely on Formey in a situation in which his own scholarly work had come into conflict with religious orthodoxy.

The intersection of scholarly and religious virtue which seems to have been a central aspect in Bonnet's, di Felice's and Bose's positive perception of Formey was supposedly present among the majority of people who shared a similar position as Formey, i.e. the position of a learned man indebted to the idea of the truth and legitimacy of Christian religion. Yet the trope of such an intersection was voiced only on particular occasions that challenged this position. If it was for a general assessment of Formey's practice, this hybridity was apparently not stressed, instead only his qualities as a scholar were noticed and linked to certain expectations. Interestingly, Formey's friends among the ministers of the *Refuge* in Brandenburg-Prussia often referred in their exchanges with

599 See Anette Höfer and Rolf Reichardt, "Honnête homme, Honnêteté, Honnêtes gens," in *Handbuch Politisch-Sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680-1820*, ed. Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt, vol. 7 (München, 1986), 7–73.

600 See Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 237.

601 See Formey, *Sendschreiben an S. Eminenz den hochwürdigsten Herrn, Herrn Angelus Maria Quirini ... in welchen erwiesen wird, daß D. Luther gelehrter und tugendhafter und folglich zur Besserung der Kirche tüchtiger gewesen sei, als die Kardinäle seiner Zeit* (Berlin, 1749); see Bose to Formey, 8.5.1749 and 16.11.1749 (FF).

602 Bose to Formey, 20.5.1751 (FF). Formey had apparently written a letter in defence of Bose to present in front of his trial, a measure that seems to have proven Bose's innocence.

Formey to his virtues as a learned man. To mention only one example of Formey's close friends, the pastor Abraham Bocquet strongly expressed this attitude in his letters to Formey. Bocquet and many of Formey's other coeval acquaintances had been scattered around the numerous Huguenot parishes in the Prussian provinces, and they used their correspondence with Formey as a means to stay in touch with the capital in which they had been trained.⁶⁰³ Since Formey's relations with Huguenot pastors had their origin in personal encounters and often lasted for an entire life, they were marked by a high degree of intimacy. Initially, these relations evolved around ecclesiastical affairs and the everyday experiences of a minister. Yet, due to Formey's early and extraordinary change in his career trajectory – he quit his ministry in 1739 to become a full-time professor of philosophy at the *collège français* – the perception of him by Bocquet and his peers was that of a learned man from whose knowledge, advice and connections in the Republic of Letters he could benefit. First, this perception of being able to benefit from Formey manifested itself in Bocquet's expectation to increase his own status in the Republic of Letters, by being friends with someone like Formey who had acquired a certain kind of prestige, especially after having been affiliated with the Academy. Shortly after Formey's affiliation in 1744 Bocquet wrote to him, and explained that he could only imagine the reaction of his small provincial community when they saw that he posted a letter addressed to the secretary of a learned society: 'Lorsque je mets à la Poste une lettre adressée à un membre de l'académie Royale des Sciences, je m'imagine que le maitre de Poste et tous ses ecrivains me regardent avec une sorte de respect que ne me procurent pas mes autres correspondances. Après cela vous me permettez bien d'endosser tous vos titres.'⁶⁰⁴

A second way that Bocquet's correspondence proves that he benefitted from Formey's role as a man of letters, was the enhancement of his own knowledge. Bocquet, in particular, tried to fashion himself as a learned man, he read and commented avidly on Formey's works and discussed various topics with Formey, particularly those which were linked to religious dogma. In a letter written in October 1740, Bocquet voiced his regret that he was unable to attend Formey's lectures concerning the immortality of the soul. As we remember, at this point Formey, in his function as a professor of philosophy, was regularly lecturing for a mixed audience on Saturdays, and Bocquet seems to refer to this. As he claimed, the question of the soul's immortality was of utmost relevance for him: his reflections on it left him in an ambiguous state between confidence and sadness and he stated that only Formey would be able to disperse this latter feeling.⁶⁰⁵ An almost identical claim on Formey's

603 Among Formey's 55 close correspondents, i.e. who wrote 50 and more letters to him, 23 wrote mainly from places in the Prussian provinces. Two thirds of them, i.e. 16, were either Huguenot pastors or held an administrative function in the *Refuge*. Besides Bocquet in this group of people figure Samuel George, Jérôme Galafres and Guillaume Pelet, who supposedly belonged to the same circle of friends.

604 Bocquet to Formey, 17.3.1744 (FF).

605 See Bocquet to Formey, 3.10.1740 (FF).

capacity to help him make up his mind over questions with religious implications can be found in one of Bocquet's letters in 1753. When his son died, Bocquet reflected on the nature of Providence and he sent Formey a kind of questionnaire with all the points on this topic that caused him doubt. He hoped that Formey would be able to provide him with insights that would disperse his doubts and in turn provide him with consolation over his personal loss: 'Je vais vous confier et vous prier de résoudre quelques doutes sur lesquels je n'ai encore rien trouvé qui me satisfasse jusqu'à un certain point et que je suis persuadé que vous saurez éclaircir de manière à me consoler plus efficacement que je ne le suis jusqu'ici et à me procurer même une plus grande tranquillité que celle dont je jouissois avant l'événement en question.'⁶⁰⁶ Bocquet seems to have ascribed a particular intellectual authority to Formey that enabled him to 'enlighten' his counterparts. It was this capacity to enlighten others, or to give reason-based explanations on certain topics that Bocquet seems to have preferred over the dogmatic declarations and spiritual consolations of a pastor.

Formey as a Wolffian Scholar

Linked to this general perception of Formey as a learned man with whom his Huguenot acquaintances could discuss all sorts of topics, was the perception that he was an expert on Wolff. This was definitely due to the Wolffian focus of his philosophical teaching and several of his writings. Besides Bocquet, who was also interested in learning about Wolff's philosophy, this aspect of Formey's reputation was established and upheld particularly by his former students at the *collège*. Among those figured for example Louis de Beausobre, the youngest son of Formey's early theological teacher, Isaac de Beausobre. The young Beausobre, who was the godson of Frederick II, went to study at the Reformed University of Prussia, the Alma Mater Viadrina at Frankfurt/Oder in 1749.⁶⁰⁷ From there he engaged in an intellectual exchange on Wolffian metaphysics with his former professor Formey. At his arrival in April 1749, he begged Formey to enlighten him on Wolffian metaphysics, since metaphysics and physics were in general not taught in the current term at Frankfurt:

'On ne lit ny Metaphysique ni Physique ce semestre ci, je n'ai pû me résoudre d'écouter la Logique de Mr. Baumgarten: Cependant pour ne pas perdre de vue une science sans le secours de la qu'elle on étudie en vain, j'ai pris la résolution de lire le grand ouvrage de Wolf avec l'aide du seigneur: voudriez vous bien m'honorer, Monsieur, avec vos conseils à cet égard, et faire

606 Bocquet to Formey, 21.1.1753 (FF).

607 For more details on Beausobre's life and particularly on his role as a mediator between Frankfurt and Berlin, see Anne Baillot, "Pyrrhonismus und Politik an der Akademie der Wissenschaften um 1750," in *Französisch-Deutsche Kulturräume um 1800. Bildungsnetzwerke, Vermittlerpersönlichkeiten, Wissenstransfer*, ed. Anna Busch, Alix Winter, and Nana Hengelhaupt (Berlin, 2012), 25–42.

partir de votre cabinet un rayon de vos lumieres, pour eclairer les tenebres du lieu que j'habite.⁶⁰⁸

Beausobre's request to Formey contained the same metaphor on the light that Formey's knowledge could provide as Bocquet's questionnaire concerning the topic of Providence. Later in their exchange, Beausobre exposed his metaphysical ideas – which were sometimes in opposition to his professors – ⁶⁰⁹ to Formey and sought to obtain Formey's own ideas and interpretations of Wolffian metaphysics. Thus, for him, Formey was an intellectual authority whose opinion he esteemed. Beausobre's perception, unlike that of Bocquet and perhaps Formey's other coevals among the Prussian Huguenots, was based on his experience of being Formey's student. The comparison between Bocquet's and Beausobre's 'Huguenot' perception of Formey's role as provider of knowledge, and especially as an expert of Wolff's philosophy, shows that the origin of this perception differed slightly from individual to individual – although they were, of course, all linked to the subjects that Formey's writings and teachings dealt with.

Yet, it was not only Formey's Huguenot acquaintances that addressed him as an expert of Wolff, his Genevan Calvinist correspondents were also aware of his intellectual affiliation. However, since Wolffianism was generally not as popular in Geneva as it was in Prussia, they rarely linked it to a positive evaluation of Formey's scholarly being. The pastor Jean Peschier seems to have been the most neutral of his Genevan acquaintances: he asked Formey to recommend a comprehensive abbreviation of Wolff's philosophy to him because he wanted to get his own idea of a philosophy that, as he told Formey, was as much contested as it was appreciated in his lands.⁶¹⁰ Almost ten years later, Peschier confirmed the rather negative opinion on Wolff among his friends and colleagues in Geneva and insinuated that Formey's affiliation to Wolff could also create a negative perception of him as a learned man within this group of people. He reported that Formey's new journal *La Bibliothèque impartiale* was appreciated by the Genevans, but that they had remarked that many of his articles showed a certain bias towards Wolff's teachings, which had caused some of its readers to actually doubt the proclaimed impartiality of the periodical.⁶¹¹

However, a much more negative perception of Formey's Wolffian bias which affected the perception of him as a scholar in general prevailed among certain of Formey's colleagues at the Academy. With the re-organisation of the Academy in the mid-1740s and the appointment of new members, a general hostility towards Wolff and his strictly demonstrative philosophy emerged. This was due to both the increasing outdatedness of this philosophy in the German lands in general, and

608 Louis de Beausobre to Formey, 29.04.1749 (Slg. Darm.).

609 See for example Louis de Beausobre to Formey, 30.9.1749 (Slg. Darmst.) and ?.10.1750 (Slg. Darmst.).

610 See Peschier to Formey, 20.2.1742, *Lettres de Genève*, 20.

611 See Peschier to Formey, 8.1.1751, *Lettres de Genève*, 291.

the strong influence of Newtonian ideas brought to Berlin by Voltaire and other French philosophers. This attitude was described in an academic discourse by Bernhard Merian in 1797, the year of Forney's death, in which he compared Wolff's and Kant's philosophy with respect to their role in Prussian academic culture. Merian attributed the decline of Wolffianism in Germany firstly to its dry content and lack of sentiment, which had caused it to be rejected by the contemporary 'beaux-esprits', and secondly to the emergence of experimental science.⁶¹² Besides this general development within philosophy and literature, it was Frederick II's politics of science in particular that pushed Wolffianism into the margins of German sciences, particularly in Berlin and in its Academy. As Bronisch emphasises, although Frederick, at the very beginning of his reign, had fetched Wolff back from his exile in Marburg, Wolff remained isolated in his chair at Halle University for the rest of his life since he had not accepted Frederick's offer to become the President of the Berlin Academy. Wolff's refusal of the position, however, was due to Frederick's admiration for and recruitment of, in his view, Newtonian philosophers such as Algarotti, Euler, Voltaire and Maupertuis. According to Wolff, this philosophy would destroy the sciences as well as religion.⁶¹³ On the other side, these intellectuals, together with Frederick as the patron of the Academy, were likewise increasingly critical of Wolff. As a result, the onslaught of arguments on Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics reached its peak within the academic disputes of the academy in the 1740s, most famously in the debate on Leibniz's monadology, in which the mathematician Euler took the harshest stand towards this system by accusing it of removing morality from humanity.⁶¹⁴

In his retrospective view on the Academy's history in 1797, Merian highlighted that it was contrary to the 'esprit philosophique & academique' if an Academy was directed by a leader of one particular philosophical school, such as Wolff. For him, the most important feature of a scientific institution and of a philosopher was eclecticism, which he defined as a way of doing science in which one chose among many ideas those that appeared to be true, independently of their association with a certain school or philosopher. In Merian's description eclecticism implied not only philosophical independence, but also a less systematic, i.e. rigid, assemblage of knowledge. Moreover, all these elements shared characteristics with empiricism, which Merian seems to have considered as closely related to eclecticism; together they characterised the new era after Wolff.⁶¹⁵

612 See Bernhard Merian, "Parallèle historique de nos deux Philosophies nationales," *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres* 1797 (Berlin, 1800), 89-90.

613 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 190-204 and for Wolff's rejection of Newtonianism particularly 197-198. On Wolff's critical stand towards Frederick's renovation of the Berlin academy, see also Cornelia Buschmann, "Wolffianismus in Berlin," in *Aufklärung in Berlin*, ed. Wolfgang Förster (Berlin, 1989), 101.

614 For the main philosophical developments at the academy of science from its renovation until Kant see William Clark, "The Death of Metaphysics in Enlightened Prussia," in *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, ed. William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Schaffer (Chicago, 1999), 424-72, especially 443.

615 See Merian, "Parallèle historique," 91.

Merian claimed that the Berlin Academy and in particular its philosophical class had in its history always succeeded in creating and supporting such an eclecticism. As an example of this, he mentioned its prize essay contests, in which the jury's votes were always determined by the excellence of the essays and not by a preference for a certain philosophical school.⁶¹⁶ Besides their eclecticism Merian also praised the conduct of the philosophers at the Academy who, according to him, always behaved politely and virtuously and did not indulge in personal disputes with each other.

Merian also attributed all of these qualities of a good academician to Formey, whose eulogy he pronounced in the same year as his discourse on the comparison between Wolff and Kant. In respect to this, Merian stated that Formey simply ignored hostile attacks against his works, and instead confronted his enemies with absolute politeness, and thus highlighted Formey's serene and dispassionate character as a philosopher, which was very similar to the perception of Formey's moral conduct by his Calvinist correspondents.⁶¹⁷ Besides this, in respect to Formey's philosophy, Merian claimed that Formey was independent of any particular philosophical school, a characteristic that he underlined in particular with respect to Wolffianism. Merian almost played down Formey's strong inclination for Wolffianism in his early years, by claiming that he had resisted the seductive forces of the Wolffian fanatics: 'Mais malgré des encouragemens si puissans [des Wolffiens], & si capables de produire, dans des têtes moins bien organisées, des symptômes de ce zèle fanatique dont on ne vit alors & dont nous ne revoyons aujourd'hui que trop de tristes exemples, il faut rendre à M. Formey la justice de dire qu'il ne se livra jamais à cet aveugle enthousiasme.'⁶¹⁸ For Merian it was important to emphasise Formey's unbiased and sober attitude towards Wolffianism not only because he understood it as a sign of the eclecticism, which he had largely attributed to the philosophers of the Berlin Academy, but also, and maybe even more importantly, because of the ideological orientation of the Berlin Academy in particular, in which Wolffianism – as he put it – had never gained importance. Besides presenting Formey as being independent of Wolffian ideas, or at least selective and reasonable in his appropriation of them, Merian also described Formey's style as a philosopher as non-dogmatic, a feature that he apparently also considered to be contrary to Wolffianism:

'Quoique fidèle aux principes de sa Philosophie [de Formey lui-même], il en use, [...] sans y afficher les grand airs de prétention & la hauteur impérieuse du Dogmatisme. Il savoit fort bien qu'une Académie n'est pas une école, que le ton magistral & tranchant y seroit fort mal venu, & prêteroit même au ridicule, dans la nôtre surtout ou le Wolfianisme n'eut jamais une influence

616 See Merian, "Parallèle historique," 95.

617 See Bernhard Merian, "Éloge de Formey," 79.

618 Merian, "Éloge de Formey," 60.

despotique, & pouvoit être defendu, combattu, loué, censuré, examiné, contrôlé avec une liberté sans bornes.⁶¹⁹

The faithfulness of Merian's description, particularly concerning Formey's relation to Wolffianism, can be doubted if we consider Formey's academic treatises that were heavily indebted to Wolffian ideas. Given the particular moral requirement of a eulogy to a deceased person, it is however not surprising that Merian did not openly criticise or polemicise against Formey's Wolffian position; instead, he did it indirectly by criticising Wolff and the alleged dogmatic zeal of his followers in general.

The potential criticism of Formey's role as a learned man at the Academy was not exclusively and unambiguously linked to Formey's support of Wolffian philosophy; often it rather referred simply to the apologetic and censoring functions and style of several of Formey's writings, i.e. the aspects for which the theologians and pastors among Formey's correspondents had praised him. In 1757, for example, Formey provided a preface and annotations to a translation of David Hume's *Essay concerning human understanding* that had been conducted by his colleague Merian.⁶²⁰ In his letters to the Academy's president Maupertuis, who at the time had already quit Berlin to live in St. Malo, Merian revealed his motivation for deliberately engaging Formey in this enterprise: with the help of Formey's comments against Hume's unorthodox opinions Merian expected his translation to be able to pass censorship in almost all countries:

'Dans ma dernière lettre je vous priai d'ordonner où je devois remettre les Essais de Hume; j'aurai bien tôt l'honneur de Vous les présenter imprimés: je me suis associé avec Monsieur Formey pour faire cette édition, et je compte que sous son passeporte elle fera du chemin. Je fournis le texte, qu'il accompagnera de savantes remarques, lesquelles serviront de contre-poison aux doctrines peu philosophiques et peu orthodoxes que Hume sait rendre si séduisantes.'⁶²¹

Merian's statement did not contain any judgement on whether or not he appreciated Formey's habit of criticising philosophical texts for reasons of their religious heterodoxy; yet we might ask, whether the fact that he wanted his translation of Hume – with all its possible heterodox contents – to be widely disseminated, was (not) a sign that he appreciated it, and he hence used Formey's apologetical comments merely as a camouflage. Besides this open question concerning Merian's attitude towards Formey's campaign against heterodoxy, it seems certain that he despised Formey's style, which he described to Maupertuis as being the style of a preacher rather than of someone who

619 See Merian, "Éloge de Formey," 68.

620 *Essais philosophiques sur l'entendement humain, par David Hume. Traduit de l'anglois par J.-B. Merian, avec préface et notes de J.H.S. Formey*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1758).

621 Merian to Maupertuis, 3.5.1757 (Fonds Maupertuis, Académie des Sciences de Paris); compare also to Merian's letter to Maupertuis, 10.9.1757 (Fonds Maupertuis).

engaged critically with a text.⁶²²

Yet, Merian's comments on Formey's ambiguous merit as a learned man still appear quite decent in comparison to Frederick II's cynical assessment of the secretary of his Academy.⁶²³ In April 1773 he even composed a poem in which he disparaged Formey as an 'ennemi secret de la philosophie', who condemned all thinkers who did not adhere to his orthodox and reactionary ideas to be freethinkers and epicureans:

'Vous ne le croirez point, sage Anaxagoras,/ Qu'au siècle où nous vivons, il soit en ces États,/ Même au sein révééré de notre Académie,/ Un ennemi secret de la philosophie,/ Qui, jadis reconnu pour très-mince aumônier,/ Fait métier maintenant de nous calomnier./ Cependant il s'érige en écrivain habile;/ Ce bel esprit pesant, nourri,/ Soutient que tout penseur qui regimbe à son frein,/ Que tout bon raisonneur n'est qu'un franc libertin,/ Aux plaisirs adonné, séduit par Épicure,/ Qui suit brutalement l'instinct de la nature;'⁶²⁴

Also in Frederick's eyes, Formey's arguments were suitable for sermons but not for academic writings.⁶²⁵ The poem abounded with anger which stemmed from – if we are to believe Frederick's letter which accompanied the poem to its addressee Jean le Rond d'Alembert – one of Formey's works in which he had depicted the conversion of an unbeliever on his deathbed out of fear for the devil. For Frederick – a declared freethinker and defender of religious tolerance – people like Formey did not only put forward ridiculously outdated arguments but more importantly, with their habit of refuting the thoughts of other authors, they harmed the reputation of the Prussian state which was supposed to stand out for its intellectual freedom:

'... et comme, Dieu merci, nous n'avons point de Sorbonne, ni de bigots assez autorisés pour oser se mêler de censurer les pensées, vous verrez, par les pièces que je vous envoie, que moi et tous les Prussiens, nous pensons tout haut. Cependant je ne saurais vous dissimuler que le secrétaire perpétuel de notre Académie s'est avisé de faire imprimer je ne sais quelle *Confession d'un incrédule* qui, comme de raison, se convertit *in articulo mortis* de ses débauches par peur du diable.'⁶²⁶

Still it is interesting that Frederick considered Formey's books, mainly his refutations, from the same perspective as Formey's correspondents of a shared confessional background: the function of

622 See Merian to Maupertuis, 27.12.1757 (Fonds Maupertuis, Académie des Sciences Paris).

623 Frederick's animosity towards Formey has been stated in the literature by Krauss, "Ein Akademiesekretär vor 200 Jahren," 58 and Martin Fontius, "Der Akademiesekretär und die Schweizer," in *Schweizer im Berlin des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Martin Fontius and Helmut Holzhey (Berlin, 1996), 290-295. He attributes the conflictive relationship between Frederick and Formey to the latter's criticism of the Academy in two of his official speeches concerning the tasks of academies from 1767 and 1768.

624 Frederick II, "Épître à D'Alembert," *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand – Werke Friedrichs des Großen*, ed. Johann Preuss, vol. 13 (Berlin, 1846), 119.

625 See Frederick II, "Épître à d'Alembert," 120.

626 Frederick to d'Alembert, 27.4.1773, *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, vol. 24, 664. The title of Formey's text that Frederick cited is obviously a fictive one; however, I could not find that Formey published any works in that period that could have formed the basis for Frederick's criticism.

censorship that Formey's books exercised; yet, for Frederick, unlike Formey's other correspondents, this was not a positive thing, since he favoured the idea of a rather limited, liberal censorship. It was to a tolerant Prussia, characterised by a liberal censorship, that Frederick aimed to convince d'Alembert to move after the death of Maupertuis in 1759, and thus, his defamation of Formey's apologetic and pastoral style had to be particularly strong in front of this special foreign correspondent. Yet, Frederick's perception of Formey as an 'anti-philosophe' was not just a mere rhetorical device to show off in front of his famous Parisian correspondent; it seems to have also been the driving force behind his refusal to promote Formey as the director of the Academy's philosophical class after the death of Johann Georg Sulzer in 1779. Harnack described this incident, which remains admittedly quite opaque in the sources, as a ruse by the academicians in which they promoted Formey to the post in 1782 without Frederick's prior consent. According to Harnack, who grounded his interpretation on a note in the Academy's registers from the 25th April 1782, Frederick protested harshly against this by alerting the academicians that: 'Jamais prêtre ne sera philosophe et jamais philosophe ne peut être prêtre.'⁶²⁷ If we believe this account, Frederick apparently contested the basic principle of his secretary's self-concept, i.e. that the philosopher and the theologian were compatible with one another. On the contrary, it seems that Frederick rejected the possibility of promoting religion through a reason-based philosophical method, a duty which constituted an integral part of Formey's self-fashioning as a Christian philosopher. Therefore, in the context of Frederick II's academic politics, Formey's self-fashioning as a Christian philosopher had a real impact on his socio-professional life: he was only able to ascend to the leadership of the philosophical class after the monarch's death.

Frederick's negative perception of Formey can be considered rather emblematic for the members of the Academy who were hostile to Wolffianism, and perhaps inclined to heterodox ideas on religion. As such, they form a group that in many ways – and in particular with respect to Formey's practice as a philosopher – held views contrary to a large part of Formey's readership who had similar confessional and intellectual origins and positions as he did, i.e. the Genevan Calvinists and the Huguenots of the *Refuge*. The latter had a generally positive attitude towards Formey. As we have also seen, their positive reception of Formey's practices and writings had several different facets, which were determined by their individual experience and their relationship to Formey. Still, such views could also differ from occasion to occasion. All these different perceptions reached Formey mostly via his correspondence within a broad network, and they re-informed his self-

627 Harnack, *Geschichte der königlich-preußischen Akademie*, 385. Already in 1780, right after the death of Sulzer, Frederick had refused the candidates that had been suggested by the academicians. Formey, because of his seniority, had supposedly been among those candidates together with his friend Nicolas de Béguelin. See also Fontius, "Der Akademiesekretär und die Schweizer," 292. Formey also reported the events of 1780 in his *Souvenirs*, vol. 1, 161-162, but without admitting his own candidateship, perhaps because he did not want to appear as a loser.

fashioning, which in turn determined the intellectual debates that Formey engaged in.

FORMEY AND THE RELIGIOUS, EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND MORAL DEBATES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

One fundamental question that Formey engaged in intensively and repeatedly as a Christian philosopher was the question of how to prove the existence of God. Traditionally philosophers distinguished between a-priori and a-posteriori proofs of God's existence.⁶²⁸ The first argued from the cause to the effect, i.e. it proved God through a pre-conceived, innate idea of His essence. This argument was shaped considerably in the Seventeenth Century by Descartes, whose so-called ontological proof was conceived as a reformation of the Thomistic (i.e. Aristotelian) cosmological proof, which according to Descartes did not successfully demonstrate the existence of the Christian God, but demonstrated only that there was a natural philosophical motor to the world.⁶²⁹ The cosmological proof corresponded to the a-posteriori method, according to which one argued from the effect to the cause, and hence via this method God's existence was deduced from humans' experiences in nature. This cosmological argument was based on the conviction that the finite (and sinful) human being cannot know God's essence, and therefore all proofs of His existence had to resort to what was known or experience, with which they would form analogies to demonstrate what was unknown.⁶³⁰ Both the ontological and an altered version of the cosmological proof continued to exist throughout the Eighteenth Century, although Descartes' conceptualisation of the ontological proof of God had marked a shift in early modern philosophical discussions on God's existence, that was increasingly concerned with the question of whether it was possible to comprehend God through human reason at all. It was precisely this question that was at the centre of Formey's earliest occupation with the proofs of God, which will be discussed in chapter 6. More precisely we will see how Formey, in the form of an encyclopedia article, disputed Pierre Bayle's scepticism towards the Cartesian trust in human cognition.

Descartes' 'theological revolution' (Scribano) had also provoked a reaction from the defenders of the cosmological arguments because from mid-Seventeenth Century onwards the so-called argument from design gained increasing popularity. This was a teleological argument which deduced God's existence from the observation of order and regularity in the universe.⁶³¹ This proof

628 See Maria Rosa Antognazza, "Arguments for the Existence of God: The continental European debate," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonssen, vol. 2 (New York, 2006), 731–48.

629 See Maria Emanuela Scribano, *L'existence de Dieu: histoire de la preuve ontologique de Descartes à Kant* (Paris, 2002), 12-3.

630 See Scribano, *L'existence de Dieu*, 102-3.

631 See Antognazza, "Arguments for the Existence of God," 738.

had its height in England where the mechanistic worldview and the empirical method of Isaac Newton posed the basis of Robert Boyle's and others' physico-theology. The development of the physico-theological argument from design was reflected in Formey's debate on the proofs of God's existence with Maupertuis at the Academy. Both men rejected purely a-priori and empirical proofs of God, but this rejection fuelled a debate on the epistemology of metaphysics between them, in which they held different standpoints and which coincided with the competitive relation between (Wolffian) metaphysics and (Newtonian) physics within and without the Berlin Academy of Science in the late 1740s.

6. Encyclopedic Knowledge of God: Defending the Comprehensibility of God's Nature against Bayle

Formey's Dictionnaire Philosophique and the Article DIEU

Formey's earliest systematic publication on the proofs of God's existence was an encyclopedia article. Here, I refer to the article DIEU that together with approximately a hundred other articles, was part of his contribution to the Parisian *Encyclopédie*.⁶³² Formey had sold a manuscript containing these diverse entries on the 26 April 1747 as a result of long negotiations with the *Encyclopédie*'s editors and publishers, mainly with Antoine-Claude Briasson to whom he had been acquainted since the late 1730s.⁶³³ The origin of this rather coincidental arrangement and hence of Formey's collaboration with the Parisian *encyclopédistes* lay, however, in Formey's own project of compiling and publishing an encyclopedic work, the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, which he had already begun in 1742. The article DIEU that can be found in the fourth volume of the *Encyclopédie*, which bears the indication 'tiré des papiers de M. Formey', must, therefore, have already been (at least partly) written between January 1742 and April 1747, that is in the early years

632 For the list of articles written entirely or in parts by Formey see Richard N. Schwab, Walter E. Rex, and John Lough, eds., *Inventory of Diderot's Encyclopedie*, vol. 6 (Oxford, 1972), 101-1. The older research was undertaken by Eva Marcu, who records that only 81 articles were written by Formey: Eva Marcu, "Un encyclopédiste oublié: Formey," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* 53, no. 3 (January 1, 1953): 296–305.

633 See Marcu, "Un encyclopédiste oublié," 296 who provides the exact date of the transaction. See also François Moureau, "L'Encyclopédie d'après les correspondants de Formey," *Recherches sur Diderot et l'Encyclopédie* 3 (1987), 127-31. He narrates in great detail on the process of negotiation between Formey and Briasson and with Abbé De Gua who was in charge of the project of the *Encyclopédie* between June 1746 and August 1747. It was with De Gua that Formey had negotiated his collaboration which continued under the same terms after d'Alembert and Diderot became the editors of the *Encyclopédie*.

of Formey's career as a professor of philosophy.⁶³⁴

Since the beginning of his project Formey conceived of the production of his *Dictionnaire philosophique* as emerging within his new role as a professor of philosophy. He announced his plan for the first time in a letter to the Huguenot bookseller Prosper Marchand from The Hague in January 1742:

J'ai commencé avec l'année un ouvrage de longue haleine, et dont je me propose de faire ce que je suis capable de faire de meilleur. C'est un dictionnaire philosophique en français. Nous n'avons que celui de Chauvin en latin, qui est presque pure scholastique. Je me propose un tout autre plan. Mes articles seront disposés comme ceux de Bayle, un texte court et dégagé, et des notes étenduës où je rendrai compte des opinions, des découvertes, où j'ajouterai les questions, etc. Mon premier but est de m'instruire moi-même dans ma profession. Si je puis en même tems rendre service au public, à la bonne heure, mais cela est encore éloigné.⁶³⁵

This presentation by Formey is revealing in terms of the conceptual premises and purposes of the planned encyclopedia: on the one hand, the *Dictionnaire* was primarily meant to be a work for professional use, i.e. for scholars of philosophy such as himself. However, on the other hand, considering the choice of language and Formey's closing remark, the *Dictionnaire* was probably at the same time supposed to appeal to a larger, non-professional public; such a public probably comprised of his pastoral acquaintances in the *Refuge* and Geneva, and of other amateur philosophers in the Republic of Letters. Formey's choice of Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* as a model makes this intention very likely for it had been famous within this group of people.⁶³⁶ Likewise, the claimed premise to avoid scholastic models shows the extent to which Formey conceived of his own practice as a philosopher to be a break with tradition and an orientation towards forms of learning and instruction that transcended the classroom or the erudite's study: the plan for his *Dictionnaire philosophique* clearly shows that Formey saw himself at the edge between the academic and the popular philosopher.⁶³⁷

As André Bandelier notes, Formey promoted his project first and foremost among his Huguenot acquaintances both in the German lands and in Switzerland: specifically to the pastors

634 Formey, DIEU, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1754), 976-983.

635 Formey to Prosper Marchand, 12.1.1742, Jan Schillings, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand (1736 - 1749)," *LIAS* 39, no. 2 (2012), 280. Besides to Marchand, Formey offered his *Dictionnaire* also to the Parisian bookseller Antoine-Claude Briasson who he contacted with respect to this in September 1743, see Briasson to Formey, 28.9.1743, *Correspondance passive*, 30.

636 For an account of the wide diffusion of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* see Pierre Rétat, *Le "Dictionnaire" de Bayle et la lutte philosophique au XVIIIe siècle*. (Paris, 1971), 128-31.

637 I doubt the suggestion of Jens Häsel, "L'encyclopédisme protestant de Formey à la Lumière de sa Correspondance avec De Felice," in *L'Encyclopédie d'Yverdon et sa résonance européenne. Contextes, contenus, continuités*, ed. Clorinda Donato et al. (Geneva, 2005), 121-40, 125, that the *Dictionnaire philosophique* was meant to serve Formey as a textbook for his philosophy classes. This was rather the function of his Latin *Elementa philosophiae seu medulla Wolfiana* of 1746.

Jacques Pérard and Abraham Bocquet in Stettin and Magdeburg in February 1742, and the pastor Jean Peschier in Geneva in Spring 1742.⁶³⁸ This is why they were probably the kind of readers that Formey tried to address with his *Dictionnaire philosophique*. Yet, it seems that Formey announced his new work not only to advertise it, but rather in order to seek potential collaborators to his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, or simply for information and advice on the execution of the project. Peschier in Geneva did not believe that he was able to provide this kind of assistance himself, and so forwarded Formey's call for collaborators to several Genevan professors, among whom the mathematician Gabriel Cramer provided Formey with lengthy comments and recommendations concerning the style and content of the *Dictionnaire*.⁶³⁹ The pastor Abraham Bocquet, instead, seems to have immediately gone about penning certain articles for Formey.⁶⁴⁰

In their function as potential readers and collaborators, Bocquet and Cramer both picked up on the genre of the *Dictionnaire philosophique* and the form that Formey had envisaged for it. Cramer appreciated Formey's aim to use Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* as a stylistic role model: In his view the alternation between a short separate article body and extended notes containing discussions and questions⁶⁴¹ would fit the genre of encyclopedia that Formey had chosen – a philosophical encyclopedia – even better than it did Bayle's historical encyclopedia. Nevertheless, Cramer warned Formey to avoid the digressions in which Bayle had become trapped since he thought that these digressions were not respectable for a philosopher like Formey; in his view, Bayle was a critic rather than a philosopher.⁶⁴² By stating this as such, Cramer chose a very elegant way of expressing his concern that Formey's *Dictionnaire* was becoming as heterodox as its Baylien model. According to many contemporaries, Bayle's complex entanglement of notes and references containing seemingly random discussions of the most important dogma – 'digressions' in Cramer's words – served as a means to sow sceptical and heterodox thought into its readers'

638 See André Bandelier, "L'encyclopédisme avant l'Encyclopédie. Attentes genevoises et projet de 'Dictionnaire Philosophique' de J.H.S. Formey," in *L'Encyclopédie d'Yverdon*, 57.

639 See Peschier to Formey, 17.4.1742, *Lettres de Genève*, 35-6; For Cramer's comments see his letters of 9.4.1742 and 29.8.1742 and compare to Bandelier, "L'encyclopédisme avant l'Encyclopédie," 61-8.

640 Bocquet to Formey, 24.2.1742, 21.5.1742 and 13.10.1742 (FF).

641 Compare Formey's remarks to Marchand (see above) with what Bayle himself stated concerning the structure of his *Dictionnaire*, "Préface de la première édition," *Dictionnaire historique et critique par Mr. Pierre Bayle, 5ième édition*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam, 1740), II: 'J'ai divisé ma composition en deux Parties: l'une est purement Historique, un Narré succinct des Faits: l'autre est un grand Commentaire, un mélange de Preuves & de Discussions, où je fais entrer la Censure de plusieurs Fautes, & quelquefois même une tirade de Réflexions Philosophiques; en un mot, assez de variété pour pouvoir croire, que par un endroit ou par un autre chaque espece de Lecteur trouvera ce qui l'accommode.'

642 Gabriel Cramer to Formey, 9.4.1742, *Lettres de Genève*, 28. Interestingly, the temporary editor of the *Encyclopédie* in 1747, the Abbé De Gua, had a completely opposite opinion to Cramer concerning the correlation between certain methods and genres of encyclopedias: In a letter to Formey he claimed that the method Formey had chosen would fit much better Bayle's historical encyclopedia than it would a philosophical one (see De Gua de Malves to Formey, 29.4.1747 (CV), quoted in Élisabeth Badinter, *Les Passions Intellectuelles*. Vol. 1, *Désirs de Gloire, 1735-1751*, (Paris, 2010; first edition 1999), 399-401 (particularly 400)).

minds.⁶⁴³ A similar doubt concerning the risk of Formey's *Dictionnaire* becoming a work imbued with scepticism might have also agitated the pastor Bocquet: it was on the occasion of Formey's *Dictionnaire* that he raised his above-mentioned concern about the sceptical nature that was inherent to the practice of philosophy in general, and which made him prefer theology.⁶⁴⁴

The reactions of these two individuals within Formey's correspondents, who were from different backgrounds – Bocquet was a simple pastor and a coeval of Formey, whereas Cramer was an established professor at the Academy of Geneva – echoed quite well the ambivalent reputation that the philosopher Pierre Bayle and his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* still had in the mid-Eighteenth Century. Despite the common appreciation of the huge erudition displayed in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, its early modern readers considered it largely as a work of a sceptic and covert atheist whose religious fideism was only a disguise. This is more or less the essence of the criticism that Bayle had still encountered in his lifetime within the milieu of Huguenot erudition, most famously from Pierre Jurieu, Jacques Bernard, Jean Le Clerc and Isaac de Jaquelot.⁶⁴⁵ The various arguments of these authors still lingered on when Formey was being trained in philosophy and theology and, more importantly, they were re-formulated in 1733 by the Swiss philosopher Jean Pierre Crousaz in his *Examen du Pyrrhonisme ancien et moderne*, in which Bayle was a prominent target of criticism beneath Sextus Empiricus and Huet.⁶⁴⁶

Formey was also well aware of Bayle's dubious fame. More than that, he was familiar with Crousaz's arguments against Bayle's alleged scepticism for he had worked through and abbreviated Crousaz's entire *Examen du Pyrrhonisme* from 1733 to 1740. A work that Formey himself said was the 'premier enfant de sa plume' and which eventually resulted in the publication of his *Le Triomphe de l'évidence* in 1756.⁶⁴⁷ Formey familiarised himself with Crousaz's orthodox Calvinist criticism

643 The intelligent composition of Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* has just recently been perfectly portrayed by Mara van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu, and the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (Oxford, 2016), particularly chapter one.

644 See Bocquet to Formey, 21.5.1742 (FF); see above p. 83-4.

645 For a brief summary of the criticism of these authors see Anton M. Matytsin, *The Specter of Skepticism in the Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, 2016), 54-65. Obviously the mentioned group of authors is very heterogeneous itself, Jurieu belonging to a much more orthodox section of Calvinism, whereas Bernard and Jaquelot embraced a Calvinism tinged with Arminianism, and Le Clerc was Arminian. The three latter stressed the rationality of faith. For a detailed study on the dispute between Jurieu and Bayle see Van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu and the Dictionnaire*; for the controversy with the three latter authors, commonly called the *rationaux* see Stefano Brogi, *Teologia senza verità: Bayle contro i "rationaux"* (Milano, 1998). I do not intend to discuss here the scholarship on Bayle, which is divided into the defenders of Bayle as being a Calvinist fideist on the one hand, and him as being a deliberate atheist on the other. It should suffice to refer to the work by Elisabeth Labrousse for the first argument and that of Gianluca Mori for the second.

646 Crousaz's arguments are summarised most recently in Anton Matytsin, "The Protestant Critics of Bayle at the Dawn of the Enlightenment," in *Scepticism in the Eighteenth Century: Enlightenment, Lumières, Aufklärung*, ed. Sébastien Charles and Plinio J. Smith (Dordrecht, 2013), 63-76. Besides this, see Antony McKenna, "Les Critiques de Bayle au 18e siècle: L'exemple de Jean-Pierre de Crousaz," in *Aufklärung und Aufklärungskritik in Frankreich. Selbstdeutungen des 18. Jahrhunderts im Spiegel der Zeitgenossen*, ed. Johannes Rohbeck and Sonia Asval (Berlin, 2003), 35-62.

647 See Formey, *Le Triomphe de l'évidence*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1756). For the history of the works genesis see the preface

against Bayle at a time when he had barely read the famous *Dictionnaire* himself – he obtained a copy of its 1730 edition only in late 1740.⁶⁴⁸ In his introduction to his *Triomphe de l'évidence*, however, Formey commented largely on Bayle's method and its dangers:

Il y a une Méthode bien plus délicate & plus dangereuse d'établir le Pyrrhonisme. C'est de le répandre dans ses Ecrits, d'ébranler, non les fondemens de la certitude en général, mais les fondemens particuliers des Vérités, qui ont passé pour les plus incontestables, & de profiter des occasions que présentent tous les sujets qu'on a à traiter, pour répandre les semences du doute. Le Lecteur n'est point en garde contre de pareils Ecrivains. [...] *Montaigne*, & *la Mothe le Vayer* ont écrit dans ce goût; mais jamais personne n'égalera Mr. *Bayle* dans ce funeste Art. Son Dictionnaire est le plus dangereux Livre qui existe.⁶⁴⁹

The Critical Method in the Article DIEU: Fighting Bayle with His Own Weapons

If Formey was so aware of the danger of the sceptical method that was exposed in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, then why in 1742 did he consider it as the best method for his own *Dictionnaire philosophique*? Leaving aside the interesting financial advantages that a work similar to Bayle's well-sold masterpiece would bring, it is indeed likely that Formey, once he had read the whole *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* on his own – that means, not mediated through Crousaz – started to appreciate Bayle's style to a certain extent. Moreover, there are other works by Formey that imply that he considered the method of balancing several arguments against each other – the epistemological essence of Bayle's work – as a legitimate approach to philosophy. This adoption of an altered sceptical method is suggested by Jens Häselser as well as Anton Matytsin, who attribute a more nuanced position concerning scepticism to Formey, which allowed him to apply a critical method to all subjects in philosophy except those concerning religious dogma.⁶⁵⁰

However, there is also another possibility, which somehow combines all of these elements: having discerned the public and philosophical success of Bayle's method, Formey borrowed it in order to apply it against its creator who he regarded despite all his ingeniousness as a heretic and an unbeliever. Particularly Formey's article DIEU demonstrates, how he transformed Bayle's historical-critical method into a pattern of opinion and objection, by means of which he scrutinised Bayle's own positions towards God's existence. Moreover, it seems as if Formey used the same concept on

to its first volume.

648 See Formey to Prosper Marchand, 30.12.1740, Schillings, “La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand,” 247.

649 Formey, “Introduction,” *Le Triomphe de l'évidence*, vol. 1, LXVIII-LXIX. For a similar stand on Bayle and his method see also Formey, *Histoire abrégée de la Philosophie*, 247-8.

650 See Jens Häselser, “Formey et Crousaz, ou Comment fallait-il combattre le scepticisme?,” in *The Return of Scepticism. From Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle*, ed. Gianni Paganini (Dordrecht, Boston, London, 2003), 460-1 and Matytsin, *The specter of Skepticism*, 142-4.

which Bayle's *Dictionnaire* had been based, that is to compile an encyclopedia in which all deficiencies and errors of previous encyclopedias were corrected. Bayle had done so with the *Grand Dictionnaire historique* by Louis Moreri and Formey in turn would do it with Bayle himself.⁶⁵¹ Later in his career, Formey even attempted to publish such a corrected encyclopedia on the basis of the Parisian *Encyclopédie*: his *Projet d'un Encyclopédie réduite* in 1756 provides evidence of this,⁶⁵² just as his considerations on an *Encyclopédie négative*, that he presented at the Academy in 1773, do. The aim of this *Encyclopédie négative* was to allow the reader to 'unlearn' false and harmful definitions.⁶⁵³ Hence, the endeavour to correct and ameliorate was a constant drive for Formey's several encyclopedia projects over his lifetime and it seems that he had adopted it from Bayle with the aim to use it against him.

To understand how Formey applied his vision of an encyclopedia as a means of correction and amelioration together with his interpretation of the Baylien method in his own *Dictionnaire philosophique*, it is worthwhile to first briefly observe the structure of the article DIEU. At the first sight, the article is divided into two large parts. First, there is an extensive discussion on Bayle's scepticism towards the possibility to rationally demonstrate God's existence. This is followed by a selection of three different texts presenting potential ways of rationally proving God's existence: through the metaphysical, the historical and the physical proofs. For the metaphysical proof, Formey had used an extract of Samuel Clarke's 1705 Boyle Lecture, on the existence and nature of God, which is a step-by-step deduction of twelve propositions in which the existence of an independent, immutable and self-existent supreme being is inferred as well as some of His essential attributes.⁶⁵⁴ The historical proof of God, taken from Isaac de Jaquelot, demonstrates the compatibility of the biblical chronology of the Old Testament with the (secular) histories of the classical civilisation.⁶⁵⁵ In the last of the three texts, copied from Bernard de Fontenelle, the first specimen of each animal was shown to be the work of a Creator instead of being the result of an

651 Louis Moreri, *Le Grand Dictionnaire historique ou le mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane [...]* (several editions between 1674 and 1759). Bayle's *Dictionnaire* emerged from his initial plan to provide a corrected and improved version of Moreri, see Van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu and the Dictionnaire*, 15.

652 On the emergence and eventual abandonment of this project see Georges Roth, "Samuel Formey et son projet d' 'Encyclopédie Réduite,'" *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 54, no. 3 (July 1, 1954): 371–74; Ute van Runset, "Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey and the Encyclopédie Réduite," in *The Encyclopédie and the Age of Revolution*, ed. Clorinda Donato and Robert Maniquis (Boston, 1992), 63–67; and Anne-Marie Chouillet, "Documents sur le projet d'Encyclopédie Réduite de Formey," *Recherches sur Diderot et l'Encyclopédie* 16 (1994): 154–59, including a copy of Formey's proposal.

653 Formey, "Projet d'une encyclopédie négative," *Nouveaux Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Berlin*, 1773 (Berlin, 1775), 14–18. As is said in the notes, Formey held this discourse at the public assembly of 3.6.1773.

654 Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God* (London, 1705). It is more than likely that Formey used the French translation of this work by Pierre Ricotier, first published in 1717 and subsequently also in 1728 and 1744.

655 Isaac de Jaquelot, *Dissertations sur l'existence de Dieu* (La Haye, 1697).

accidental encounter of matter.⁶⁵⁶ Compared to each other, the two main parts of the article – the refutation of Bayle and the list of three different arguments for the existence of God – appear to be very different in style: The first is a critical discussion in which we can observe the alternation between 'historical fact' (in Bayle's version), i.e. quote from Bayle in Formey's version, and comments or objections against it. The second part, except for a few interventions, was an assemblage of faithful copies of other authors' texts, lacking any annotation or comment from Formey's side. This dissonance between the two main parts evokes several hypotheses about Formey's (absent) choices in the composition of his article DIEU. How does this fit into Formey's plan of using a kind of critical method and of correcting Bayle?

My first hypothesis is that this apparent dissonance fitted with Formey's convictions and the main argument of his article: only Bayle's arguments were contrary to Formey's own opinion on this subject. In a nutshell, Formey's argument throughout the whole article was that the existence of God was a provable fact. Bayle had doubted this and hence he received a refutation from Formey, whereas Clarke, Jaquelot and Fontenelle were essentially affirming Formey's position, and consequently did not need further correction. That the two parts of the article functioned in such a way was also suggested by Formey himself: he presented Clarke, Jaquelot and Fontenelle as his supporters against impious authors such as Bayle.⁶⁵⁷ The particular tri-partition of the second part into metaphysical, historical and physical arguments can be explained with a reference to Formey's second main source besides Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, the *Philosophisches Lexicon* by the Lutheran professor of theology in Jena, Johann Georg Walch.⁶⁵⁸

That the *Philosophisches Lexicon* constituted an essential source for Formey was underlined in a letter by Manteuffel in August 1742, who also offered to lend Formey his copy of the Walch.⁶⁵⁹ Moreover, his fellow Huguenot Bocquet, who was one of Formey's collaborators on this project, reported how he tried to compile an entry for the topic 'Âme' on the basis of Walch's encyclopedia.⁶⁶⁰ Walch's entry on God, which Formey probably drew significantly from for his DIEU, is an analytical review of the manifold historical and contemporary works on the topic. Its

656 Bernard de Fontenelle, "De l'existence de Dieu," *Œuvres diverses de M. de Fontenelle* (Paris, 1724).

657 See DIEU, 978a.

658 Johann Georg Walch, *Philosophisches Lexicon [...]* (Leipzig, 1726). For a short introduction into Walch and his encyclopedia see Dagmar von Wille, "Johann Georg Walch und sein Philosophisches Lexicon," *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 22, no. 1 (1998): 31–39.

659 See Manteuffel to Formey, [?].8.1742 (A).

660 See Bocquet to Formey, 21.5.1742 (FF), where Bocquet suggests Brucker's History of philosophy as an additional source to Walch's *Lexicon*, which was apparently intended by Formey. Moreover, Bocquet's letter of 26.2.1745 explicitly shows that the articles he provided to Formey were supposed to be 'refoundations' of articles out of the 'Walch': 'Au reste ne vous attendez pas d'une tractation complete de tout ce qu'on peut renfermer sou le titre Âme. J'en ai parcouru l'article dans le Diction. Philos. De Walch, et sa longueur, ou je ne trouve pourtant rien de superflu, m'effrayeroit quand il ne s'agiroit que de le traduire de l'Allemand en François; que seroit ce donc s'il falloit le refondre?'

starting point, however, is to distinguish between an innate and an acquired notion of God's existence: the first relied on inner feeling whereas the second resulted from the apprehension of reasonable proofs. These reasonable proofs, as Walch went on, were commonly divided into metaphysical, physical or historical ones, which is precisely the division we find in Formey's article.⁶⁶¹ Moreover, it seems that the *Philosophisches Lexicon* also inspired Formey over which authors to quote in the second part of his article.⁶⁶² To put it in a nutshell, a first option is to see Formey's DIEU as a well-conceived treatise on the evidence of God's existence, in which Bayle's denial of this fact was corrected by a threefold confirmation of it.

The problem with this option is that it seems slightly at odds with Formey's apparent concept of a corrective encyclopedia. If we do not consider that the large second part of the article constituted an actual correction of Bayle, then it appears to be superfluous. In other words, why include affirmative arguments in a work that has the goal to destroy negative arguments? The answer could be, and this is my second hypothesis, that the three texts in the second part were not entirely positive in Formey's view, but that they needed (slight) revisions. This possibility seems to be confirmed by a closer reading of Clarke's, Jaquelot's and Fontenelle's arguments as Formey portrayed them. They show that Formey had indeed undertaken some corrections within the three authors' texts, although he presented these changes almost imperceptibly when compared to the rhetorical fuss with which he encountered Bayle. Clarke's original treatise consists of twelve so-called propositions, steps in a logical deduction, whereas Formey's version of it has only nine. He simply cut proposition numbers four, five and 12, out of which the first two are of particular interest to us. In his fourth proposition, Clarke had declared that the human being was not able to comprehend neither the substance (or essence) of a supreme being, nor of any other thing. This assumption in the legacy of Newton and Locke, posed a significant restriction to the capacity of human understanding, which contradicted not only the essential assumption of Descartes' ontological proof, in which God's existence was deduced precisely from His essence (because His existence was included in His essence), and therefore required that this essence was intelligible by human beings.⁶⁶³ Moreover, Clarke's assumption was potentially contrary to the concept of human reason that Formey had adopted from Leibniz and Wolff, and according to which the human being could comprehend the essence of almost everything. In his fifth proposition, Clarke challenged the traditional Christian understanding of God's eternity according to which God existed permanently without any connection to space and time. This concept was also defended by Wolff. Clarke,

661 See Walch, "Gott," *Philosophisches Lexicon*, 1339-1340.

662 See Walch, "Gott," 1354. Walch concluded his article with a list of the five most recent writings on the existence of God in which Isaac de Jaquelot and Samuel Clarke – two of the authors who Formey quoted – appear.

663 See Ezio Vailati, "Introduction," in *Samuel Clarke : A Demonstration of the Being and the Attributes of God and Other Writings*, ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge, 1998), XIII; and Scribano, *L'existence de Dieu*, 69 and 116.

however, in agreement with Newton, doubted this and instead gave way to the possibility of understanding God's eternity as a successive duration.⁶⁶⁴ Consequently, by removing Clarke's fourth and fifth propositions, Formey seems to have attempted to align his metaphysical demonstration of God's existence to the Cartesian ontological proof with which he tried to refute Bayle and to the essentials of his Christian philosophy that was inspired by Leibniz and Wolff.

If this 'correction' of Clarke's opinion could pass unnoticed by the reader, Formey's critical intervention in Isaac de Jaquelot's text was more obvious: after having reproduced Jaquelot's arguments on the compatibility of the evolution of Greek culture and the chronology of the world according to Moses, Formey interjected: 'On pouvoit dire à M. Jaquelot, de qui cet argument est tiré, qu'en se renfermant dans les connoissances & dans les inventions de la Grece, il prenoit la question du côté le plus avantageux à sa cause, & lui opposer l'ancienneté prodigieuse des empires d'Assyrie, d'Egypte, de la Chine même.'⁶⁶⁵ Then he continued to quote Jaquelot's treatise which indeed provided answers to these three difficult cases, yet still Formey raised another objection: in his view, Jaquelot's solution for reconciling the Chinese and the Jewish chronology appeared too weak and vulnerable. Relying on the Greek translation of the Old Testament (*Septuaginta*), which established a much longer chronology of the world than the Hebrew version, Jaquelot had calculated that the Chinese people had emerged 200 years after the expulsion of the Jews – a time span that according to Formey was too short to allow for their establishment and rise in Eastern Asia.⁶⁶⁶ Although Formey made these objections to Jaquelot's report, he did not attempt to overturn it in its essence; instead, he quoted the version of Chinese history established by the French chronologist Nicolas Fréret which, in his view, was more solid and safe against potential attacks of unbelievers. This seems to be a perfect example for Formey's endeavour to ameliorate the arguments of the authors that he quoted. In sum, it becomes clear that the second part of the article DIEU consists not only of simple copies of other authors' texts but that Formey also critically engaged with them to a certain extent. When compared to his engagement with Bayle in the first part, his engagement with Clarke and Jaquelot resembled a somewhat gentler dialogue.

Having said this, it seems curious that Formey did not enter into any dialogue whatsoever with Fontenelle who was the author of the physical proof that he quoted. In general, the presence of Fontenelle besides Clarke and Jaquelot in Formey's article appears to be odd. Unlike the other two, Fontenelle had no clerical background and it is rather unlikely that his text had an apologetic function. On the contrary, Fontenelle's oeuvre is considered by the scholarship to have been covertly heretical, containing very subtle scepticism towards Christianity. The difference between Fontenelle

664 See Vailati, "Introduction," XVI.

665 See DIEU, 980b-981a.

666 See DIEU, 981b.

and the *philosophes* and freethinkers was, as Jean Dagen recently noted, that he did not use polemical language against religious doctrine, instead, he employed a strictly rational method and style, which he used to indirectly invalidate arguments that were based on revealed and natural religion alike.⁶⁶⁷ In this sense, Dagen also sees Fontenelle's *De l'existence de Dieu*, quoted in Formey's article DIEU, as a parody of the common apologetic texts, in which he used the style of those texts but established doubts over the possibility of a creation.⁶⁶⁸ This tendency can be observed for example in his considerations on the ad-hoc nature of the Creation: Fontenelle insinuated that the autonomous creation of the first animals appears strange if we consider present-day observations according to which animals developed over generations. Why should the earth have simply produced the two first specimens of each animal ad-hoc or 'out of the dust', rather than having animals develop over time? Fontenelle used this doubt to deny that the world could have possibly been created autonomously without the influence of a higher being, God. However, the general doubt over the creation of animals that he had raised could also have easily implied the absurdity of a divine Creation, which after all was also ad-hoc. Considering all this, it almost seems that Fontenelle's proof was added to Formey's manuscript by the *encyclopédistes*. In contrast, there is no evidence that Formey was aware of the subversive character of Fontenelle's oeuvre in general or his *De l'existence de Dieu* in particular. On the contrary, he always referred positively to him, not only in respect to his genius but also to his decency and character as a *honnête homme*.⁶⁶⁹ Hence, both options are possible: that Formey did not intend to include Fontenelle as an advocate for his argument, and that he considered him just as adequate as Clarke and Jaquelot for this purpose.

As a result, we might say that the two hypotheses to account for the apparently dissonant structure of the article DIEU complement each other: The three different arguments for the existence of God that were quoted in the second part support Formey's main message against Bayle's scepticism, namely that God's existence was comprehensible by human beings and thus could be proved in several ways. At the same time, Formey also applied to the texts in the second part an admittedly less invasive, critical method that was inspired by Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* as well as the concept of a corrective encyclopedia. From all this, we can deduce that Formey was the author of the whole article and that he pursued a certain and clear objective with it. Nevertheless, in the end, there remains an element of doubt about this given the particular publication history of the *Encyclopédie*. As Formey was already informed by the Abbé De

667 See Jean Dagen, "Fontenelle 'esprit fort,'" *ThéoRèmes. Enjeux des approches empiriques des religions*, no. 9 (December 2016), doi:10.4000/theoremes.892. For a good analysis of Fontenelle's philosophy see also Jean Raoul Carré, *La philosophie de Fontenelle ou Le sourire de la raison* (Geneva, 1970).

668 See Dagen, "Fontenelle 'esprit fort,'" paragraph 13.

669 See [Formey], "Article V. Oeuvres de Monsieur de Fontenelle [...]," *Bibliothèque Impartiale*, 4 (juillet et août 1751), 75.

Gua, and as we know from several other cases, the material that he provided to the project was meant to undergo revision by the *Encyclopédie's* editors.⁶⁷⁰ Since Formey's manuscript has not survived, it is possible that parts of the article DIEU were either omitted or added, compared to the version that Formey originally submitted, such as Fontenelle's text. It is, however, very probable that at least the first part of the article which engaged with Bayle arose from Formey's pen. Knowing the conceptual origin of his *Dictionnaire* as well as that in this period Formey engaged with the Baylian scepticism through the study of Crousaz' *Examen du Pyrrhonisme*, it is no surprise that Bayle's considerations on the existence of God were at the core of Formey's article on God. Hence, let us finally examine which of Bayle's considerations did Formey chose to discuss. And what were the results of these choices?

The Ontological Proof in the Article DIEU

Formey merged and discussed two core arguments of Bayle's critical position on the monotheistic religion in his article DIEU: the irrationality of religious doctrine and the non-innate character of man's idea of God. The first was addressed by Bayle when he posed the question who was better able to define God, the pagan philosopher or the simple-minded Christian believer? A question addressed in the article SIMONIDE in Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*. The second argument, i.e. that the idea of God was not innate to the human being, emerged out of Bayle's discussion on whether the *consensus omnium* was a legitimate proof of God's existence within his *Continuation des Pensées diverses sur la comète*. Despite the chronological distance between these two works, Bayle had underlined the connection between the two instances of the argument, a connection that Formey's article followed and put into a new light.⁶⁷¹ As a result, combing all of Formey's objections to the single instances in Bayle's texts they build an over-arching claim that God's existence was comprehensible for the human mind. This over-arching claim is characterised by its general compliance with the Cartesian ontological proof of God's existence, and by its particular similarity to the rationalism of Bayle's contemporary Calvinist critics, Jaquelot and Bernard as well as the Arminian Le Clerc, all three of whom had defended the compatibility of reason and faith against Bayle's arguments. Formey approached the subject in three steps that followed Bayle's arguments on the basis of his texts.

670 See De Gua de Malves to Formey, 29.4.1747 (CV), quoted in Badinter, *Les Passions Intellectuelles*, vol. 1, 399-401.

671 First, both the history of the ancient philosopher Simonides and the discussion of the *consensus omnium* argument came from the same source: Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. Moreover, in his *Continuation des Pensées diverses, écrites à un Docteur de Sorbonne à l'occasion de la comète qui parut au mois de Decembre 1680, ou Réponse à plusieurs difficultez que Monsieur *** a proposées à l'Auteur*; vol. 1 (Rotterdam, 1705), 82 Bayle referred to the anterior article SIMONIDE in order to demonstrate how difficult it was to define God.

Formey began his article with anecdotes about two ancient philosophers, Thales and Simonides, who had been asked by their sovereigns to define God but were not able to give a satisfying reply. Bayle had used these same anecdotes in his *Dictionnaire* to emphasise that there existed a difference between believing in God, as each simple-minded Christian did, and having evident knowledge of God's existence and attributes, as the pagan philosophers Simonides and Thales tried to do. The latter was simply not possible in Bayle's view: this is why the two philosophers had refrained from giving an answer to their sovereigns.⁶⁷² Formey, instead, delved not into the differences between simple-minded belief and rational evidence. On the contrary, he supposed that the only way of knowing God was through reason, more precisely, reason in the sense of the cognitive capacity that was innate to every human being.⁶⁷³ Therefore, in his view, both the 'simple-minded' and the philosopher possessed the same prerequisite knowledge for understanding God. Having dissolved Bayle's distinction between belief and evidence, Formey used the anecdotes of Simonides and Thales for another purpose, namely to underline the caution that was required when one reflected on God. He claimed that although the nature of God remained incomprehensible to a large extent, there were at least a few things that human beings were able to comprehend of Him, namely His existence, intelligence and power as a creator:

'Mais quelqu'incompréhensible que soit Dieu, on ne doit pas cependant en inférer qu'il le soit en tout: s'il en étoit ainsi, nous n'aurions de lui nulle idée, & nous n'en aurions rien à dire. Mais nous pouvons & nous devons affirmer de Dieu, qu'il existe, qu'il a de l'intelligence, de la sagesse, de la puissance, de la force, puisqu'il a donné ces prérogatives à ses ouvrages; mais qu'il a ces qualités dans un degré qui passe ce que nous en pouvons concevoir'.⁶⁷⁴

The basic attributes of God that Formey described to be conceivable by the human being were similar to those that constituted God's essence according to Descartes' a-priori demonstration of His existence: for Descartes, the human notion of God's essence, from which His existence could be deduced, comprised of His necessary existence and almightiness.⁶⁷⁵ This basic notion of God's essence was also contained in the fictive answer that Formey had suggested to Simonides in the *Triomphe de l'Évidence*. There Formey had also emphasised that it was definitely not a lack of genius that had impeded Simonides from giving this answer.⁶⁷⁶ From this, it follows that in Formey's view, everybody was capable of recognising a basic notion of God, independently of the degree of their cognitive abilities.

672 See SIMONIDE, 211a. See Brogi, 32.

673 For Formey's vision of reason as a universal human quality see DIEU, 977a: 'Les hommes, des qu'ils sont hommes, c'est-à-dire capables de société & de raisonnement, reconnoissent un Dieu.'

674 DIEU, 976a.

675 See Scribano, *L'existence de Dieu*, 50-1.

676 See Formey, *Le Triomphe de l'Évidence*, vol. 2, 114.

This general human capacity to form a basic notion of God resulted from the assumed similarity between God and His creatures. Formey alluded to this in the last sentence of the quoted passage in DIEU: all of God's attributes were also contained in His creatures, although to a considerably different degree. This difference in degree, as Formey continued, was due to other, uniquely divine attributes, i.e. the necessity of God's existence, His indivisibility and His aseity. Finally, Formey concluded this introduction with still another emphasis on the universal accessibility of knowledge of God, namely through the experience of oneself and the world which, however, did not belong to the classical structure of an a-priori argument. Therefore, in Formey's description, unlike in Bayle's, the common and simple notion of God emerged not from faith alone, but instead it relied on a certain kind of reasoning and experience, which however was so rudimentary that it could also be carried out by the most stupid person. In other words: Formey portrayed a reasonable faith as the foundation of Christianity, with the assumed purpose to protect faith against the criticism of superstition. By this, he presumably tried to counteract the negative effects that Bayle's argument of 'faith alone' had produced on religion: Bayle's argument was able to destroy the power of faith by accusing it of being prone to superstition. Thus, in the introduction of the article DIEU, Formey averted the destructive effect on Christianity that Bayle had created with the anecdotes about Simonides and Thales, and aligned it instead with the basics of the ontological proof of God's existence as a basis of reasonable faith.

After this significant but still quite subtle distortion of Bayle's original text, Formey moved on to directly attack Bayle's position: The second section of the first part of the article DIEU starts with 'C'est donc en vain que M. Bayle s'efforce de prouver que le peuple n'est pas juge dans la question de l'existence de Dieu.'⁶⁷⁷ With this Formey referred to Bayle's discussion of the *consensus omnium* argument in the *Continuation des Pensées diverses sur la comète*. The *consensus omnium*, i.e. the universal agreement by all people that there was a God, had been used since Antiquity as a strong moral proof for God's existence, yet by Bayle's time, its evidence was already more than contested.⁶⁷⁸ Bayle had easily refuted several aspects of this argument, amongst others by doubting that the human being, peasants and philosophers alike, were able to comprehend the nature of God.⁶⁷⁹ This is the problem to which Formey had replied regarding the episode on Simonides and Thales and also Bayle, in his *Continuation des Pensées diverses*, had referred back to this article of his *Dictionnaire*.⁶⁸⁰ However, at this stage of the article DIEU, the debate on the comprehensibility of God entered into more detail in the sense that the question was asked which

677 DIEU, 976b.

678 For a historical evaluation of the *consensus omnium* argument see Brogi, *Teologia senza Verità*, 83-9.

679 See Bayle, *Continuation des Pensées diverses*, 79-80.

680 See Bayle, *Continuation des Pensées diverses*, 82.

aspects of God were comprehensible and which were not: In his original text, Bayle had put a lot of weight on the necessity of having an idea of God's concrete nature in order to be able to judge His existence. He had claimed that it was easy to conceive of God's existence if one argued with the concept of the first cause. In his view, the existence of a universal, eternal and necessary first cause was a fact that indeed everyone agreed upon, yet, this concept was not identical with the one of God. Therefore, in order to establish the idea and the existence of the Christian God, the nature of this first cause had to be defined, and Bayle had doubted whether this was even possible.⁶⁸¹

Formey, presumably because he lacked a satisfying objection to Bayle's argument, pursued a strategy of tacit re-appropriation: He omitted Bayle's harsh judgement on the insufficiency of arguing for the existence of a first cause in order to account for God's existence; instead Formey presented Bayle's distinction between knowing the existence of God and His nature as a positive truth. More precisely, Formey asserted that although the human mind was too limited to comprehend the nature of God, it was naturally capable – or even forced by reason – to understand His existence. He then went on and underlined the importance of distinguishing between the incomprehensible and the comprehensible aspects of God: The incomprehensible aspect of God was His nature and it was incomprehensible because it was based on His eternity and infinity, which were attributes that humans struggled to understand. In contrast, the comprehensible aspect of God was His existence and it was comprehensible because humans were able to conceive that there must have been a cause to the first effects, i.e. that there must be an eternally existing being.⁶⁸² Hence, Formey basically made the same argument as Bayle, but with a different meaning. Formey dissociated the knowledge of God's existence from the knowledge of His nature and bestowed the first, God's existence, with a greater importance by declaring it as being innate knowledge: 'Je dis donc & je soutiens que l'existence de Dieu est une vérité que la nature a mise dans l'esprit de tous les hommes, qui ne se sont point étudiés à en démentir les sentimens.'⁶⁸³ By this he again emphasised the Cartesian argument according to which the necessary existence of God is the only component of His essence that human beings can conceive of.

It was precisely the innateness of the knowledge of God's existence that constituted the logical consequence of the *consensus omnium* argument: if every nation in the world agreed that there was a God, then this knowledge must be innate to every human being (instead of having been imposed on them by any political power). As Stefano Brogi reveals, this conclusion was one of the main reasons why the *consensus omnium* argument was still used in mid to late seventeenth-century apologetic writings, despite its lack of a demonstrative force as a proof of God's existence.

681 See Bayle, *Continuation des Pensées diverses*, 80.

682 See DIEU 976b.

683 DIEU, 976b.

Additionally, it apparently also had a persuasive effect on a broader public.⁶⁸⁴ Moreover, Formey also put the question of the origin of human knowledge of God at the centre of his article DIEU, and it might well be that it was through this question that the *consensus omnium* argument found an entry to Formey's discussion as a whole. Bayle had doubted that it was possible to discern whether the knowledge of God was natural or imposed on human beings since children were imbued by doctrine from an early age.⁶⁸⁵ Formey instead claimed that it was natural disposition rather than education that was the origin of the human notion of God. He justified this view by stating that education was a matter that changed over time and space, whereas human nature, as a number of human habits demonstrated, remained stable:

'Les principes de l'éducation varient sans cesse [...] Mais la nature est semblable dans tous les hommes qui sont & qui ont été: ils sentent le plaisir, ils desirent l'estime, ils s'aiment eux-mêmes aujourd'hui comme autrefois. Si donc nous trouvons que ce sentiment qu'il y a un Dieu s'est conservé parmi tous les changemens de la société, qu'en pouvons-nous conclure, sinon que ce sentiment ne vient pas de la simple éducation, mais qu'il est fondé sur quelque liaison naturelle qui est entre cette première vérité & notre entendement? Donc ce principe qu'il y a un Dieu est une impression de la nature.'⁶⁸⁶

It has to be stressed that Formey qualified this 'impression de la nature' on the first level as a feeling ('*sentiment*') and hence portrayed it as the counterpart to the above-mentioned rational demonstrative proofs of God's existence, which he later quoted in the second part of the article DIEU. This seems to have been a legitimate distinction at the time; at least it complied with the distinction between innate and acquired proofs of God that was emphasised in the *Philosophische Lexicon* by Walch (see above, p. 174). Nonetheless, despite the common habit to ground human beings' notion of God at least partly in an innate *feeling*, Formey was aware of the vulnerability of his argument. For good reason: in some of the later paragraphs of his article DIEU, Formey cited Bayle's suspicion on the reliability of 'un sentiment que nous inspire la nature' due to the corrupted nature of the human soul. This objection prompted Formey to outline a brief theory of human understanding in order to restore authority to the argument of (rational) innateness:

'Distinguons en nous deux sentimens, dont l'un nous trompe toujours, & l'autre ne nous trompe jamais. L'un est le sentiment de l'homme qui pense & qui suit la raison, & l'autre est le sentiment de l'homme de cupidité & de passions: celui-ci trompe la raison, parce qu'il précède toutes les réflexions de l'esprit; mais l'autre ne la trompe jamais, puisque c'est des plus pures lumieres de la raison qu'il tire sa naissance.'⁶⁸⁷

684 See Brogi, *Teologia senza verità*, 88-89.

685 See DIEU, 977a.

686 DIEU, 977b.

687 DIEU, 977b.

According to this, there was only one legitimate type of feeling: the feeling that emerged out of reasoning. It goes without saying that for Formey the notion of God was such a reason-based feeling.

Besides the crucial question of the innateness of our notion of God, Bayle's and Formey's discussion on the *consensus omnium* also tackled the issues of the existence of atheism and pagan polytheism. The first issue revolved around Bayle's first and simplest objection to the *consensus omnium* argument, namely that not all people admitted the existence of God but that atheists also existed. Formey's reply to this was also deeply imbued by his concept of a rational faith. He admitted the existence of atheism but denied its legitimacy: atheism was an acquired habit for it resulted from the (deliberate) misuse (or rather absence of use) of natural human reason: 'Quand même j'accorderois ce que je ne crois pas vrai, que l'athéisme se seroit glissé parmi quelques peuples barbares & féroces, cela ne tireroit point à conséquence; leur athéisme auroit été tout au plus négatif; ils n'auroient ignoré Dieu, que parce qu'ils n'auroient pas exercé leur raison.'⁶⁸⁸ This argument, as Stefano Brogi noted, was also common among the rationalist Calvinist and Arminian theologians who had refuted Bayle at the beginning of the century; it was used in particular by the Arminian Jean Le Clerc.⁶⁸⁹ Formey's account of the falseness of pagan polytheism, the second issue, came within a similar mantle. According to him, polytheism was a universal error that resulted from the internal sources of human error, namely the senses, the imagination and the passions. These three irrational factors made it easy for the pre-Christian people to invent and worship diverse gods that possessed human countenance.⁶⁹⁰ At the origin of Formey's considerations on this issue was Bayle's cunning doubt on the evidence of the peoples' universal agreement: He had noted that if this agreement really accounted for the truth then it would justify polytheism rather than monotheism, given how widely spread this belief had been amongst the pagans. As we have seen, in his answer, Formey explained how polytheism could have been a universally recognised belief in the past and hence admitted its existence. The logical consequence of this was, however, that the *consensus omnium* argument was deprived of its argumentative power – as it did not necessarily prove that there was a universal innate knowledge of *one* God's existence – an issue on which Formey did not further elaborate.⁶⁹¹

In general, Formey's discussion of Bayle's arguments in SIMONIDE and the *Continuations des Pensées diverses* show that his aim was not to defend the *consensus omnium* proof of God's

688 See DIEU, 977a-b.

689 See Brogi, *Teologia senza verità*, 28.

690 See DIEU, 978a.

691 See DIEU, 978a: 'Ces observations conduisent au dénouement de la difficulté qu'on tire du polythéisme. On conçoit aisément que le polythéisme a pû devenir une erreur universelle, & que par conséquent ce consentement unanime des nations ne prouve rien par rapport à lui.'

existence, which its critics had been doing sufficiently for quite some time. Instead, it seems that he simply used it as a means to address the fundamental question of whether human beings were capable of forming an idea of God. He clearly affirmed this by referring to the innateness of such a capacity. Moreover and most importantly, he corroborated this affirmation with a reflection on the rationality of human beings and particularly of their feelings. Consequently, Formey designed in his article DIEU a theory of rational faith that was opposed to Bayle's scepticism. With this theory, his arguments followed in the footsteps of the Calvinist and Arminian theologians of the previous generation, the so-called *rationaux* who had been inspired by Cartesian ideas and whose teachings, we might expect, were transmitted to Formey by his teachers Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze and Jacques Lenfant in the Berlin *Refuge*. Formey's early engagement with Crousaz's more orthodox criticism of Bayle seems to have functioned almost like a motor which released Formey's critical discussion of Bayle.

This intellectual origin of Formey's encyclopedia article underlines that his role as a Christian philosopher had emerged directly from his Huguenot socialisation. The Wolffian impact that was so important in the majority of his works, was not yet perceivable in this work of the beginning of his career, although the article DIEU obviously did not contradict the Wolffian understanding of God and religion as we shall see in the next chapter. We might thus say that Formey's article DIEU, in terms of its origin and arguments, seems to have prepared Formey's more intensive engagement with the proofs of God under the auspices of Wolffian philosophy in the subsequent years of his career. He contributed a substantial work on this subject to the Berlin Academy's discussion in 1747. Although – as we will see – the article DIEU and the 1747 treatises highlight different proofs of God, both works relied on the same fundamental assumption, namely that it was possible to prove God's existence through reason. This emphasises once more the intellectual similarities between moderate Calvinism (or better: Arminianism) and Wolff's philosophy.

Besides these traces of the article's intellectual context, it was the particular structure and method of Formey's *Dictionnaire philosophique* that shaped its content. As we have seen, this structure was not driven by the aim to establish a system of thought or a coherent entry of an encyclopedia, but instead, it emulated a debate with one of the most famous sceptics and supposed atheist of the time, Pierre Bayle. The curious aspect of this work is that this particular way of engaging with Bayle reflected the style and premises that Bayle had used himself in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. The continuous public success of this late-seventeenth-century masterpiece fuelled Formey's undertaking, which aligned with his instructive mission as a Christian philosopher.

7. Religion and the Politics of Science: Proving the Existence of God through Metaphysical Principles

Shortly after Formey had composed his encyclopedia article on the topic God in 1747, he also introduced this topic to the Academy. In spring and autumn 1747, Formey presented two closely related academic discourses on the question of God's existence in the newly re-organised Academy.⁶⁹² The encyclopedia article and the academic discourses were not only chronologically and thematically close, their respective arguments were also related in such a way that the discourses could be seen as building upon the encyclopedia article. While the article DIEU focused on the question of the possibility and the disposition of humans to understand God's existence and provided a sample of the diverse arguments for God's existence, the 1747 academic discourses basically focused on one particular proof for God's existence, namely the metaphysical one. Moreover, we can observe a shift from the Cartesian ontological proof, on the basis of which Formey had refuted Bayle, towards the Wolffian cosmological proof to which Formey ascribed more importance after having become familiar with Wolff's philosophy and having entered the Academy, in which Newtonianism had a strong standing. Unlike the article DIEU that emerged out of a critical reading of Bayle and should serve for the instruction of professional philosophers and amateurs alike, the academic treatises had a clear scientific-political purpose within the newly re-shaped Academy of Science in Berlin, namely the defence of the (Wolffian vision of) metaphysical discipline in the context of eighteenth-century institutional philosophy.

Due to this scientific purpose the academic discourses were dominated by methodological and epistemological considerations, and it appears at some point as if the arguments for God's existence and attributes served only as an example to prove the value of the method. This was also suggested by Formey's own statement when he considered the connection between the first and the second discourses: according to him, the two essays built upon each other in the sense that the first elaborated on the method that the arguments of the second were based on.⁶⁹³ It has to be mentioned at this point that the order of the two essays as they were presented at the Academy's assembly, and in turn as they appeared in the *Mémoires*, was very likely not the way that Formey had originally

692 Formey, "Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu, ramenées aux notions communes," *Histoire de l'Académie des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin 1747* (Berlin, 1749), 341-364 and Formey, "Examen de la preuve qu'on tire des fins de la nature, pour établir l'existence de Dieu," *Histoire de l'Académie 1747*, 365-384. Formey presented each of the two discourses in two parts at the Academy's assembly: the first on the 27 April and the 29 June 1747 and the second on the 14 September and the 2 November 1747. The two essays were later republished, again successively, in Formey, *Mélanges philosophiques*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1754), 1-42 and 43-76.

693 See "Examen de la preuve," 365.

assigned them. A manuscript version of them in the Academy's records suggests that Formey had intended the second to precede the first.⁶⁹⁴ More importantly, the manuscript of the *Examen de la preuve qu'on tire des fins de la nature* contains a substantial second part, which might have been presented orally at the Academy's assembly, but in turn was cut from the printed version. This second part contained a defence of the natural philosophical study of the divine Creation against orthodox religious criticism according to which such studies undermined the revealed truth of the Creation.⁶⁹⁵ Formey did not accept this argument and claimed instead that God had given us the task to inquire about His creation, simply because he had bestowed us with the capacity to do it. He admitted that philosophy would never be able to explain the entire Creation in all its details, but still he thought that this was no reason to stop doing it.⁶⁹⁶

Besides this general defence of the philosophical inquiry of revealed truths, this handwritten part also slightly altered the appearance of the main argument that Formey purported in the printed treatises, for it demonstrated support for a natural philosophical inquiry while the printed version highlighted the deficiencies of the proofs of God which relied on natural philosophy instead of on metaphysics. I argue that this apparent contradiction (or at least oddity) within Formey's argument is due to the different purposes that he pursued with the longer text (manuscript) and the reduced text (printed version). Especially since the two versions were aimed at different audiences: the longer text was critical about the exclusive legitimacy of religious doctrine that the Church purported, and possibly was aimed at a limited audience of scientists. This would fit with the possibility that the manuscript contains the text that Formey presented orally to the limited circle of his academic colleagues. Instead, the printed version, which was available to a much larger

694 See BBAW, Ms C5 Sammlung von Berliner Akademievorträgen, vol. 1 (1747), Bestand Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1700-1811, I – M 345, fol. 100-113 (= Discours sur les Preuves de l'Existence de Dieu) and I – M 346, fol. 192-211 (= Discours sur les Fins de la Nature). Today the two essays appear in the volume in the same order as in the printed version, but it is possible that they were bound together at a later stage. They are not in Formey's hand. Since they are not the template for the print, it is likely that they represent the version which Formey had sent to Maupertuis for correction 15 days before their presentation, just as §12 of the 1746 Academy Statutes required (see Harnack, *Geschichte der königlich-preußischen Akademie*, vol. 1, 301). My theory of the essays' originally inverted order is predominantly based on a passage in the manuscript of "Les Preuves", Bl. 108r: 'Dans le Discours precedent nous avons deja employé cette Methode avec succès, en epluchant l'argument des Causes finales, et en analysant les notions communes, d'ou il tire sa force. Nous avons dit en meme tems que cette force dependoit de celle de la preuve de l'Existence de Dieu, que fournit la Contingence de l'Univers. Notre dessein est donc de lier à present ces deux verités ensemble, de nous elever des Causes finales à la Contingence, et de resoudre la preuve meme de la Contingence ...'

695 See BBAW, Ms C5, vol. 1 (1747), I-M 346 ("Discours sur les fins de la nature"), 209v.

696 See BBAW, Ms C5, vol. 1 (1747), I-M 346 ("Discours sur les fins de la nature"), 210r: 'Disons donc que tous les details de la Sagesse Divine, l'assemblage de toutes ses fins et de tous ses moyens, sont et seront à jamais imperscrutables pour nous. Leur etude suffira pour nous occuper dans toute l'eternité et nous ne l'euiserons jamais. Mais disons en meme tems que ce n'est point une raison qui doit nous détourner d'en faire l'objet de nos recherches et de notre Meditation. Si cette occupation nous etoit interdite, ou qu'il fut impossible d'y vaquer, il en resulteroit l'absurde consequence que Dieu a manqué son but, puis que nous avons vu qu'il n'a pu s'en proposer d'autre dans la Creation de l'Univers, que la manifestation de ses perfections et de sa gloire. Or cette manifestation ne scauroit consister que dans la connoissance des fins que Dieu a eu en vües, et des mooyens dont il s'est servi pour y arriver, en tant que des Etres intelligens peuvent aquerir cette connoissance.'

audience, clerics included, dispensed with the references to doctrine and the Church. Moreover, the printed version was an unequivocal confession for Wolffian metaphysics against Newtonian empirical science, which Formey used to publicly position himself within a controversy between rationalists and empiricists or Leibnizians and Newtonians that had started at the Academy, and had engaged the German academic public at large since 1746. In the following I predominantly examine Formey's presentation of the proofs of God in light of this epistemological controversy (and conflict between two philosophical schools), and therefore the printed version of Formey's two essays of 1747 will be at the centre of my analysis.

In the first discourse Formey set out to show how certain truths could obtain more probative force by correctly using common notions, and in the second discourse he carried out a sort of methodological re-consideration and rejection of the physico-theological proof of God's existence. The linking element of the two discourses and the core of Formey's natural theology was the cosmological or a-posteriori proof of God's existence, which had been initially stated by Leibniz and then elaborated on by Wolff. This proof basically relied on the observation of a contingent world order from which the necessary existence of God was inferred. Although it proceeded from the effects of the Creation to its cause, this proof should not be confused with the physico-theological proof or argument from design, for in terms of the epistemology it operated through cognition instead of sensory experience. In this sense the Wolffian and the Cartesian arguments were very similar. The development of Formey's text depicts the process of his emancipation from Descartes' ontological argument, and his embracing of Wolff's cosmological one.

The Proof of God's Existence from Descartes to Wolff

With the first of the two academic treatises of 1747, *Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu ramenées aux notions communes*, Formey seemed to follow up on the impossibility of comprehending the nature of God, in the same manner as he did in his article DIEU. In the article DIEU he had distinguished between the incomprehensibility of God's nature and the comprehensibility of His existence.⁶⁹⁷ In *Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu* he elaborated on the first by partly using Descartes' notion of the incomprehensibility of the nature of God because of His infinite character, as opposed to the finite character of the human being.⁶⁹⁸ This reference to Descartes seems to have been inspired and supported by Philippe Joseph Pandin de Jariges, who was Formey's predecessor as the Academy's secretary, and apparently also played the role of being Formey's slightly older

⁶⁹⁷ See above, p. 180.

⁶⁹⁸ See for example René Descartes, "Préface," *Méditations métaphysiques de René Descartes, touchant la première Philosophie, nouvelle édition, revue & corrigée*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1724).

intimate friend and mentor. In a letter to Formey from February 1747, Jariges stated:

'Je suis charmé que vous ayez *retrouvé* [my emphasis] la pièce que vous avez composée. Je me souviens de vous indiqué [sic] quelques endroits des meditations de Des-Cartes sur l'incomprehensibilité de Dieu et sur les variations de la matiere expliquées par l'exemple d'un morceau de cire qui sert merveilleusement à prouver cette thèse: quod omnis modificatio consistat in variatione limitum. Vous aviez noté ces passages et vous aviez même pris une note de quelques autres que j'avois faites ci devant, dans le dessin de les inserer dans vôtre pièce, ou vous faites sentir l'absurdité qu'il y a de concevoir l'infini comme un resultat ou un assemblage des choses finies. C'est par la que vous prouvez en même tems l'oposition manifeste des ces deux idées, d'ou resulte l'incomprehensibilité de l'infini pour les intelligences finies. De grace cher ami donnez encore quelques momens à cette importante meditation.'⁶⁹⁹

Apparently starting from Jariges' lead, Formey assumed in his academic discourse with Descartes that there was one fundamental difference between the supreme being and the human being, namely that the first was infinite by nature while the second was finite. According to Formey, this ontological difference between God as the object of investigation, and the human as the subject who investigated it, could result in both a correct and incorrect comprehension of God's nature. On the one hand, the human being could conceive of the infinite being as the accumulation of finite things and thus see the supreme being as a sort of copy of the world. Like Descartes before him, Formey rejected this concept.⁷⁰⁰ He regarded such a concept as the human being's lack of imagination and blamed atheists for defending this view in order to prove God's incapacity to have carried out the Creation, and in turn to state the non-existence of (the biblical) God. In contrast, Formey subscribed to a different way of conceiving of the infinite being:

'La notion de l'Etre réellement infini s'acquiert d'une toute autre maniere, & bien loin que ce soit en ajoutant continuellement, & en amplifiant à perte de vuë, les propriétés que nous remarquons en nous mêmes, & dans les objets qui nous environnent, il faut au contraire prendre le contrepied, & attribuer à l'Etre indépendant des propriétés, diamétralement opposées à celles que nous présentent les choses dépendantes.'⁷⁰¹

He claimed that one should regard God's attributes as being the diametrical opposite of the human's attributes and thus obtain a notion of God being distinct from man and the world.

699 Jariges to Formey, 20.2.1747 (CV). Jariges' letter also suggests that Formey's two essays initially formed one single writing that Formey split into two in 1747 in order to present it to the Academy, and moreover that Formey had written it earlier than in 1747 (use of 'retrouvé'). For the relationship between Formey and Jariges see Formey, "Éloge du Grand-Chancelier de Jariges," *Nouveaux Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences et Belles-Lettres* 1771 (Berlin, 1773), 41-45 (esp. 45) as well as the correspondence between Formey and Emer de Vattel who was a common friend of the two men.

700 See Laurence Devillairs, *Descartes et la connaissance de Dieu* (Paris, 2004), 133.

701 Formey, "Les Preuves," 350.

Although it relied on the Cartesian assumption that God's incomprehensibility was constitutive for a rational notion of God, Formey's claim already went one step further than Descartes' by suggesting a precise way of rationally demonstrating God's attributes on the basis of this assumption. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Descartes' ontological proof of God's existence proceeded from the notion of God's essence while at the same time considering that the nature of God was incomprehensible for the human being. Unlike Bayle, who had claimed that due to this incomprehensibility God's existence could only be known through Revelation, Descartes had argued that the notion of God's essence, which contained His necessary existence, was a sort of rational intuition innate to every human being. As Laurence Devillairs has shown, Descartes described this rational intuition that provided every human being with a limited but clear knowledge of God as an intellection as opposed to a comprehension or a conception. It allowed the human being to understand God's infinity which in turn allowed him to ascribe certain attributes that he perceived as infinitely perfect to the nature of God.⁷⁰² The particularity of Descartes' concept on how to acquire knowledge on God's nature was that it was based purely on cognition, without the need to resort to sensory experience. It was this fact which made the human idea of God's perfections so clear despite His incomprehensibility.⁷⁰³ Formey drew precisely on this idea of knowing God on the basis of his incomprehensible infinity; yet, his description of how the intellection of His attributes should proceed was less abstract than the one suggested by Descartes: For Formey, the attributes of God could be deduced in opposition to human attributes. He carried out this deduction by first describing the limitedness of the human mind and body from which he derived, likewise the mutability of the human being (for Formey, mutability or modification was the re-arrangement of limits, which he drew from Descartes' wax metaphor⁷⁰⁴). By applying then the sentence of the diametrical opposition between human being and God, he ascribed the attributes of immutability, infinity and eternity to God.⁷⁰⁵

This rather concrete description of the method of acquiring knowledge of God's nature shows first that Formey wanted to strengthen Descartes' natural theology against attacks of unbelievers, and second that he was influenced by Wolff's concept of the similarity between the human soul and the divine essence. First, it seems that Descartes' idea of making God's incomprehensibility constitutive for His existence did not go far enough in Formey's view. He apparently feared that atheists could easily use this argument to claim the total opposite, i.e. that God did not exist because we could not understand him,⁷⁰⁶ unless he presented positive attributes of

702 See Devillairs, *Descartes et la connaissance de Dieu*, 108-9.

703 See Devillairs, *Descartes et la connaissance de Dieu*, 112-3.

704 See Formey, "Les Preuves," 361-62.

705 See Formey, "Les Preuves," 358-59.

706 See "Les Preuves," 349.

God that were inferred from the negation of human attributes. Although Descartes had also maintained that we could obtain a 'real idea' of God through the negation of humanity's finite nature, he had strictly precluded the possibility to infer knowledge of God from knowledge of the human soul.⁷⁰⁷ In contrast, Wolff's a-priori proof of God's existence that he had developed in the second part of his *Theologia Naturalis* in 1737, relied on the assumption that the notion of the perfect being, from which the demonstration of God's existence started, was established on the human being's knowledge of his own nature.⁷⁰⁸ Already in his German metaphysics of 1719 Wolff had outlined the epistemological possibility of this procedure, by claiming that there was a similarity between the essence of God and the essence of the human soul, and that since the human soul was able to have a notion of itself, man was able to have also a notion of God.⁷⁰⁹ The difference between God and the human soul was that the latter was limited, it only could conceive of the present world, its knowledge was generally unclear and it could only conceive of one thing at the time. In order to obtain an idea of God's nature the human being therefore had to conceive of a being that was deprived of all these limits, and as a result the notion of God as a power that was able to clearly recognise all possible worlds at once; according to Wolff once this point was established all further attributes of God could be deduced.⁷¹⁰ As Matteo Favaretti has argued, Wolff had elaborated his method of indirectly gaining knowledge on God's nature, i.e. via the knowledge of our soul, in opposition to Descartes' claim of intuitive recognition and in Leibniz's legacy.⁷¹¹ Compared to Wolff's description of how to understand God through the negation of the human soul's limits, Formey's claim to infer God's attributes in opposition to a human's attributes sounded very similar. In addition, the similarity between Formey and Wolff is also manifest in his use of the 'world-as-a-mirror metaphor', which he used to conclude his first discourse, and which Wolff had used it in his German metaphysics to express his assumption that God's nature was not directly visible to the human being, but instead that it could be seen through the mirror of his creations (human and non-human) that contained His perfections to a lesser degree.⁷¹² Formey quoted the metaphor in a similar way and added the emphasis of the world's contingency and in turn claimed that the contemplation of our soul and the world not only enabled us to infer several divine

707 See Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques*, LVIII.

708 See Jean École, "Introduction de l'Éditeur," in *Theologia Naturalis Pars secunda*, ed. Jean École. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 2, vol. 8 (Hildesheim, 1981), VI-VII.

709 See Christian Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt* [1720], ed. Charles A. Corr. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 1, vol. 2 (Hildesheim, 1983), §1067 and §1076.

710 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen*, §1077.

711 See Matteo Favaretti Camposampiero, "Der Psychotheologische Weg. Wolffs Rechtfertigung der Gotteserkenntnis," in *Die Natürliche Theologie bei Christian Wolff*, ed. Michael Albrecht, Aufklärung, 23 (Hamburg, 2011), 71–96.

712 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen*, §1046 and 1079.

attributes but also that the very existence of God was based on the perception of our own being.⁷¹³ These arguments seem to suggest that Formey's strong emphasis on the difference between a finite and infinite being and the resulting incomprehensibility of God's nature was probably still very Cartesian, yet that the demonstration of God's attributes that he built upon it was based on Wolff's notion that God could be recognised through the contemplation of our soul.

Formey's orientation towards Wolff's natural theology eventually led him to discard Descartes' ontological proof of God's existence entirely. However, before doing so, he first highlighted the interchangeability of Descartes' and Wolff's demonstrations of God's nature. In his first discourse Formey not only changed the content of Descartes' ontological argument in a Wolffian way, he also added in a second step Wolff's cosmological or a-posteriori proof to it. According to this proof, the necessary existence of God, which for Descartes constituted God's essence, resulted from the recognition of the contingency of the world order, in which single beings did not exist eternally but in an endless chain of succession. The metaphysical basis for recognising this contingent world order, as Formey also stressed, was the principle of sufficient reason, which was central to Leibniz' and Wolff's metaphysics, and said that everything that existed must have a sufficient reason to it.⁷¹⁴ Firstly, this principle was thoroughly linked to the principle of contradiction which said that a thing was absolutely necessary if its contrary was not essentially contradictory. Secondly, it was also linked to the concept of the essence of a being which said that the reason for the existence and attributes of a being were contained in its (immaterial) essence. Relying on these metaphysical notions, Formey claimed that, since worldly beings did not exist eternally, the sufficient reason for their existence could not be contained in themselves, i.e. in their essence. A reason external to them must have produced them. If this assumption – that worldly beings emerged of an external reason – was added to the premise 'Ex nihilo nihil fit' (from nothing nothing emerges), it followed that there must exist a being that contained the reason for their existence. This being must be an absolutely necessary and self-existent being because it contained not only the reason of the others' existence but also of its own. Formey hence concluded the proof with 'Puisque toutes ces choses existent, & que le néant ne sauroit rien produire, il existe nécessairement un Etre, qui ne tient son existence que de lui-même.'⁷¹⁵

This proof from contingency allowed Formey to not only account for God's existence in a

713 See Formey, "Les Preuves," 363.

714 See Michael Albrecht, "Die philosophischen Grundüberzeugungen des Wolffianismus," in *Christian Wolff und die Europäische Aufklärung: Akten des 1. Internationalen Christian-Wolff-Kongresses, Halle (Saale), 4. - 8. April 2004*, ed. Jürgen Stolzenberg and Oliver-Pierre Rudolph, vol. 5 (Hildesheim, 2010), 13–30. Albrecht regards the reference to the principle of sufficient reason as the most unambiguous criteria for a philosopher's affiliation to Wolffianism (22-24).

715 Formey, "Les Preuves," 355-357.

different way to Descartes, it also enabled the deduction of some of God's attributes. Leibniz, like Descartes, had been convinced that absolute necessity and existence out of itself (aseity) were qualities contained in the essence of the supreme being and that from this essence further attributes of Him could be inferred, more precisely the three divine attributes of immutability, infinity and eternity. In the second part of his first discourse, Formey retraced the Wolffian demonstration of these three attributes on the basis of the divine essence. Besides self-existence, Formey underlined that this essence also consisted of God's understanding, will and almightiness.⁷¹⁶ Formey then showed that none of these features would allow for a mutable or limited character of God, from which he concluded the confirmation of the three divine attributes.⁷¹⁷ For Formey the deduction of these attributes on the basis of the proof out of contingency was identical to those that were obtained through the a-priori proof based on the opposition between human and divine being:

'Après cela, rien de plus aisé que de se convaincre que tous les attributs de cet Etre [Dieu] sont des suites de la nécessité de son existence, de son indépendance absoluë. Mais à mesure que nous arriverons à la notion de quelcun des ses attributs, on découvrira de plus en plus la verité de ce que nous soutenons ici, c'est que ces notions ne se forment que par opposition avec celles que nous avons tirées des réflexions que nous faisons sur nous mêmes, & sur les autres.⁷¹⁸

Formey's emphasis that the two proofs that he presented in his first discourse (the a-priori and the a-posteriori proof), had the same outcome, most probably resulted from Wolff's own reflections on the legitimacy of several proofs for God's existence. Wolff had from at least 1718 emphasised that the proof of contingency was the only relevant and necessary proof for establishing the truth of God's existence, and had reiterated this claim throughout his whole natural theological and moral philosophical oeuvre.⁷¹⁹ Nevertheless, in the second part of his *Theologia Naturalis* he had also presented the a-priori proof according to which God's existence was deduced from the notion of the perfect being which itself had to be obtained through the contemplation of the soul. According to Jean École, Wolff had presented the a-priori proof in his *Theologia Naturalis*, despite being aware of the redundancy of this proof, and of the flaws of any a-priori proof in general, because of the great popularity of the proof developed by Descartes and because he considered it easier to infer the notion of God from the human soul than from the contingent world.⁷²⁰ In the light of this, it seems that Formey's attempt to show the interchangeability of the two ways to obtain knowledge on God's

716 See Formey, "Les Preuves," 359.

717 See Formey, "Les Preuves," 359 -60.

718 Formey, "Les Preuves," 352-53.

719 See Michael Albrecht, "Einleitung," *Die Natürliche Theologie bei Christian Wolff*, 10. Wolff had formulated this argument in his *Ratio Praelectionum*, 160. See also Robert Theis, "'Ut & Scias, & Credas, Quae Simul Sciri & Credi Possunt' Aspekte der Wolffschen Theologie," in *Die Natürliche Theologie bei Christian Wolff*, 27-28.

720 See École, "Introduction de l'Éditeur," VII.

attributes was particularly a means to stress the predominant relevance of Wolff's cosmological proof through contingency. As such it is a sign of his growing distance from Descartes.

In addition to this, Formey also criticised Descartes' argument for its weak evidence. In the final paragraph of his first discourse of 1747, Formey still manifested his support of the results of Descartes' proof; yet he underlined that this proof was incomplete for he did not elaborate enough on the distinction between imaginable and intelligible things.⁷²¹ Formey followed up on this criticism of Descartes in his second academic discourse of 1747, underlining its drawback as it was only hypothetical: 'Toutes les fois donc que le Cartesien me dit, que Dieu a la Toute-science, la Toute-Puissance, la Souverain Bonté en partage, je ne puis lui passer ces propositions que comme hypothétiques, & au cas que Dieu soit effectivement l'Etre qui possède toutes les perfections.'⁷²² This rejection of Descartes' ontological proof of God due to its lack of evidence had already been carried out in a similar way by Leibniz, who had blamed Descartes for failing to prove the reality of God's possible existence.⁷²³ However, Formey's manuscript of his first discourse in 1747 shows that Formey had taken this criticism directly from Wolff's *Theologia Naturalis*.⁷²⁴ It, therefore, appears that Formey's deviations from his Cartesian starting point, which Jariges had suggested to him, as well as his categorical rejection of Descartes' proof of God, were based on his engagement with Wolff's and Leibniz's writings. As we have seen, Formey had worked through Wolff's entire Latin oeuvre until 1746 when his philosophy textbook, the *Elementa philosophiae seu medulla Wolfiana*, appeared.

Metaphysics against Physico-Theology

In his second academic discourse in 1747 Formey again developed the proof of God's existence through contingency based on the principles of sufficient reason and contradiction. Yet in this case, his purpose was not to show its interchangeability through a Cartesian a-posteriori proof – which eventually made this Cartesian proof superfluous – but to argue against another proof of God's existence, the physico-theological proof or argument from design. While the Cartesian ontological proof and the Wolffian cosmological proof were epistemologically similar as they both used rational

721 See Formey, "Les Preuves," 363-4.

722 Formey, "Examen de la preuve," 366.

723 See "Les Preuves," 363-364. On Leibniz' criticism of Descartes see Antognazza, "Arguments for the existence of God," 736 and Robert Merrihew Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 135.

724 In the manuscript version Formey had added a reference to his claim that Descartes' proof was incomplete which is taken from Wolff, *Theologia Naturalis, Pars secunda*, Dedicatio: 'Cartesius, fulgens istud Galliae sidus, ex notione entis perfectissimi existentiam Numinis supremi demonstrare aggressus est; sed foetum in partu destituit.', BBAW, Ms C5, vol. 1 (1747), I-M 345 ("Discours sur les preuves de l'Existence de Dieu"), 113r.

or cognitive knowledge, the physico-theological proof established its argument on the basis of sensory experience. It is for this reason, that Formey stressed the epistemological aspects of the proofs for God's existence in his second discourse – rather than in the first – in order to defend the superiority of the Wolffian proof the physico-theological one. Moreover, these epistemological differences of the proofs of God's existence could easily be translated into a contrast between the discipline of metaphysics that was related to the rationalist method, and natural philosophy, which was related to the empirical method. As I shall argue it was precisely this contrast that Formey wanted to stress in the debate on metaphysics' role at the Berlin Academy. However, the main argument that Formey purported in his *Examen de la preuve* was linked to a certain apologetic aim, i.e. to protect the philosophical proof of God's existence against attacks from its critics, most importantly by unbelievers and freethinkers. He argued that it was because of this reason that he criticised the missing evidence and solidity of the argument from design.

In the (printed) introduction to his discourse, Formey carefully formulated his reservations toward natural philosophical attempts to prove God's existence, by stating that he wanted to '[fixer] des idées que plusieurs Physiciens me paroissent avoir proposées d'une maniere un peu trop vague, & en examinant à quelle conclusion légitime mene l'argument pris des Causes Finales.'⁷²⁵ When considering the original version of the discourse that Formey planned to use, i.e. by including its unpublished parts, we can clearly recognise that his incentive to invoke the Wolffian proof of contingency formed a part of the competition for supremacy between the disciplines of metaphysics and physics. A supremacy that Formey as a Christian philosopher measured by each of the two disciplines' capacities to provide the most certain proof of God's existence. In the unpublished part of his introduction, Newton served as the emblem for the field of philosophy that Formey wanted to criticise.

'Je ne suis point surpris que de toutes les preuves de l'Existence de Dieu, celles des causes finales ait fait les plus vives impressions sur l'Esprit de divers Philosophes distingués, et en particulier sur celui de Newton.*[...] Ses connoissances sublimes dans la Geometrie et dans cette partie de la Physique sur laquelle les Mathematiques répandent de si grandes clartés, lui avoient découvert des beautés, des marques evidentes d'ordre et de regularité, qui echappent à des yeux moins clairvoyans.'

Despite the sublime knowledge of the universe that Newton's science was able to create, Formey claimed that it had already been rejected as a proof for God's existence because it was based on sensory experience. In this case Formey cited Voltaire as being such a critic of Newton. However, for Formey the criticism of the empirical foundation of Newton's proof, was not the kernel of the

⁷²⁵ Formey, "Examen de la preuve", 365.

problem. Instead for him the problem was that this empirical knowledge did not trace back to the most simple metaphysical notions, which curtailed its indestructibility:

'Ce n'est point l'evidence de cette Demonstration, qui l'a fait tomber dans le mépris [...]; c'est que la plupart des Philosophes, qui ont exalté cette preuve par dessus toutes les autres, se sont jettés dans une espece de déclamation, c'est qu'ils se sont hatés d'édifier, avant que d'avoir poser des fondemens assés solides, c'est qu'ils ont negligé de remonter aux premiers notions evidentes, sur lesquelles cette preuve s'appuye et qui seules en font une démonstration invincible. Par ce moyen les causes finales sont devenuës suspectes, je l'avoue, à quelques Génies, dont la pénétration assés étendue pour demeler des défauts dans la maniere dont on les mettoit en oeuvre, n'a pas suffi pour redresser ces défauts, et rendre à ce bel argument sa véritable force.⁷²⁶

The main reason why Formey criticised the missing metaphysical solidity of Newton's physico-theological proof was its vulnerability in respect to attacks from freethinkers and unbelievers. In this passage of the manuscript it seems that he associated Voltaire with such attacks, whereas in the rest of the text he referred to atheists, spinozists and fatalists.⁷²⁷

Starting from this, Formey described how the knowledge of the world that was obtained through experiment and observation, and more precisely the knowledge of the order in the world, could be traced back to basic metaphysical notions. This description, in turn, led him to portray the Wolffian proof through contingency as the only legitimate one. The key element of his description was the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason, which he considered to be the most general and self-evident principle – an axiom – and it was on this that every a-posteriori proof of God's existence was eventually based.⁷²⁸ Hence, in his view, the defenders of the physico-theological proof were mistaken when they denied its dependency on this metaphysical root.⁷²⁹ Having stated this, Formey then went on to 'correct' the physico-theological proof by basing it on the principle of sufficient reason. His crucial claim here was that to state an observable order in nature was not sufficient to infer the existence of an author to this order.⁷³⁰ To be able to infer such an existence, one had to establish a precise notion of this order and, more importantly, one had to show that this order was contingent by nature because only the contingency of the order made it possible to conceive of the necessity of its author:

'Tout ce qui résulteroit de la notion d'un semblable Ordre [un ordre unique qui ne peut pas être substitué par un autre], c'est que l'Existence de Dieu y seroit possible, mais qu'elle ne seroit pas nécessaire, & que par conséquent on n'auroit aucun droit d'argumenter de l'Ordre à l'Auteur de

726 See BBAW, Ms C5, vol. 1 (1747), I-M 346 (“Discours sur les fins de la nature”), 192r-192v.

727 See for example Formey, “Examen de la preuve,” 376.

728 See Formey, “Examen de la preuve,” 369.

729 See Formey, “Examen de la preuve,” 373.

730 See Formey, “Examen de la preuve,” 377.

l'Ordre. Cet Auteur ne devient nécessaire, & son existence ne se démontre, qu'après qu'on a mis en évidence la contingence de l'Ordre & des Fins, qui s'observent dans l'Univers.⁷³¹

In turn, Formey argued that the contingency of the world's order could only be accomplished if the laws of movement were contingent too, and this was only the case if they were rooted in the principle of sufficient reason (instead of the principle of least action, as we shall see below). The reason that he provided for this was that the principle of sufficient reason naturally and always accounted for hypothetical necessities or contingency.⁷³² This statement relied on the Leibnizian theory of existence according to which, sufficient reason was what made potential existence, as it was contained in the essence of each thing, become real existence. In the Leibnizian logic, this meant that everything that existed on earth, i.e. everything that could be explained through sufficient reason, was only hypothetically and not absolutely necessary. In his *Examen de la preuve* Formey even provided a small historical section on the development of the principle of sufficient reason, according to which Leibniz had established it as an axiom, a truth that contains its evidence in itself. However, as Formey continued, Leibniz had only grounded the principle on experience and thus it could not be esteemed as being universally valid. In Formey's view, it was Wolff who eventually gave Leibniz's principle this universal validity, by deriving it from another metaphysical principle, the principle of contradiction.⁷³³ Moreover, at another point of the discourse he declared that Wolff was the one who, after Descartes and Leibniz had eventually clarified the distinction between a cause as an external impetus to a being's behaviour, and the sufficient reason as the motive inherent to a being: 'Et l'on peut même dire, qu'ici Des-Cartes a montré la voye à Leibniz, & l'a conduit à l'usage perpetuel & important, qu'il a tiré de son Principe. Cependant il etoit réservé à Mr. de Wolff de mettre la derniere main à l'oeuvre, & de donner la démonstration de ce Principe, que Leibniz n'a jamais fait que supposer.'⁷³⁴ From this account, it results that the principle of sufficient reason, which Formey used to underpin his argument for the supremacy of the metaphysical proof of God's existence over the physical one, had clearly a Cartesian legacy for him. Thus, Formey, in the context of his confrontation with physico-theology conceived of a continuity and similarity between Descartes and Wolff on an epistemological level, although in general, he rejected the Cartesian ontological proof. As a whole Formey's depiction of the rootedness of the physico-theological proof in the metaphysical principle of sufficient reason entailed him to stress the need for the world to be contingent, which is why we can state that he portrayed the Wolffian

731 "Examen de la preuve," 378-79.

732 See Formey, "Examen de la preuve," 379 and 380.

733 See Formey, "Examen de la preuve," 370. Formey refers here to Wolff's consideration in the *Ontology* where he said that if the principle of sufficient reason was not true, it would mean that something can be produced out of nothing which is a contradiction.

734 Formey, "Examen de la preuve," 372.

cosmological proof through contingency as the most fundamental and hence indestructible proof of God's existence.

It has to be underlined that although Formey in his discourse portrayed the supremacy of metaphysics and Wolff's cosmological proof that relied on it, he never completely rejected physical proofs and sensory experience as an epistemological category. This might have been also why he continued to emphasise the merit of natural philosophical research although he had doubted the legitimacy of the proof of God it could provide. As I have stated above, in his manuscript he praised the study of nature in general and therefore purported the image that he attempted rather a reformation of the physico-theological proof instead of its complete refutation. More precisely, the manuscript version finished with an appraisal of natural philosophy and the engagement of the philosophers who constantly enhanced our knowledge about nature:

'On ne sauroit donc que louer et encourager tant d'habiles gens, qui depuis longtems ont abandonné une pretendue science qui ne consistoit, que dans des mots vuides de sens, pour y subsister des idées distinctes acquises par la voye des Observations, et par l'etude assidue de la Nature. On ne sauroit que benir la Providence qui suscite de grands Princes, Protecteurs de la Verité, qui favorisent les sciences et les Lettres, qui fondent ou qui soutiennent des societés savantes, dont les Membres reunissent leurs efforts pour faire de nouveaux progrès dans la connoissance de la Nature. Il ne s'agit que des effets que tant de secours et de lumieres doivent produire sur notre conduite. Ce n'est pas assés d'adorer la Sagesse de Dieu dans ses Oeuvres materielles, si nous ne l'exprimons et nous ne l'imitons, en réglant les operations de ce principe spirituel qui nous anime, d'une maniere qui reponde aux vuës de l'Etre Supreme.'⁷³⁵

This depiction also has to be considered in respect to its rhetorical function in the context of a scientific institution like the Academy – this was shown through the reference to the political power as being a protector of science. Yet, it also needs to be said that the Wolffian epistemology, on which Formey relied, did not *per se* exclude empirical knowledge. On the contrary, according to this epistemology, experience, or – as Wolff called it – historical knowledge, was the basis of 'philosophical' knowledge. In order to acquire philosophical truth, i.e. a knowledge of the causes and principles of the phenomena that were observable in the world, this historical knowledge had to merge with what Wolff called 'mathematical knowledge', i.e. knowledge of the quantities of things, which if it is applied to philosophy provided certain and self-evident notions.⁷³⁶ This means that empirical observations had to be traced back to simple metaphysical principles in order to account for the causes of these empirical observations, just as Formey claimed in his discussion on the physico-theological proof, which he wanted to transform into a metaphysical one in order to

735 See BBAW, Ms C5, vol. 1 (1747), I-M 346 ("Discours sur les fins de la nature"), 211r.

736 See Wolff, "Discursus praeliminaris de Philosophia in genere," § 17 and §26-§27.

provide it with greater certainty. Formey had already portrayed this epistemology in 1741, in the first volume of his *Belle Wolfienne*, in which he had engaged with Wolff's Logics.⁷³⁷ Knowing this, it appears less surprising that Formey advocated for the practice of natural philosophy in addition to his strong plea for metaphysics. However, it is interesting that in the printed version of his discourse on God, the part on natural philosophy and empirical knowledge was absent, and instead the role of metaphysics appears overly important.

The Controversy on Metaphysics at the Academy

Behind this emphasis on the superiority of Wolffian metaphysics against (Newtonian) natural philosophy in Formey's academic discourses, we can discover concrete purposes which were determined in particular by the tension between Formey's career plans at the Academy and his affiliation to the *Aléthophiles*, as well as by the scientific politics at the Academy under the presidency of Maupertuis in general. The new Academy only began to operate fully after 1746, when Maupertuis had eventually arrived in Berlin and the new statutes, based on his guidelines, were enacted.⁷³⁸ Maupertuis' authoritative position at the head of the Academy, and his philosophy were not positively perceived by all the Academy's members; the established German scholars, in particular, seem to have been offended that the power had been granted to a Frenchman, who was a supposed friend of the freethinkers.⁷³⁹ However, the potentially conflictive atmosphere at the Berlin Academy was not only bound to Maupertuis' nationality and authoritative character, it was also linked to his philosophical convictions. By the 1740s Maupertuis was known in scholarly Europe to be a Newtonian, although as Terrall claims, he might have already started to go beyond this reputation before he arrived in Berlin, particularly through the establishment of his principle of least action.⁷⁴⁰ It is certainly true that Maupertuis' Newtonian reputation contributed to the narrative of a Newtonian-Wolffian divide at the Berlin Academy during his presidency.⁷⁴¹ Although it has been shown that the German and Swiss academicians' criticism of Wolff's philosophy – particularly by

737 See Formey, *La Belle Wolfienne. Tome 1er: Avec deux Lettres philosophiques, l'une sur l'Immortalité de l'Ame, et l'autre sur l'Harmonie préétablie* (La Haye, 1741), 35-8.

738 See Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich-Preußischen Akademie*, 293-99. Maupertuis was formally installed in his office as the Academy's president on the 1 February 1746; the revised statutes were confirmed by Frederic II on the 10 May 1746. See also Terrall, *The Man who flattened the Earth*, 236-243; and Hans Aarsleff, "The Berlin Academy under Frederick the Great," *History of the Human Sciences* 2, no. 2 (1989): 193–207.

739 See Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich-Preußischen Akademie*, 298: in the new statutes Maupertuis had insisted on granting the President superiority over the Academy's four curators who traditionally had been the institution's decision-makers. Offended by this new regulation, the four curators withdrew from their offices when Maupertuis was nominated.

740 See Terrall, *The Man who flattened the Earth*, 173-98.

741 See Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich-Preußischen Akademie*, 432-3; and Ronald S. Calinger, "The Newtonian-Wolffian Controversy: 1740-1759," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30, no. 3 (1969): 319–30.

the mathematician Leonhard Euler – could hardly have been considered as Newtonian.⁷⁴² This, however, did not preclude that Wolff's German supporters outside of the Academy, particularly the *Aléthophiles*, conceived of their adversaries at the Academy as purely Newtonian. The *Aléthophiles* certainly were Maupertuis' and the newly renovated Academy's fiercest critics in the late 1740s.⁷⁴³ Formey, who from the 1730s onwards had been significantly influenced by Manteuffel, received their polemics against his new superior at the Academy directly from its source. Moreover, he was expected to help and defend the *Aléthophiles*' cause through his function at the Academy. One crucial case in which Formey acted as an extension of Manteuffel's arm occurred shortly after Maupertuis' installation at the Academy, when Formey presented his academic discourses on God.

It was at the Academy's prize essay contest of 1747, which dealt with the validity of Leibniz's monadology, and had intrigued the scholarly world of Germany for two years that the *Aléthophiles* decided to carry out a pro-Wolffian campaign against certain members of the Academy.⁷⁴⁴ As the correspondence between Wolff, Manteuffel, Gottsched and Formey shows, the mere proposition of such a question, and even more the conduct of certain of the Academy's members – particularly of the mathematician Leonhard Euler – over this question was considered by the *Aléthophiles* to be a direct assault to the foundations of Leibnizian and Wolffian metaphysics. Immediately after the publication of the prize question in 1746, Euler wrote a piece in which he refuted Leibniz's theory of monads as immaterial beings, with which he supposedly wanted to influence the contest's participants' opinion on Leibnizian monadology. In order to oppose Euler and to inculcate the scholarly public with a pro-monad point of view, Formey wrote a reply to Euler's work, the *Recherches sur les Elemens de la matière*. The content of Formey's anonymous writing and the process of its publication was controlled and organised by the *Aléthophiles* in Leipzig and Wolff himself; they made the *Recherches* an integral part of their campaign against the enemies of Leibnizian monadology.⁷⁴⁵ Moreover, throughout the two years of the elaboration and aftermath of the essay contest, Formey provided Manteuffel in Leipzig with insider information on the Academy's internal proceedings and struggles on this issue.⁷⁴⁶ Even after an anti-monad piece had

742 See Thomas Ahnert, "Newtonianism in Early Enlightenment Germany, c. 1720 to 1750: Metaphysics and the Critique of Dogmatic Philosophy," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 35, no. 3 (2004): 471–91.

743 A very polemical account of the new Academy appeared in the review of its 1746 *Mémoires* in Gottsched's journal *Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freien Künste* 7, no. 2 (1748), 99–117. Here Maupertuis was mocked for ostensibly having claimed a superiority of the English and French sciences over the German one (104–5) and the division of the Academy's four classes was criticised (110). The intellectual opposition by the *Aléthophiles* to the new Academy and Maupertuis in particular is outlined by Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung* in Ch. 3.2.3.

744 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, Ch. 4; Terrall, *The Man who flattened the Earth*, 257–65 and Cornelia Buschmann, "Die philosophischen Preisfragen und Preisschriften der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Aufklärung in Berlin*, ed. Wolfgang Förster (Berlin, 1989), 183–186.

745 See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 280–85.

746 See for example Manteuffel's request for information on the academy members in charge of deciding the winner, Manteuffel to Formey, 10.6.1747 (CV): 'L'ami [not known who] [...] me charge de vous prier, cher Gr. Aumonier,

been awarded the Academy's prize in June 1747, the public debate on the subject continued. In September 1747, Manteuffel still incited Formey to influence the opinion of his academic colleagues on the issue of monads, particularly the President Maupertuis' opinion, to whom Formey was supposed to transmit all publications against Euler and the prize contest's winner Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi.⁷⁴⁷ In general, Manteuffel and Wolff were inclined to believe that Maupertuis secretly supported the anti-Leibnizians and anti-Wolffians.⁷⁴⁸ In contrast, it seems that Formey was suspected by his colleagues at the Academy to be biased towards Wolffianism because they accused him of having intercepted the anti-monadist piece that was eventually awarded the prize of the essay contest.⁷⁴⁹ Consequently, it seems that the events around the 1747 prize contest on monads placed Formey in the difficult position between the partisans of his ideological role model, and his academic colleagues. In this whole situation Formey however continuously underlined Maupertuis' impartiality and seems to have kept a good relationship with him, which supposedly was also due to Formey's ambition to ascend to the position of the Academy's secretary, for which he needed the President's support.⁷⁵⁰

Although Formey seems to have been keen to preserve equally good relations with both parties – Maupertuis and the *Aléthophiles* – it initially seems that he supported the *Aléthophiles* to a greater extent. He more or less openly propagated Wolffian doctrines at the Academy. Even after the controversy on the monads, he felt obliged to infiltrate the Academy with Wolffian ideas. After the publication of the Academy's *Mémoires* for the year 1746 (in 1748), Formey received a favourable comment from Frederick II on his *Essai sur les Songes*, which, as Formey confessed to Manteuffel, was based on Wolff's experimental psychology. In regard to this, he wrote proudly to Manteuffel:

'Le plaisir que cela me cause vient principalement de ce qu'il paroît par là, que notre Philosophie mise dans un certain jour se fera nécessairement goûter; et je remarque tous les

de nous apprendre les noms des membres du comitté, qui a examiné et jugé les pièces monadières, et de nous procurer confidemment une copie de celle, qui a été si liberalement couronnée.'

747 See Manteuffel to Formey, 29.9.1747 (CV): 'Ne pourriez vous pas faire en sorte, que cette brochure de Halle [against Euler] fut bien traduite en françois, en omettant ou en adoucissant un peu les traits caustiques, dont elle est remplie? Ce seroit peutêtre le moyen de rectifier vòtre president et celuy d'empecher, par luy, la Societé, de se prêter au dessein insensé du Rabuliste antimonadier, supposé que mes nouvelles de Halle disent vrai.' Maupertuis did not read German and hence, depended mainly on his secretary's translations of the various pieces circulating in the German public concerning the debate on monads.

748 See Manteuffel to Formey, 10.6.1747 (CV): 'Il y en a, qui soupçonnent vòtre President, de se chauffer du même bois, que le grand anti-monadier [Euler], quoiqu'il ait trop d'esprit et savoir-vivre, pour le declarer aussi grossierement que son collegue.' In contrast, as Terrall, *The Man who flattened the Earth*, 258, n. 100, rightly says, there is no evidence that Maupertuis took an anti-Leibnizian or anti-Wolffian position in the whole debate. On the contrary, he even made an effort to let assaults on Wolff in the winning essay be deleted before its publication (Terrall, 263).

749 See Formey to Manteuffel, 3.6.1747 (UBL, Ms 0347).

750 Already since June 1746 Formey acted as the proxy of the Academy's secretary Jariges (see Formey, "Eloge du Grand-Chancelier de Jariges," 45.). Apparently it was suspected that he would officially ascend to the latter's position in November 1746 when Jariges went to Pommerania to reform the juridical system there; see Wolff to Manteuffel, 29.10.1746, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, 192.

jours, que nos premiers Genies sont frappés de l'evidence de certaines idées que je propose dans mes lectures academiques, mais dont je leur cache la source, jusqu'à ce que je les aye amené à une conviction, contre laquelle leurs préjugés ne puissent plus tenir.⁷⁵¹

However, by presenting his works on the existence of God in 1747, Formey seems to have changed his strategy: through his works he overtly exposed his intellectual affiliation to Wolffianism, a decision that Formey might have taken in order to openly affirm his position in a moment of apparently strong anti-Wolffianism at the Academy (or even to take revenge for the Wolffians' defeat in the debate on monads that had become public on 1 June 1747, with the announcement of the winner of the prize contest).

More than anything else, however, Formey's discourses can be considered as a *prise de position* in a broader debate concerning the politics of science, that concerned the Berlin Academy for several decades and most acutely at the beginning of its revival under Frederick II and Maupertuis: it was the debate on the role of traditional metaphysics in an institution that understood itself as competing with the big centres of science in London and Paris, and hence it attached great importance to mathematics and the emerging experimental sciences. For this reason, it was considered to be peculiar that in 1744 a class of speculative philosophy – the equivalent of metaphysics – was established at the Academy.⁷⁵² In the Academy's prize contests, metaphysical subjects fuelled many debates – the one on the monadology was only one of them – during the second half of the Eighteenth Century. Yet, what seems to be even more important, was that the Academy also fostered a kind of meta-debate about the role of metaphysics as a discipline compared to other disciplines: in the prize question for the year 1763, it was asked if metaphysical truths were as evident as mathematical ones, and still in 1795 the concern was about the progress that metaphysics had made in Germany since Leibniz and Wolff.⁷⁵³ Formey, as the predominant representative of the class of speculative philosophy and a supporter of Leibnizian and Wolffian metaphysics often echoed these debates; for example in another academic discourse on the proofs of God's existence in 1765, he compared the probative force of metaphysics with that of other disciplines.⁷⁵⁴

Although from the renewed Academy's inauguration, metaphysics was supposed to play a distinguished role in the institution, a certain competition among the disciplines could not have been

751 Formey to Manteuffel, 27.1.1748 (UBL, 0347).

752 See Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich-Preußischen Akademie*, 309-10 and Terrall, *The Man who flattened the Earth*, 265.

753 See Buschmann, "Die philosophischen Preisfragen."

754 Formey, "Discours sur ces questions: Quel est le degré de certitude dont sont susceptibles les preuves tirées de la considération de cet Univers pour demontrer l'existence d'une Divinité? Et quelle est la meilleur maniere de faire usage de ces Argumens a posteriori, pour établir cette importante Vérité?," *Histoire de l'Académie des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin*, 1765 (Berlin, 1767), 435-49.

avoided, particularly in the initial years. In the preface of the Academy's first volume of its *Mémoires* in 1745, it was strongly emphasised that metaphysics was seen as a foundational science that – as Wolff had described it in his general introduction to philosophy – contained the principles on which all other sciences were based.⁷⁵⁵ This presentation of the institution's self-concept was written by Formey himself in his function as the Academy's historian, yet Maupertuis, who arrived in Berlin in autumn 1745, most likely had confirmed or perhaps even contributed to it.⁷⁵⁶ In this statement, the pursuit of a modern metaphysics in the Academy's new class of philosophy was propagated; a metaphysics that had emancipated itself from its scholastic predecessor and would instead be a foundational science that provided the most general and certain principles:

'La Metaphysique est sans contredit la Mère des autres Sciences, la Theorie qui fournit les principes les plus généraux, la source de l'evidence, & le fondement de la certitude de nos connoissances. Ces beaux caractères ne convenoient pas à la verité à la Metaphysique des Scolastiques, terre ingrate, qui ne produisoit gueres que des ronces et des épines. [...] De grands Genies, en donnant une nouvelle culture à cette portion de l'Empire des Sciences, lui ont fait revêtir une toute autre face. Au lieu d'un Dictionnaire de termes barbares, nous commençons à avoir une pépiniere, où chaque Science trouve, pour ainsi dire, sa semence, et d'où naissent tous les principes, toutes les notions directrices qui nous guident, de quelque coté que nous tournions nos pas.'⁷⁵⁷

Moreover, as Formey specified in the short history of the Academy that followed his preface, this modern form of metaphysics was not meant to carry out a fanciful ('chimérique') sort of system building any more, but to rely on experience and observation of nature and by this means to incorporate the achievements of modern science.⁷⁵⁸

This enthusiastic and supportive statement concerning the role of metaphysics in the new Academy, however, did not depict the institutional reality. Before Maupertuis' arrival the philosophical class – together with the philological one – seems to have felt very underprivileged compared to the mathematical and the physical class. In the registers of the Academy from May 1744 we find a complaint by some of the members that, since they were understaffed, the philosophical and the philological classes had fewer possibilities to present their research outputs at

755 See Wolff, "Vorbericht von der Welt-Weisheit," in *Vernünfftige Gedancken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkänntniss der Wahrheit* [1713], ed. Hans Werner Arndt. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 1, vol.1 (Hildesheim, 1978), § 14 and Wolff, "Discursus praeliminaris de Philosophia in genere," § 73.

756 See BBAW, Abt. IV, Nr. 12: Protocolle. Errichtung der neuen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1744-1746, Actum vom 22.9.1745, 119. In this document the assembly was instructed to provide Maupertuis with all material that had been written so far for the *Mémoires* for revision. This was also supposedly the reason why the publication of the first *Mémoires* was delayed to 1746 although it had initially been planned for 1745.

757 [Formey], "Préface," *Histoire de l'Académie des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin 1745* (Berlin, 1746), without pagination.

758 See Formey, "Histoire du renouvellement de l'Académie en MDCCXLIV," *Histoire de l'Académie 1745*, 2.

the weekly assemblies.⁷⁵⁹ Connected to this lack of representation was the financial discrimination that the two 'humanities' classes experienced. Given the generally difficult financial situation of the Academy, its curators, predominantly count Samuel von Schmettau, had decided that the pensions for these two classes should be suspended until the Academy's household was stable. Instead, the members of the mathematical and the physical classes should be remunerated because of the greater need as well as the utility of these two disciplines.⁷⁶⁰ Formey and his colleague Johann Philipp Heinius complained about this situation in September 1744, and offered to provide more discourses to the assembly if they obtained a remuneration for it, yet their request was rejected.⁷⁶¹ In this potentially conflictual situation between the humanities and the natural sciences at the Academy, we can suppose that it was important for Formey to mark their position in his academic discourses, and to highlight the relevance of his class. Moreover, with the arrival of Maupertuis, Formey might have hoped to receive support in this endeavour from the Academy's highest rank, given the new President's own engagement with metaphysics. However, as we shall see, it turned out that their conceptions of metaphysics were very different, to the extent that Maupertuis' concept was destructive to the discipline of metaphysics itself.

In Formey's second discourse in 1747, in which he showcased the metaphysical foundation of the natural philosophical argument from design, his commitment to enhancing the recognition of metaphysics and his class was quite apparent. Formey fashioned this discourse – probably retroactively, i.e. when he knew that Maupertuis would be present at its presentation – as a means of gathering the support and collaboration with the Academy's President. In the manuscript of the discourse, the reference to Maupertuis is clearly added later in Formey's hand, whereas it disappeared again with the re-publication of the *Examen de la Preuve* in the *Mélanges philosophiques* in 1754. This suggests that Formey's original intention with the discourse might not have been to align with Maupertuis.⁷⁶² In its first published version, however, it appeared as if Formey's discourse was a direct reply to a discourse on the same topic held by Maupertuis at the

759 See BBAW, Abt. IV, Nr. 12: Protocolle. Errichtung der neuen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1744-1746, Versammlung vom 9.5.1744, 41-2.

760 See BBAW, Abt. I, Nr. 5: Fundation und Organisation der Akademie, 15.1.1744: 144r and 143r (“Extrait abrégé des 6 articles, sur lesquels on supplie très humble S.M. de décider gracieusement”). See also Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich-Preußischen Akademie*, 289, note 6, who claims that von Schmettau initially did not want to have a philosophical and a philological class at all.

761 See BBAW, Abt. IV, Nr. 12: Protocolle. Errichtung der neuen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1744-1746, Actum vom 19.9.1744, 68-71.

762 See BBAW, Ms C5, vol. 1 (1747), I – M346 (*Discours sur les Fins de la Nature*), 192r. The manuscript version of the reference to Maupertuis is slightly longer and more explicative than in the printed version: ‘(*) C'est ce que Mr. de Maupertuis a mis dans une pleine évidence dans ses Loix du Mouvement et du Repos etc. An. 1746 p. 267 etc. Il y porte sur l'argument tiré des fins de la Nature le jugement, auquel nos Réflexions vont aboutir. Seulement nous tendons au même but par des routes différentes. Mr. de Maupertuis résout cet argument dans celui qui est tiré de la considération des Loix générales de la Nature; au lieu que le but de notre analyse est de remonter aux notions communes, sur lesquelles cet argument est fondé, et qui en font toute la force.’

Academy one year earlier, on 6 October 1746. This had been Maupertuis' first discourse at the Berlin Academy after having been appointed as its President, and it dealt with the argument for the existence of God by using a principle derived from the laws of motion.⁷⁶³ As Formey stated at the beginning of his second discourse, his reflections on God were meant to lead to the same result as Maupertuis'; however, he stressed that he would apply different measures to achieve this purpose.⁷⁶⁴ Formey's and Maupertuis' common purpose was to strengthen the truth of God's existence by dismissing weak proofs of it, more precisely the proofs arguing from the marvels of nature, i.e. the physico-theological proof. Interestingly, Maupertuis, like Formey in his manuscript, had criticised Newton for his naïve application of physical proofs to the existence of God.⁷⁶⁵ They were apparently both convinced that the better alternative to these weak proofs, which were based on empirical observation, was the application of universal metaphysical principles.⁷⁶⁶

Besides this basic analogy in Maupertuis' and Formey's considerations on the proofs of God, however, they bore a significant difference to each other – in Formey's words, by different means they achieved their common purpose. This distinction lay in their individual approaches to metaphysics which was correlated with the use of different universal principles for proving God's existence. Formey's metaphysics was ontologically inspired whereas Maupertuis' was physico-mathematically inspired: Formey, as we have seen, made a plea for the principle of sufficient reason, whereas Maupertuis relied on the principle of least action, which said that changes in nature were incited by the smallest quantity of power possible. This means that Maupertuis showed how all the laws of movement and rest which could be observed in nature depended upon one single principle – the principle of least action – which, according to him, correlated with the wisdom and dignity of a supreme being.⁷⁶⁷ In contrast, Formey, in reference to Leibniz, regarded the laws of motion as a demonstration of the contingent world order, since they were contingent too and hence grounded in the principle of sufficient reason.⁷⁶⁸

The more important difference between Maupertuis and Formey – besides their different

763 Maupertuis, “Les lois du mouvement et du repos déduites d'un principe métaphysique,” *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin* 1746 (Berlin, 1748), 267-294. See Terrall, *The Man who flattened the Earth*, 270-79. Terrall suggests that this discourse served to present Maupertuis for the first time as a man of science in his new institution and that it was supposed likewise to 'set a new standard for the metaphysics class' (270).

764 See Formey, “Examen de la preuve,” 365.

765 See Formey, “Examen de la preuve,” 367-68 and Maupertuis, “Les lois du mouvement,” 270.

766 See Maupertuis, “Les lois du mouvement,” 277-78: 'Ce n'est donc point dans les petits détails, dans ce parties de l'Univers dont nous connoissons trop peu les rapports, qu'il faut chercher l'Etre suprême, c'est dans les Phenomènes dont l'universalité ne souffre aucune exception, & que leur simplicité expose entièrement à notre vuë.' and a similar statement on p. 279. The emphasis on the 'notions communes' and 'premiers principes' pervades each of Formey's two discourses at length.

767 See Maupertuis, “Les lois du mouvement,” 286.

768 See Formey, “Examen de la preuve,” 379-80. For the support of Formey's argument by Leibniz see the footnote in “Examen de la preuve,” 380-1.

choice of metaphysical principles – was that the former did not consider his metaphysical a-priori principle of least action as uniquely sufficient and self-sustained in the establishment of the laws of motion, whereas the latter was convinced of the standalone-quality of a simple metaphysical notion like the principle of sufficient reason. Maupertuis had constructed his proof of God on two sources of knowledge that confirmed each other and, as such reinforced the proof: he had declared that the laws of motion that he deduced from the principle of least action were the same as could be induced through the observation of nature. It was precisely the compatibility of the two epistemic procedures' (deduction and induction) results that convinced Maupertuis of the truth of his principle and, as a consequence, of God's existence.⁷⁶⁹ In terms of the relation between the disciplines of metaphysics (more precisely metaphysics of nature, i.e. cosmology) and physics (more precisely mathematical mechanics), Maupertuis' epistemological approach implied their mutual dependence. Christian Leduc recently described Maupertuis' conception of a metaphysics of nature, or cosmology, as follows: Maupertuis considered metaphysics as a foundational science which, however, received its legitimation only on the basis of previously established physical laws that were confirmed by experience and mathematical calculation. As such, Leduc qualified that Maupertuis' position was in between the Wolffian (and Kantian) conception of an entirely a-priori metaphysics which was the necessary precondition of physical laws, and the conception of d'Alembert and Voltaire who defended the independence of physics from a metaphysical foundation.⁷⁷⁰ In contrast to Maupertuis, Formey in his approach defended the unconditioned legitimacy of ontological a-priori principles to account for the secondary principles and the phenomena of all other sciences. According to Formey, this legitimacy was due to the epistemic status of these a-priori principles, which was, as we have seen in his account of the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason, as strong as that of the mathematical axioms. Maupertuis' and Formey's different perceptions on the degree of evidence and trustworthiness of metaphysical principles implied that Maupertuis undermined the concept of metaphysics as a foundational science that was proclaimed – probably under Formey's Wolffian influence – at the Academy's renewal in 1746. It is for this reason that the discussion between Maupertuis and Formey on the proofs of God via their academic discourses indicated a deeper ideological conflict than Formey's rhetoric might have initially suggested.

In respect to this, the way Formey presented his arguments deserves some attention, for, even if he did not refer explicitly to Maupertuis, his words could easily have been seen as being part of a controversy with him. To quote Leibniz in order to undermine the principle of least action was

769 See Maupertuis, “Les lois du mouvement,” 279 and 286.

770 See Christian Leduc, “La métaphysique de la nature à l’Académie de Berlin,” *Philosophiques* 42, no. 1 (2015), 15.

supposedly not considered as a minor personal affront to Maupertuis, who had the reputation of being an anti-Leibnizian.⁷⁷¹ Inversely, some of Maupertuis' claims also sounded like strikes against Formey as a practitioner of merely speculative metaphysics. Maupertuis' discourse was a campaign in favour of mathematics, which he wanted to bestow with a new (higher) degree of usefulness by applying it to the inquiry into the proofs of God. In this regard he claimed that proofs gained through mathematical calculation would be more evident and certain:

'Voyons, si nous pourrons faire un usage plus heureux de cette science [la mathématique]. Les preuves de l'existence de Dieu qu'elle fournira, auront sur toutes les autres, l'avantage de l'evidence qui caracterise les verités mathématiques. Ceux qui n'ont pas assez de confiance dans les raisonnemens métaphysiques, trouveront plus de sûreté dans ce genre de preuves: & ceux qui ne font pas assez de cas des preuves populaires, trouveront dans celles-ci plus d'exactitude & d'élévation.'⁷⁷²

At the same time, he openly discarded metaphysics' ability to provide certain knowledge, and hence presented mathematics as a real alternative to it when dealing with questions on the existence of God. The last part of Maupertuis' *Les lois du mouvement* was then also an attempt to demonstrate the laws of motion through calculation. In fact, Formey also recognised the power of mathematics to possess 'incontestable principles', and he compared the mathematical axioms to the principles which guided his own metaphysical analyses. Nonetheless, Formey considered metaphysical truths as being superior to mathematical ones, due to the impact they would have on morals and natural theology.⁷⁷³ Maupertuis might have referred to Formey's general appreciation of the mathematical method as a model for a metaphysical demonstration (as Wolff had defended it as well) when his discourse criticised those kinds of metaphysics, which only 'pretended' to be mathematically rooted but which in reality were not.⁷⁷⁴ Consequently, the difference between Maupertuis' and Formey's approach to the existence of God was in the end not as minor as Formey's complaisant statement at the beginning of his second discourse would suggest – they had completely different conceptions of metaphysics – which when translated into the politics of science at the Berlin Academy, potentially reinforced the difference between metaphysics on the one hand and mathematics and physics on the other.

771 See David Beeson, *Maupertuis: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford, 1992), 185.

772 See Maupertuis, "Les lois du mouvement," 278.

773 See Formey, "Les preuves," 343-44.

774 Maupertuis, "Les lois du mouvement," 278: 'Car il ne faut pas s'y tromper dans quelques Ouvrages, qui n'ont de mathématique que l'air & la forme, & qui au fond ne sont que de la Métaphysique la plus incertaine & la plus ténébreuse.'

Reactions to the Debate

In the Genevan Calvinist part of Formey's public, his and Maupertuis' writings were largely perceived as being opposed to each other, yet not for their different views on metaphysics: most of Formey's Genevan correspondents criticised Maupertuis' discourse for actually doing harm to the truth of God's existence, whereas they appreciated Formey's discourses for rehabilitating it. The common criticism of the Genevan theologians and pastors was that Maupertuis had destroyed the ordinary and easily accessible proofs of God, and replaced them with his complex and subtle metaphysical proof that would be unintelligible to the majority of common readers.⁷⁷⁵ This argument is particularly interesting since one could equally apply it to Formey's discourses in 1747. Indeed, the same people who criticised Maupertuis for corrupting the simple belief of the masses admonished Formey for not speaking to a more simple-minded public; yet they did so in a remarkably propitiatory vein. The theologian François de Roches even assured Formey that it was not important whether the simple-minded understood his complex metaphysical defence of God, since they also would not have understood the highly scientific confutation of God; in other words: as long as it stayed in a closed scholarly circle, Formey's text was acceptable.⁷⁷⁶ Jacob Vernet regarded Formey's discourses as a very successful way to correct Maupertuis' earlier essay without causing him offence.⁷⁷⁷ Both Roches and Vernet, and more explicitly Jean Peschier, seem to have considered Formey's essays as an example of the task that they had attributed to Formey as a Christian philosopher, namely to censor contents that were dangerous for religion.⁷⁷⁸ These testimonies of the Swiss Calvinists show quite plainly how deeply determined and biased opinions were regarding the philosophical treatment of religious doctrines: in their perception Maupertuis and Formey belonged to opposing philosophical parties (because of their origin, confession, social milieu or previous writings) although in their texts they claimed to do very similar things.

Besides Formey's Calvinist correspondents, this determined conception of the two opposing parties can also be found in another important group that was close to Formey, the *Aléthophiles*. As we have already mentioned in respect to the dispute on Leibniz's monadology, they perceived that there was an opposition between the 'French Newtonian' philosophy that was gaining ground in the Academy and the 'German Wolffian' philosophy. Christian Wolff himself was very suspicious of Maupertuis' ideological position, suspecting that he would agree with the ideas of the famous

⁷⁷⁵ See François de Roches to Formey, 29.4.1749, *Lettres de Genève*, 227; Jean Peschier to Formey, 20.5.1749, *Lettres de Genève*, 230-1 and Jacob Vernet to Formey, 25.5.1749, *Lettres de Genève*, 235-36.

⁷⁷⁶ See François de Roches to Formey, 30.1.1750, *Lettres de Genève*, 257 and already before, Peschier to Formey, 19.12.1749, *Lettres de Genève*, 251-2.

⁷⁷⁷ See Vernet to Formey, 26.2.1750, *Lettres de Genève*, 259.

⁷⁷⁸ See Peschier to Formey, 4.8.1750, *Lettres de Genève*, 271-2. See above, p. 149.

materialist La Mettrie and, more importantly, that he feigned his 1746 proof of God.⁷⁷⁹ When Manteuffel and Wolff read Maupertuis' essay, which was published in 1748 in the Academy's *Mémoires*, their reaction to it was fierce and culminated in an attempt to defame Maupertuis in front of Formey. Interestingly, Formey did not respond to this attempt which shows that he apparently did not conceive any 'impolite' purposes against Maupertuis with his own academic discourse.

In August 1748 Johann Christoph Gottsched published in his journal *Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste* a polemic review of Maupertuis' *Les Loix du mouvement* in which Maupertuis was alleged to have mocked the proofs of God that he discussed in his essay in the same manner as the so-called freethinkers.⁷⁸⁰ Moreover, the review declared Maupertuis' principle of least action to be non-innovative and attributed it instead to Leibniz, whom Maupertuis was supposed to resent.⁷⁸¹ It was on the basis of this critical article in the *Neuer Büchersaal* that they apparently expected Formey to become convinced of Maupertuis' bad intentions against the principles venerated by the *Aléthophiles*.⁷⁸² Manteuffel sent him the article together with some subtle remarks on the dispensability of Maupertuis for the good of the Academy's reputation.⁷⁸³ Formey, however, seemingly replied to this attempt to denigrate Maupertuis with a reference to the loyalty he owed to the President. Unfortunately, Formey's response to Manteuffel from the 19 September 1748 has not survived, but from Manteuffel's reaction to it we can divine that Formey was not willing to openly contradict Maupertuis' essay and that he had generally praised the quality of the latter's knowledge even if he had certain objections towards Maupertuis' proof of God: Manteuffel answered him:

'J'applaudis extrêmement à Votre conduite, à l'égard de Votre President, dèsque Vous attachez, à l'étendue de ses lumieres, le sens limité, que Vous y attachez actuellement. Il seroit ridicule de risquer sa fortune, pour tacher de tirer un ami d'une erreur, dont on le sait coëffé, lors sur-tout que l'on prevoit, qu'au lieu de se corriger, il ne fera que se facher contre le correcteur.'⁷⁸⁴

It seems that Formey sought to keep a middle position that would allow him to not become compromised in either party's view. He had defended his non-reaction towards the *Aléthophiles* by

779 See Wolff to Manteuffel, 8.9.1748, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 233.

780 See [Gottsched], "I. Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Sciences et Belles Lettres. Année 1748," *Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste* 7, no. 2 (1748), 114.

781 See [Gottsched], "I. Histoire de l'Académie Royale," 116-17. In his *Les loix du mouvement* Maupertuis had indeed criticised Leibniz for his theory of the best of all worlds (p. 275).

782 It seems that Wolff himself came up with the plan to forward the defamatory article of the *Büchersaal* to Formey; see Wolff to Manteuffel, 8.9.1748, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 233.

783 See Manteuffel to Formey, 9.9.1748 (Slg. Darm.) where he communicated the article; and 10.9.1748 (Slg. Darm.) for his remarks on Maupertuis.

784 Manteuffel to Formey, 26.9.1748 (Slg. Darm.). Manteuffel had forwarded Formey's answer also to Wolff, who in turn commented on it by diminishing Maupertuis' scientific achievements and by expressing his comprehension of Formey's conduct given his career situation (Wolff to Manteuffel, 26.9.1748, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 246).

referring to his career.⁷⁸⁵

It is hence very difficult to account for Formey's real opinion on Maupertuis' demonstration of the existence of God, and linked to this, his concept of metaphysics, which, as I have tried to show was nevertheless fundamentally different. The quoted passage from Manteuffel's letter of 1748 suggests the possibility that Formey was indeed aware of these differences between his and the President's views on metaphysics, and therefore we might think that he had only superficially fashioned his second discourse in 1747 as a supplement, instead of an opposition to Maupertuis' previous discourse. Still, it could also be that Formey held a similar view on Maupertuis' discourse as his friend and likewise supporter of Wolffianism Emer de Vattel: he found that Maupertuis in his text had strengthened the position of metaphysics by showing that his mathematical laws could be traced back to metaphysical principles; for him Maupertuis was both, a 'philosophe' and a 'géomètre'.⁷⁸⁶ That Formey might have had a similar view to Vattel's on Maupertuis' concept of metaphysics, was suggested in 1765, in another academic discourse on the adequacy of certain proofs of God's existence that Formey presented almost 20 years after the first two discourses. His arguments concerning this topic remained basically the same – he still favoured the proof of God's necessary existence through a contingent world, and he strictly rejected the physical and the physico-mathematical proofs as they generalised the marvels of nature either too little or too much.⁷⁸⁷ Most importantly, however, Formey eventually also rejected the mathematico-metaphysical proof – the one which Maupertuis (at this point already deceased) had pursued. Nevertheless, before discarding it, Formey expressed his general sympathy for the ambition of this approach to find one single general law of the universe that could explain the cause of every effect.⁷⁸⁸ Besides this, he even defended mathematical metaphysics against the reproach of being unintelligible for the popular masses, by stressing that there was a distinction between a scientific demonstration of God's existence – naturally unintelligible to people not trained in reasoning – and the promulgation of this proof via catechisms and theology:

'Nous ne nous récrions point contre cette entreprise, comme quelques uns l'ont fait, en disant que la Démonstration de l'Existence de Dieu ne sauroit dépendre de calculs & de signes algébriques, qu'elle doit être à la portée de tout le monde, & qu'il seroit singulier qu'on fût

785 After this Manteuffel did not pursue Formey further on this issue, yet he commented on it again in a letter to Wolff, 29.9.1748, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 248: 'Il n'y a rien à ajouter au jugement que vous portez, soit du caractère, et de l'érudition limitée de Maupertuis, soit de la conduite, que notre ami F. s'est proposé de tenir avec lui. Rien n'est effectivement si déraisonnable, si ridicule, que de risquer se perdre, en s'opiniâtrant à guérir un ami d'une maladie incurable, lors sur-tout que nous voions et sentons, qu'il refuse de se servir de nos remèdes, et que les conseils, que nous lui donnons, ne font que l'aigrir personnellement contre nous. Dès lors la Raison veut, que nous l'abandonnions à son caprice, et que nous songions préférablement à notre propre conservation.'

786 See Emer de Vattel to Formey, 13.1.1749, *Emer de Vattel à Jean Henri Samuel Formey*, 96.

787 See Formey, "Discours sur ces question," 437-39.

788 See Formey, "Discours sur ces questions," 441-42.

obligé de faire main basse sur toutes les preuves ordinaires que les Catéchismes & les Cours de Théologie renferment pour y substituer un Principe tel que celui de la moindre Action, ou tout autre du même genre, qu'on voudroit ériger en Principe primitif à cet égard. Ces objections me paroissent peu concluantes. [...] Qui dit Démonstration, dit une chose nécessairement inintelligible au peuple, à tous ceux qui n'ont pas étudié les regles du raisonnement, & même à ceux qui les ayant étudiées ont négligé d'acquérir l'habitude de les réduire en pratique. On ne doit pas s'en laisser imposer par l'abus perpétuel qu'on fait du terme de démontrer dans la Conversation, en Chaire, ou dans les Ouvrages.' ⁷⁸⁹

Reading between the lines of this statement (which even contained a reference to the principle of least action) we might find support for Maupertuis' approach and further still, a reply to the Genevan criticism of Maupertuis' essay from the late 1740s.

More than that, with this reply, Formey defended not only Maupertuis and the mathematico-metaphysical approach against the criticism of incomprehensibility, but also his own practice as a metaphysician. His 1765 discourse established that he did not agree with the rather orthodox opinion that scientific clarifications of revealed truths should be prohibited, as they did not contribute to or even distorted the religious convictions of the popular masses. For him, there had to be a distinction between scientific and popular, more confessional, proofs of God. This view, which manifested in 1765, seems to be slightly at odds with his first discourse in 1747, where he had first introduced the method of common notions: there he had suggested the accessibility of these common notions to the entire human race, including therefore popular believers. 'Ramener donc une Verité & ses preuves aux notions communes, c'est la rendre d'une evidence universelle, c'est la mettre à la portée de tout le genre humain.'⁷⁹⁰ Yet, as we have seen, between 1747 and 1765, Formey was confronted with the criticism of not being intelligible to a popular public, not only in respect to his metaphysical treatises on the existence of God, but also – as we have observed in the previous chapters – with respect to his sermons and moral philosophical discourses. Moreover, the solution between this apparent dissonance in Formey's statements on the role of metaphysics might be that he regarded the process of finding the truth as metaphysical, and as such it was intelligible only to the practitioners of the discipline, whereas the results of this process – like for example confirming the existence of God – were meant to be applied to the general public.⁷⁹¹

From the mid-1740s to 1765 Formey's considerations on the existence of God seem to have evolved yet did not change in essence. We have observed the gradual shift of his ideas from his early

⁷⁸⁹ See Formey, "Discours sur ces questions," 440-1.

⁷⁹⁰ Formey, "Les preuves," 354-55.

⁷⁹¹ Compare to "Les preuves," 344 where Formey stated that metaphysics has an impact on natural theology and morals.

affirmation of the Cartesian a-priori proof against Bayle to Wolff's a-posteriori proof through contingency, which itself was not perceived as a radical break with but rather as an amelioration of Descartes' only nominal proof. The Wolffian proof of contingency then became central for Formey's criticism of the physico-theological proof which he basically described as a negative alteration of the former. It seems therefore that Formey mainly reiterated, via his role as a professor of philosophy and as a member of the Academy, the developments that the different proofs for God's existence underwent after the 'Cartesian theological revolution' of the early Seventeenth Century. Likewise his seemingly unlimited trust in the epistemic strength of the demonstrative method of a metaphysics that served as a foundation of all other sciences, which he defended in 1747 and re-affirmed in 1765, most likely had its origins in Descartes' assumption on the intelligibility of God's essence for the human being and of the rational demonstrability of His existence. In the context of mid-eighteenth-century philosophy, the arguments Formey that decided to put forward on the different occasions that we have discussed appear rather conservative: he seemingly warded off the increasing excitement over the discovery of nature, and the arguments for God's existence from design that resulted from this. Similarly, he doubted the epistemic value of the new research strands in natural philosophy and mathematics, and instead safeguarded purely speculative metaphysics. Yet, in the context of Formey's understanding of philosophy as a Christian philosopher, his metaphysical engagement with the proofs of God appears as being rather progressive in the sense that his arguments relied exclusively on natural reason, without mentioning or connecting it to revealed knowledge. Of course, Formey's presentation of the arguments for God's existence was animated by apologetic purposes – in 1747 Formey's justification for 'attacking' the physico-theological proof was to make it safe against atheists and freethinkers – yet these purposes remained to a large extent implicit throughout his demonstration. Instead, it seems rather that he transferred the traditional religious apologetic discourse to the science of metaphysics which, as we have seen, he defended as the most secure way to find the truth. As a consequence, the image of a mutually fruitful relationship between science and religion emerges in which the Christian notion of God was best defended when it was demonstrated through metaphysical methods, and in which metaphysics obtained its sense and legitimacy through the service that it rendered to the understanding of such a fundamental knowledge as the nature and existence of God.

After having observed Formey's plea for the metaphysical demonstration of God's existence which he developed through his engagement with the different positions of Bayle, Descartes, Wolff and Maupertuis, in the next chapters, we will focus on the question of the relationship between liberty and determination in the world. Also this question, like the existence of God, had important religious implications and, most importantly, was at the root of moral theories in the Eighteenth Century. Since early Christianity the question of whether the human being was free or subject to an absolute divine predestination incited debate: Augustinus' claim of the post-lapsarian man's total dependence on God for salvation had been rejected by the so-called Pelagians who saw the freedom of will as a gift from God, that enabled the human being to obey God's commandments. The Protestant reformers, particularly Luther, had followed the Augustinian doctrine of a strong original sin, according to which the human being had lost his free will after the Fall and was absolutely reliant on divine grace for his salvation. Calvin, in a similar vein, had claimed a double predestination according to which from the beginning God had determined those who were to be saved and those who were to be damned. However, this strong plea for divine predestination had already by the time of the reformers created tensions with other doctrines of the Christian and particularly Protestant creed: it denied God's benevolence since if God had determined everything then He must also have been responsible for the evil in the world. Moreover, the doctrine of a strong predestination undermined the importance of the Revelation as an instruction to salvation, and the function of Jesus' death at the cross, i.e. the believers' redemption from their sins. The continuous engagement with these tensions meant that in the Eighteenth Century Protestant orthodoxy largely maintained the doctrine of a middle way between human freedom and divine predestination. As we will see, very similar ideas as those underlying such a doctrine were also inherent to Leibniz's and Wolff's cosmological and ontological theories and were reflected in their moral philosophy, with which Formey engaged in several instances of his work as a Christian philosopher.

However, in the Eighteenth Century, this apparent compromise between necessity and contingency in the Creation was challenged, not only from a religious perspective but also increasingly from a natural philosophical one. Religiously inspired critics of Leibniz's and Wolff's theory accused it of implying fatalism, i.e. the absolute determination of the world order by a supreme being. In chapter 8 we will observe how Formey was confronted with this criticism through his correspondence with the Swiss philosopher Jean Pierre de Crousaz, and how it affected his appropriation of Wolff's philosophy and practical support for the *Aléthophiles* in the early 1740s. The solution for Formey to overcome his doubts concerning the alleged fatalistic implications of Wolff's cosmology, as expressed in the theories of pre-established harmony and *nexus rerum*, seems

to have been to resort to a natural philosophical observation of the subject. As we will see in chapter 9, by addressing the question of human free will from the perspective of a 'science of the mind', i.e. psychology, he came to the concept of a human being who freely decided upon his actions on the basis of motives that emerged from a world chosen and determined by God. However, in respect to this, he had to combat not only competing theories of free will, such as that of pure chance but also competing epistemological claims concerning the empirical investigation into the human soul. Finally, we will observe when transported to moral philosophical questions, what form the problem of combining free will and (divine) determination caused. Chapter 10 analyses how Formey made use of Wolff's concept of natural morality in his role as a preacher, and how he defended it in the public learned debate at one of the Academy's prize essay contests. Moreover, it shows how Formey eventually, in the realm of moral philosophy, brought back the importance of revealed doctrine in the debate on the relation between freedom and determination. Throughout the three following chapters, we will encounter a large variety of different genres of writing and audiences, which demonstrates the wide impact of the question in society. More than Formey's discussion of the existence of God which revolved mainly around his role as a professor of philosophy and member of the Academy, Formey also transported the problem of the reconciliation of freedom and determination to popular groups of readers, either in the realm of religiosity or in public discussions of moral duties.

8. The Danger of Fatalism: The Religious and Moral Criticism of Pre-Established Harmony

Leibniz's idea of pre-established harmony was an attempt to account for the order of the world and particularly the relation between the body and the soul.⁷⁹² In tackling these fundamental cosmological and ontological questions, pre-established harmony almost automatically sparked a

792 On Leibniz theory of pre-established harmony and its philosophical context, see Gerd Fabian, *Beitrag zur Geschichte des Leib-Seele-Problems: Lehre von der prästabilierten Harmonie und vom psychophysischen Parallelismus in der Leibniz-Wolffschen Schule* (Langensalza, 1925); Gregory Brown, "God's Phenomena and the Pre-Established Harmony," *Studia Leibnitiana* 19 (1987), 200–214; Steven Nadler, ed., *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy: Cartesianism, Occasionalism, and Preestablished Harmony* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1993); David Scott, "Leibniz and the Two Clocks," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 3 (1997): 445–63. On the development of the theory of pre-established harmony in Germany after Leibniz, see Mario Casula, "Die Lehre von der Prästabilierten Harmonie in ihrer Entwicklung von Leibniz bis A.G. Baumgarten," in *Akten des II. Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses, Hannover, 17.-22. Juli 1972*, ed. Albert Heinekamp, vol. 3 (Wiesbaden, 1975), 397–414; and Eric Watkins, "From Pre-established harmony to Physical influx: Leibniz's reception in Eighteenth Century Germany," *Perspectives on Science* 6, no. 1 (April 1, 1998): 136–203.

fierce theological and moral controversy that was predominantly concerned with the role of God in the Creation and the freedom of human action. How could human beings be held responsible for their behaviour if all the movements of their body and perceptions of their mind had been predetermined by a supreme being? How could a supreme being be considered good if it had installed a world-order that included misery? Given the fundamental nature of these questions and the difficulty of replying to them, it is not surprising that the controversy around pre-established harmony seems to have been fairly perennial during the Eighteenth Century, in the sense that it hit not only Leibniz, its 'inventor', but also the subsequent generation of his followers, particularly, of course, Wolff: the presumed fatalism contained in pre-established harmony was one of the central issues that the German Pietists raised against Wolff in the 1720s and, if we believe certain anecdotes, it was also the eventual cause for Wolff's expulsion from Prussia.⁷⁹³

Some 20 years later, in 1740/41 – when Wolff had been re-established in his chair at the Prussian University of Halle – Formey demonstrated that this subject had not yet lost its controversial potential. In his often cited (but never analysed) popular-philosophical book *La Belle Wolfienne*,⁷⁹⁴ a work with the proclaimed aim of spreading Wolff's philosophy, Formey replicated the debate between the Pietists and Wolff on pre-established harmony, nourishing it with several other traditions of opposition to pre-established harmony. As we will see in the following chapter, which analyses Formey's version of this debate, pre-established harmony posed a crucial problem to Formey's understanding of the world's order and of morality. This led him, in the second volume of his *Belle Wolfienne*, to openly doubt its compatibility with important religious and moral premises by reiterating the reproach that pre-established harmony entailed fatalism. In this sense, pre-established harmony became for Formey the issue that tested his apparently unconditional trust in Wolffian philosophy, and hence through the analysis of his engagement with it we will be able to acquire a more nuanced image of him as a supporter and mouthpiece of Wolffianism. Formey's renewal of the criticism towards pre-established harmony may seem strange at first, as he proposed it when the predominant goal of the *Aléthophiles'* long-lasting efforts seem to have been fulfilled through the rehabilitation of Wolff and, furthermore, in a book that was intended to support the acceptance and spread of Wolff's ideas. It is thus understandable that some of his contemporaries

⁷⁹³ See Watkins, "From Pre-established harmony to Physical influx," 147.

⁷⁹⁴ The classification of the *Belle Wolfienne's* genre is rather difficult: Formey, in his *Avertissement* to the first volume called it a 'roman philosophique'. The scholarship places it within the genre of 'philosophie des Dames', a sub-genre of popular philosophy which told the stories of (fictive) lady philosophers and were often meant to instruct female readers. See Ursula Pia Jauch, *Damenphilosophie & Männermoral: Von Abbé de Gérard bis Marquis de Sade. Ein Versuch über die lächelnde Vernunft*, 2. edition (Wien, 1991), and Concha Roldán, "Damenphilosophie und europäische *Querelle des femmes* zur Zeit Wolffs," in *Christian Wolff und die Europäische Aufklärung*, vol. 3, 145–61. Even Wolff himself had apparently thought to write such a 'philosophie des Dames': Jean École, "A Propos du projet de Wolff d'écrire une «Philosophie des Dames»," *Studia Leibnitiana* 15, no. 1 (1983): 46–57.

and modern scholars alike considered Formey's behaviour to be an act of weakening or damaging Wolffianism. However, by shifting our focus from the political dimension of Wolffian philosophy to the ideas as such, we will discover that Formey's behaviour fitted perfectly into the contemporary debate. The original Leibnizian principles of pre-established harmony and the best of all worlds were also increasingly contested among those who supported Wolff's ideas in general. It is the purpose of this chapter to shed new light on the motivation and conditions of this episode in Formey's engagement with Wolff's philosophy.⁷⁹⁵

Pre-established Harmony

Before turning to Formey, however, it is useful to briefly consider the contents of the principle of pre-established harmony as well as its different appearances in Leibniz and Wolff. As several scholars have pointed out, for Leibniz, pre-established harmony was a means to generally describe interactions between the different substances that existed in the world, whereas Wolff applied this principle exclusively to one particular type of interaction, namely that between the body and the soul.⁷⁹⁶ Leibniz had claimed that no finite substance (as opposed to infinite or divine) was able to (re-)act with another, and as such all activity/changes of a substance must have been caused by its uniquely internal disposition: every substance in the world contained from its 'birth' a template of all its future properties and activities – they were pre-established. Nevertheless, all substances seem to interact with each other, that is, they seem to form an overall harmony, a harmony that was made by God.⁷⁹⁷ Applied to the question of the relation between the body and the soul, this meant that there was a 'psycho-physical parallelism' between these two genuinely different entities,⁷⁹⁸ instead of a real reciprocity between bodily movements and spiritual representations. With this theory, Leibniz not only opposed the traditional scholastic idea of a real interaction between the body and the soul that he referred to as a physical influx, but also the Malebranchean theory of occasionalism, which also denied a real influence between the two. However, unlike Leibniz's theory, occasionalism suggested that the origin of the apparent reciprocal relation between the body and the soul was

⁷⁹⁵ Bronsch is the only one who dedicated a brief investigation to this episode but he examined it from the perspective of the *Aléthophiles* – and particularly Manteuffel's – role in suppressing Formey's doubts. Häselser provides some insights into the role that Jean-Pierre de Crousaz played in this episode to which we will refer in more detail in due course.

⁷⁹⁶ See Watkins, "From pre-established harmony to physical influx," 141-2; Stefan Lorenz, "Problemanzeigen und Krisenphänomene. Theologie und 'Praestablierte Harmonie' in der Perspektive der Wolffschen Schule und ihrer Gegner. J.G. Reinbeck und J.F. Bertram als Beispiele," in *Drei Schriften zur Theologie und "Praestablierten Harmonie"*, ed. Stefan Lorenz (Hildesheim, 2014), 28. Casula, "Die Lehre von der Prästablierten Harmonie," 399: According to Casula's account it was only when Wolff adopted the theory of pre-established harmony that a philosophical debate about it started.

⁷⁹⁷ See Watkins, "From pre-established harmony to physical influx," 138.

⁷⁹⁸ Lorenz, "Problemanzeigen," 26.

God's permanent intervention in the course of the universe. One scholarly generation later, embedded in his considerations on the nature of the soul, Wolff regarded Leibniz's pre-established harmony as the most plausible way of accounting for the state and powers of the body and the soul.⁷⁹⁹

Formey himself, in the margins of the first volume of his *Belle Wolfienne*, retold the history of Leibniz's invention of the principle of pre-established harmony as well as the criticism that it had provoked among his contemporaries. Moreover, Formey already alluded here to the fact that Wolff had not absolutely accepted Leibniz's theory, and that instead, Wolff had gradually adjusted his opinion of pre-established harmony between the appearance of his German metaphysics in 1720 and his *Psychologia rationalis* in 1734.⁸⁰⁰ In modern scholarship, Bruno Bianco has reiterated how Wolff had gradually relativised the unequivocal truth of Leibniz' theory, until he presented it in his later work as a mere, although very probable, hypothesis. For Bianco, this relativisation was largely due to the continuous criticism that the theory had encountered among Wolff's contemporaries, especially the Halle Pietist Joachim Lange.⁸⁰¹ Formey, in the appendix to the first volume of his *Belle Wolfienne*, clearly stated that it was Wolff's later work – the *Psychologia rationalis* – that had to be consulted if Wolff's true opinion on pre-established harmony was to be accounted for.⁸⁰² This is what Formey did at this point. He faithfully followed the paragraphs of Wolff's writing and first explained the parallelism of the soul's and the body's actions through the nature of their essences (inspired by Leibniz); second, he emphasised the hypothetical character of the theory⁸⁰³ and, finally, he defended it against the accusation that it entailed anti-religious or even atheist conclusions.

Intention and Setting of the Belle Wolfienne

With this brief description of the essentials of pre-established harmony that were embedded in a *Lettre philosophique sur l'harmonie préétablie* and placed in the appendix of the *Belle Wolfienne*, Formey concluded the first part of his fictional conversations on Christian Wolff's Latin Logics⁸⁰⁴ that were led by a young and beautiful lady, *Espérance*, in the parks of Charlottenburg outside of Berlin. According to Formey, this philosophical novel (which had its role-model in the popular-

799 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen*, §765.

800 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 167-9.

801 See Bruno Bianco, "Freiheit Gegen Fatalismus. Zu Joachim Langes Kritik an Wolff," in *Zentren der Aufklärung I: Halle. Aufklärung und Pietismus*, ed. Norbert Hinske (Heidelberg, 1989), 111–55; (see especially 129-30).

802 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 169.

803 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 176.

804 Christian Wolff, *Philosophia rationalis sive Logica* (1728). The first volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* deals particularly with the *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere* which Wolff had put as an introduction in his book.

philosophical works of Fontenelle and Algarotti)⁸⁰⁵ had the explicit aim of explaining Wolff's philosophy to 'ordinary readers', who had so far mostly ignored its content because of its complexity. However, the *Belle Wolfienne* seems to have had rather implicit missionary and apologetic purposes, in the sense that it was intended to help fight the increasing reservation and animosity that was being shown towards Wolff's philosophy, particularly among the German academic public. That the *Belle Wolfienne* was situated within a rather learned debate instead of a popular reading public, is underlined by the structural and even stylistic faithfulness to Wolff's original, which makes the fictional plot often appear disconnected to the philosophical content.

In the novel's narrative the archetype of the 'ordinary public' seems to be presented in the person of Monsieur**, a young intellectual from Berlin who had barely read anything by Wolff until he took a holiday to Charlottenburg where he encountered the beautiful daughter of his host, *Espérance*, who was an ardent admirer of Wolff. Primarily attracted by the beauty of the young woman, Monsieur** asked her to engage in a *cours de philosophie*, in which she would instruct him and eventually convince him of Wolff's philosophy.⁸⁰⁶ Monsieur**'s conversion to Wolffianism was quickly achieved⁸⁰⁷ and by reading Wolff's *Logic* he slowly became an equal dialogue partner for the young lady philosopher.⁸⁰⁸ Yet, the modern (and most likely the eighteenth-century) reader cannot avoid the feeling that the main reason for Monsieur**'s conversion to Wolffianism was rather a good portion of naivety, and his desire to conquer his beautiful interlocutor. This becomes clear at the beginning of the book's second volume, where Monsieur** confessed:

'Chaque Matin, je sentois redoubler mon Ardeur pour le *Wolfianisme*, & le Tems me paroissoit d'une Longeur assommante, jusqu'au Moment de la Conférence. L'Attachement à la Doctrine tiroit pourtant sa principale Force de celui que j'avois pour le Docteur; & je m'en appercevois bien. Je humois à longs Traits plus d'Amour encore que de Science. Mes Réflexions présentoient bien plus souvent à mon Esprit les Charmes d'*Espérance*, que les Principes de Mr. Wolff.'⁸⁰⁹

To convince Monsieur** of the truth of Wolffianism was hence rather easy, which according to Formey's depiction relied only to a limited extent on the inherent values of this philosophy.

Instead, the role of the eighteenth-century critical public, which the *Belle Wolfienne* targeted at least as much as the 'ordinary public' (that was in need of a comprehensible introduction to Wolff), was fulfilled in the novel's first part by the latter's younger sister, Christine. She was the real antagonist to both Wolff's philosophy and Monsieur**'s desire for romantic togetherness with

805 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 18.

806 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 16-7.

807 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 56.

808 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 86.

809 Formey, *La Belle Wolfienne, Tome second: Avec un Discours sur la Morale des Chinois, traduits de Mr. Wolff* (La Haye, 1741), 1.

Espérance. She periodically interrupted the philosophical conversations by voicing her aversion to the complicatedness and incomprehensibility of Wolff's style, as well as the litigious nature of so many contemporary philosophers in general. However, by the end of the book's first volume, Christine also seems to be on the way to conversion. The reason for this, however, was not due to any direct engagement with Wolff's philosophy as *Espérance* and Monsieur** had practised it, but to the mediation of Wolffianism and Protestant theology that was carried out by the Lutheran preacher and *Aléthophile* Johann Gustav Reinbeck: after their second conversation in the parks of Charlottenburg, *Espérance* and Monsieur** discovered Christine reading Reinbeck's recently published treatise on the immortality of the soul (*Philosophische Gedancken über die vernünftige Seele und derselben Unsterblichkeit*, 1739). Reinbeck's work had convinced Christine due to the outstanding morality of the text, and it had also contributed to her conversion to Wolffianism. Monsieur** agreed with Christine in this and, furthermore, pointed out to her that Reinbeck seems to have applied Wolff's theoretical considerations on the soul to practical experience and, in so doing, Reinbeck even had to abandon some of Wolff's doctrines.⁸¹⁰ Consequently, with Christine's conversion – as with the enamoured Monsieur** himself – it also was not exclusively and purely Wolffian philosophy that convinced her, but rather its popular alteration. The *Belle Wolfienne's* purpose to popularise and defend Wolff by simplifying his ideas – as Formey had claimed in its preface – hence also included omitting or varying some of his opinions, and of giving a stage to the critical voices concerning Wolff's philosophy.

It seems that Wolff himself did not entirely agree with the usefulness of this procedure, yet he did not oppose Formey's literary project, which was supposed to continue with further volumes of the *Belle Wolfienne*. As Wolff wrote in a letter to Manteuffel in January 1741, he generally considered his demonstrative method to be the most important issue of his teachings, and the one that should convince his readers. Still, he was aware of the intellectual incapacity of most readers to comprehend this method, which is why he accepted the form that Formey had given to his philosophy. In his decision, he referred to Madame du Châtelet, author of the *Institutions physiques* that was a popular-philosophical synthesis of Leibniz's and Newton's physics, which was also partially influenced by Wolff's philosophy and was much appreciated by Wolff:⁸¹¹ according to him, du Châtelet had claimed that the French readership was too superficial to be entertained by the purest form of his philosophy. To present his philosophy in an entertaining rather than a scholarly way – as Formey had done – was in Wolff's view at least a means to stimulate interest among its

810 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 131.

811 For the most recent work on du Châtelet's work see Andrea Reichenberger, *Émilie du Châtelets Institutions physiques: Über die Rolle von Prinzipien und Hypothesen in der Physik* (Wiesbaden, 2016). For the influence of Wolff on her work, see particularly 16-17, and for Wolff's appreciation of du Châtelet, see 69-71.

audience.⁸¹² Actually, the immediate feedback that Formey received from the readers of his (long expected) *Belle Wolfienne*, from those that he personally knew, i.e. his Huguenot acquaintances in the German provinces, confirmed the readership's apparently predominant interest in the plot that framed the content of Wolff's Logics. However, they did not think that the plot removed the seriousness of the novel's philosophical core; on the contrary, in their view, the presented philosophical content was still too serious for their taste, which was not adequate for making the work comprehensible to the 'ordinary people'. Paul-Émile Mauclerc and Abraham Bocquet, for example, did not believe that it was very authentic for a young woman like *Espérance* to be so well acquainted with Wolffian Logics, and nor was it possible, as Bocquet noted, that a so deeply enamoured man as Monsieur** was capable of following such complex philosophical explications.⁸¹³ For the reader, the entertaining love story did not make the philosophical part more entertaining (according to Mauclerc), and hence the novel was neither adequate for people who were not familiar with philosophy, nor was it necessary for those who were (according to Bocquet).

As we see, it was mainly the form and style of Formey's philosophical novel that incited comments by his contemporaries, and not the philosophical content that emerged from the pleasant conversations between *Espérance* and Monsieur**. This may have been due to the fact that the content presented in the first volume was not controversial for them. Formey had made his protagonists converse about the nature and purpose of philosophy, and the advantages of the demonstrative method that were displayed in Wolff's preface to his Logics, the *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere*, as well as about the basics of human reasoning and how it was rooted in the nature of the human soul. Moreover, this discussion always adhered to the definitions given in Wolff's work. There was indeed no occasion for controversy, as *Espérance* herself stated towards Monsieur**: their first conversations in the parks of Charlottenburg served to pose the foundations from which soon enough debate would arise.⁸¹⁴ Her claim was then confirmed in the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*, in which the narrative's pleasant character changed: after a straightforward exposition of Wolff's Logics and the non-controversial letters that were attached in the appendix, a manifold debate on a critical element of Wolff's philosophy became the content of the book's second volume. It was at this point that the purpose of the philosophical novel seems to have changed in the sense that it became a part of the learned debate on Wolff's philosophy, instead of being a simplified version of it. Together with this change Formey's position towards Wolff's philosophy also seemed altered: if in the first volume he appeared as a favourable

812 See Wolff to Manteuffel, 27.1.1741, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 209.

813 See Mauclerc to Formey, 15.2.1741 (FF) and Bocquet to Formey, 13.3.1741 (FF). Instead, Jean-Louis Thérémin, in a letter of 29.3.1741 to Formey (FF) held that the book was perfectly fulfilling its purpose to spread Wolffian philosophy via entertainment to a less educated public.

814 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 1, 120.

expert on Wolff, he was now perceived by his public as a critic of Wolff, because he described his doubts concerning the theory of pre-established harmony.

The Attack against Pre-established Harmony in the Belle Wolfienne

The second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* begins with the arrival of two young university graduates in Charlottenburg, who were invited to have lunch with *Espérance*, her sister and mother as well as their visitor Monsieur**. At the lunch table, the discussion evolved into a debate on Wolff's philosophy and introduced a significantly fiercer division line between pro- and anti-Wolffianism than the former pleasant opposition between Christine, her sister and Monsieur**. With the first appearance of the two new characters in the scene, Formey made it clear which role they were meant to play: Monsieur M..., a theologian from Halle was described as rather phlegmatic, but had a tendency to mockery and showed a vivid interest in the beautiful *Espérance*. By this, he was the natural enemy of Monsieur** who would defend his beloved *Espérance* and, with her, Wolff's philosophy against the slander of the young theologian from Halle, the city in which the Pietist opposition to Wolff had formerly been so considerable. Instead, Monsieur P..., a lawyer from Marburg, the place where Wolff spent almost 20 years in exile, had a bright and lively appearance and was perceived by Monsieur** as posing no risk,⁸¹⁵ either to his plans with *Espérance* or to the conservation of Wolff's theories. On the contrary, Monsieur P...'s vivid delight in Wolff's return to Halle University in 1740 highlighted his support for the philosopher,⁸¹⁶ which, by contrast, was received with a rather deprecating attitude by Monsieur M... The debate thus set off as a controversy between the two differently trained young men, in which *Espérance* and Monsieur** were just observers. Given Monsieur**'s recent conversion to Wolffianism it was not very likely that he would have been able to raise strong arguments in favour of Wolff; for *Espérance*, being a woman, it was not decent to engage in such a debate. Yet, the pro-Wolffian lawyer Monsieur P..., although the natural defender of Wolff according to the plot, also remained silent, which led to the impression that in the debate between the pro- and anti-Wolffians the latter dominated. This was the main object of the *Aléthophiles'* criticism when Formey's novel appeared: in their view, Formey's work looked like a criticism of Wolff's ideas, as we will see in more detail below.

In the plot, Monsieur M..., the critic of Wolff, started the very one-sided controversy by claiming that Wolff's philosophical system would have been admirable in itself if only it did not have such (dangerous) implications.⁸¹⁷ He began to prove his hostility towards Wolff's philosophy

815 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 9-11.

816 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 12.

817 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 14.

through a polemical letter from one of his correspondents, 'un Philosophe distingué, qui tient Tête au *Wolfianisme*',⁸¹⁸ that he read out loud to the participants of the lunch. This letter presented not only a morally and religiously orthodox criticism of Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy but also a parody of its implementation as a doctrine that, according to him was blindly followed by so many German philosophers. The core of the letter, more precisely, was a demonstration that Leibniz's ideas on substances (monads) and causality had severe fatalist implications and that it contradicted Revelation. According to the author of the letter, Leibniz's ideas made the human being appear as a passive creature that was completely unable to control its behaviour since everything that ever happened to its mind and body was pre-determined by its Creator. As a consequence, the human being was immune to being blamed for his actions and hence did not have to apologise for anything.⁸¹⁹ Likewise, however, the human being was deprived of any hope for change because of the inevitability of the world's course, and thus it was in vain to beg the Creator for relief.⁸²⁰ Moreover, the author of the letter depicted that human beings were not the only ones subject to destiny, God was too: being the Creator of the determined world-order, His actions were also determined.⁸²¹ Leibniz allegedly portrayed God as a being that was constrained to create the world as it was, i.e. to create it out of necessity and the need to demonstrate His perfection. This idea was diametrically opposed to the Christian image of God, according to which God was not only almighty and perfect (as He was exclusively portrayed in the theory of pre-established harmony), but also unconditionally good and therefore had created the world in order to be benevolent to His creations.⁸²² In sum, the author of the letter emphasised that the distortion of the traditional Christian conceptions of God and the human being that was provoked by Leibniz's determinism, would destroy the fundamental principle of Christianity, i.e. the reciprocal love between God and His creatures and the exchange of good deeds for divine gratitude.⁸²³ Furthermore, the distortion that Leibniz provoked, ridiculed the biblical stories including the doctrine of the self-sacrifice of Christ.⁸²⁴ The criticism of pre-established harmony that was contained in the fictional letter concentrated therefore solely on the theory's assumed consequences, which were summarised under the concept of fatalism and were portrayed as being harmful to religion and morality.

After this cynical portrayal of what the author of the letter considered to be Leibnizian determinism, he went on to provide a no less cynical attack against the persons who had invented

818 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 15.

819 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 19.

820 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 19-20.

821 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 23.

822 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 24.

823 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 25.

824 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 26-8.

and who followed this philosophy. First, he accused those who applied Leibnizian fatalism of being immoral because they used it to their advantage, i.e. as an excuse for selfish behaviour.⁸²⁵ Second, he treated those with disdain who defended fatalism because of their intellectual failure or, worse, because they wanted to support a particular philosophical party.⁸²⁶ Third, the author of the letter condemned the unacceptable refusal of the Leibnizians and Wolffians to account for the practical consequences that their theory entailed.⁸²⁷ The letter eventually concluded with a violent slander against Leibniz himself by portraying him as a smart and cunning person, who had essentially only copied Spinoza – the publicly effective incarnation of irreligion at this time – but had given Spinoza's ideas a more appealing (and perhaps seductive) cover.⁸²⁸ Thus the fictional letter revealed not only an interest in the content of Leibniz's philosophy and its implications for faith, but also pursued a campaign against Leibnizian/ Wolffianism as a 'school of philosophy'.

This letter left not only the previously assured follower of Wolff, *Espérance*, shocked and alienated, Formey's readership was also rather irritated and concerned by such harsh criticism in the middle of an expressly pro-Wolffian book. His friend Bocquet, who, as we will see, had also criticised Wolff's concept of human liberty, wrote to Formey that he would have wished the young lawyer, the partisan of Wolff, to be less silent in the debate with Monsieur M...⁸²⁹ Moreover, the book's publisher, Prosper Marchand, was also concerned with the absence of arguments in defence of Wolff in the book: some readers had complained to him that in the book Wolff was left in the dock for too long ('trop laisser M. Wolff sur la sellette'), and hence he advised Formey to immediately supply the public with the replies to the objections raised.⁸³⁰

This seemingly widespread perception of the need to reply to the criticism of Wolff, i.e. to invalidate it, was also the drive for the *Aléthophiles'* reaction to the second volume of Formey's book. A few months after its appearance, Manteuffel published a thin booklet entitled *Lettre de Mr. P... Jurisconsulte de Marbourg à Mlle Espérance de B.* in which he had assembled not only a fictional reply by the young lawyer, but also three additional pieces: a passage from Fontenelle's appraisal of Leibniz's theory of pre-established harmony, a short treatise on the theory of pre-established harmony by Reinbeck, and a section of Leibniz' *Théodicée*. In the *Avis* to this work Manteuffel (who remained anonymous and simply presented himself as 'a friend of Mr Formey') justified its publication due to some people's fear that Formey would not continue his novel. Although Manteuffel presented his *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* as a friendly suggestion on how Formey,

825 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 29.

826 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 30.

827 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 31.

828 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 32.

829 See Bocquet to Formey, 26.5.1741 (FF).

830 See Marchand to Formey, 19.9.1741, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 274.

as an author, could continue his work, he obviously launched a strong criticism of the contents that Formey had chosen to develop in his narrative, particularly of the polemical letter of Monsieur M...’s philosopher friend. In Manteuffel’s text the young lawyer Monsieur P... rejected not only the arguments of the letter’s author by pointing to his (deliberate) misinterpretation of Leibniz, Wolff and others.⁸³¹ He also strongly criticised the way in which Monsieur M... and his philosopher friend (who he took to be identical) had formed their opinion on Wolff, namely through a very superficial and biased reading of his philosophy and their egoistic urge to stage themselves as Wolff’s opponents.⁸³² Moreover, Manteuffel’s *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* also reflected the religious tone of the letter that was read by Monsieur M...: instead of highlighting like Monsieur M...’s friend that pre-established harmony neglected God’s unconditional goodness, Manteuffel’s version of the young lawyer stressed that without pre-established harmony, divine wisdom would be destroyed and replaced by a purely accidental Creation.⁸³³ With this argument Manteuffel hoped to have eventually refuted the polemics of Monsieur M...’s philosopher friend and to have corrected the anti-Wolffian message of Formey’s novel.

The polemical letter of Monsieur M...’s philosopher friend, however, did not only displease Manteuffel; Formey as the author of the *Belle Wolfienne* also seems to have disagreed with its style and content and tried to partially oppose it in the second part of the *Belle Wolfienne*’s second volume. What apparently none of the novel’s contemporary readers knew,⁸³⁴ was that Formey had retrieved the polemical letter from his correspondence with Jean Pierre de Crousaz, professor of philosophy at the Academy of Lausanne, whose works in logic were mainly Cartesian, and inspired by Locke. Moreover, Crousaz was known for his public engagement against irreligion and immorality. His refutations of Anthony Collins, Pierre Bayle, Alexander Pope, Leibniz and Wolff, were portrayed by him as expressions of this engagement.⁸³⁵ The letter that Monsieur M... read in the plot of the *Belle Wolfienne*, was part of a real debate between Formey and Crousaz about Leibniz’s and Wolff’s alleged fatalism. Formey’s appropriation of this letter in his novel is, on the one hand, a sign of the strong effect that Crousaz’s criticism had on Formey’s opinion making, and on the other hand, it served Formey as a means to continue it in public and possibly to solve the

831 See [Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel], *Lettre de Mr. P... Jurisconsulte de Marbourg à Mlle Espérance de B., contenant la suite du Tome second de la Belle Wolfienne*, 1741, 17.

832 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 27.

833 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 32.

834 Among modern scholars only Häsel, “Formey et Crousaz,” 454, revealed this hidden connection. However, Häsel did not provide the complete attribution.

835 On Crousaz see Jacqueline La Harpe, *Jean-Pierre de Crousaz et le conflit des idées au siècle des lumières. [Avec une préf. de Daniel Mornet]* (Genève, 1955); on his refutations see particularly 221-36. Moreover, for his role in the Swiss context, see Simone Zurbuchen, “Die Schweizerische Debatte über die Leibniz-Wolffsche Philosophie und ihre Bedeutung für Emer von Vattels philosophischen Werdegang,” in *Reconceptualizing Nature, Science, and Aesthetics. Contribution à une nouvelle approche aux Lumières Helvétiques*, ed. Patrick Coleman, Anne Hofman, and Simone Zurbuchen (Geneva, 1998), 91–113, particularly 102-4.

epistolary debate that he had with Crousaz.

Formey and Crousaz

Formey had started a correspondence with Crousaz in April 1738 in order to seek Crousaz's approval and support for the publication of an abbreviation that he had made of Crousaz's comprehensive treatise against scepticism in 1733, *Examen du pyrrhonisme ancien et moderne*. Crousaz agreed with and supported Formey's plans.⁸³⁶ However, already in his second letter to Crousaz (which unfortunately is lost), Formey must have revealed his predilection for Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy, which prompted Crousaz to write a whole tirade of arguments against this philosophy. From December 1739 onwards Crousaz elaborated in several letters to Formey his criticism of Leibniz's presumed fatalism and Wolff's incomprehensible methodology, and the danger they represented for religion.⁸³⁷ Crousaz's endeavour to discredit Leibniz and Wolff in Formey's eyes culminated in an almost 20-page-long polemical pamphlet that must have reached Formey in late August 1740, and which eventually became the previously cited letter by an anonymous philosopher that Monsieur M... read out in the *Belle Wolfienne*.⁸³⁸

Consequently, the controversy over the fatalistic consequences of the system of pre-established harmony that evolved at the lunch table of *Espérance's* home in Charlottenburg, mirrored – at least in part – the epistolary controversy that Crousaz and Formey had precisely when the latter was in the process of writing his book in support of Wolff.⁸³⁹ As in the novel, where the polemical letter did not receive a response by the actually pro-Wolffian audience represented by Monsieur P..., *Espérance* and Monsieur**, the correspondence also does not reveal that Formey took a clear or explicit counter-position towards Crousaz. In his supposedly third letter to Crousaz in November/ beginning of December 1739, which was prior to the reception of Crousaz's scathing criticism of Leibniz and Wolff, Formey had only alleged that he admired and agreed with Wolff's ontology and logics, and was not able to judge the potentially dangerous implications of his

836 See Crousaz to Formey, 3.11. (or 10.)1739 (FF).

837 See Crousaz to Formey, 22.12.1739 (FF).

838 The main part of the fictional letter in the *Belle Wolfienne* is based on Crousaz to Formey, s.d. (Fonds Crousaz, BCU Lausanne, IS 2024 XIII/A/7) which was previously misdated to 1738. This letter reached Formey together with Crousaz to Formey, 24.8.1740 (Slg. Darm.). The very first paragraph of the fictional letter (*Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 16-17) was copied from still another letter: Crousaz to Formey, 1.7.1740 (Slg. Darm.); already in this letter Crousaz had announced the posting of his long critical letter which must have been written between December 1739 and April 1740.

839 Formey had finished the manuscript for the first volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* in summer 1740 (Formey to Marchand, 9.8.1740, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 240) and that for its second part in late 1740 (Formey to Marchand, 18.2.1741, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 252). The publication date of the first volume in Holland was the 1.11.1740 (before it had even arrived in Berlin, Marchand to Formey, 20.12.[1740], "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 245), while the second volume appeared in spring 1741 (Marchand to Formey, 5.4.1741, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 259).

psychology (to which Crousaz had apparently referred):

'Quoique j'ai quelque prédilection pour le système de Leibnitz & Wolff, Non juro [in?] verba Magistri surtout, je n'ai pas encore assés approfondi sa Psychologie pour juger, si elle renferme des principes dangereux. Je m'en suis tenu jusqu'à présent à la Logique, & à l'Ontologie, & je vous avouë que tout m'y a paru si lumineux, si bien lié, si solidement démontré, si different des autres Cours que j'avois lus auparavant, que j'en ai conçu une haute idée & du Philosophe, & de sa Philosophie.'⁸⁴⁰

In this letter, of which only a fragment had been preserved, Formey's position concerning Wolffianism is reticent in respect to a general approval, but also firm in respect to particular parts of Wolff's philosophy – all in all a quite diplomatic move if we consider the hostility of his correspondent.

Nevertheless, in Crousaz's mind, there was a fundamental difference between his own and Formey's position in respect to the issue of human liberty. In Crousaz's view, Wolff's ideas on this subject were as harmful as Bayle's, which was why Crousaz had been slightly surprised that Formey agreed with Crousaz's refutation of Bayle, while simultaneously defending Wolff. More than that, Crousaz seems to have been worried that Formey's Wolffian bias could do harm to his own (i.e. Formey's) evaluation of Bayle in the *Abrégé* of Crousaz's *Examen du Pyrrhonisme*, that Formey had written.⁸⁴¹ Crousaz was convinced that Formey would stop supporting him (i.e. Crousaz) after having read his new *Logique* in which Wolff was openly attacked:

'j'aprehende que ma nouvelle Logique ne fasse tomber chez vous vos préventions pour moy; car je m'imagine de voir clair comme le jour, que si la Logique & l'Ontologie de Monsr. Wolff ne présente rien que de lumineux, ma Logique ne vous offrira que ténèbres, chimères & galimatias, d'autant plus, que j'ai crû qu'il étoit de mon devoir de profiter des frequentes occasions très naturelles que ma Logique me fournissoit de relever dans celle de Mr. Wolff diverses fautes contre le bons [sic] sens.'⁸⁴²

Crousaz might have assumed that Formey, as a young (and perhaps inexperienced) scholar, had accidentally started a collaboration with him, ignoring that he actually belonged to a different philosophical party.

Given Crousaz's conviction that Formey and he belonged to opposing philosophical parties – at least over the question of human liberty – it is not surprising that his reaction to the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* was very enthusiastic: when Formey told him that he had reprinted one of his anti-Leibnizian and anti-Wolffian letters in his philosophical novel, Crousaz thus

840 Formey to Crousaz, [between 22.12.1739 and April 1740] (Fonds Crousaz, BCU Lausanne, IS 2024 III/233).

841 See particularly the letters by Crousaz to Formey of 1.7.1740 and 24.8.1740 (both Slg. Darm.).

842 Crousaz to Formey, s.d. [between December 1739 and April 1740] (Fonds Crousaz, BCU Lausanne, IS 2024/XIII/A/7).

concluded that he had been successful in converting his young correspondent from Wolffianism.⁸⁴³ Furthermore, it was Formey himself who additionally enhanced Crousaz's perception of his success by claiming that he had disabused himself of Wolffianism since his first letters to Crousaz.⁸⁴⁴ Why did he highlight this so explicitly, besides having seemingly acknowledged Crousaz's opinion by printing his letter? In the very same letter in which Formey claimed this, he also reported the reaction of the *Aléthophiles* on his *Belle Wolfienne* to Crousaz and sent him the above-mentioned *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* with the request to write a reply to it, which he could insert into the next volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*. It seems at least possible that Formey emphasised his personal conversion from Wolffianism in order to convince Crousaz to engage in this task; probably with the same purpose, Formey portrayed the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* as easily refutable. Crousaz, in his strong antipathy for Leibniz and Wolff and inebriated by his apparent success with Formey, agreed immediately to write this refutation and eventually conceived of a work of around 300 pages.⁸⁴⁵ Marchand, the *Belle Wolfienne*'s publisher, however, refused to insert it into the novel's third volume.⁸⁴⁶

At least this was what Formey claimed to Crousaz in autumn 1741, which however subsequently appeared as a lie, as the relationship between the two men developed. In the years after 1741 their correspondence continued to deal with the planned but never achieved publication of Crousaz's reply to the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*,⁸⁴⁷ but likewise, it seems that Formey slowly phased out their correspondence. Over time, Crousaz seems to have also realised that Formey had not abandoned the Wolffian cause and instead continued to collaborate in the *Aléthophiles*' works in support of Wolff, such as in the translation of Reinbeck's treatise on the immortality of the soul, which was targeted against Voltaire and appeared in 1744.⁸⁴⁸ One year later, the rupture between the two men eventually occurred: Crousaz accused Formey of being a Pyrrhonian and insinuated that his image as a Christian philosopher, which he conveyed through his moral discourses would suffer from his unorthodox views on the body-soul-relation.⁸⁴⁹ In 1745 this slightly threatening 'insinuation' came too late: Formey had already stopped supporting Crousaz's opinion on pre-established harmony, in autumn 1743, as was evident in a review that he wrote of Crousaz's *De l'esprit humain*.⁸⁵⁰ There he presented Crousaz's criticism of Leibniz as confusing, not fair and

843 See Crousaz to Formey, 7.11.1741 (Slg. Darm.) and 21.12.1741 (FF).

844 See Formey to Crousaz, 29.9.1741 (BCU Lausanne, Fonds Crousaz IS 2024 XII/169).

845 See Crousaz to Formey, without date (BCU Lausanne, Fonds Crousaz, IS 2024 XIII/F/30).

846 See Marchand to Formey, 19.6.1742, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 282.

847 Actually it was published later, as an independent treatise: Crousaz, *Réflexions sur l'ouvrage intitulé 'La Belle Wolfienne' Auxquelles on a joint plusieurs éclaircissements sur le Traité de l'Esprit humain* (Lausanne; Geneva, 1743).

848 See Crousaz to Formey, 28.1.1744 (FF).

849 See Crousaz to Formey, 8.1.1745 (Slg. Darm.)

850 [Formey], "Article VI. De l'esprit humain [...]," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique*, 1, no. 2 (1746), 325-336. The

lacking serious judgement.⁸⁵¹ More precisely, he blamed Crousaz for vainly contesting the determined nature of the soul's decisions,⁸⁵² and for contradicting himself in his ideas on the liberty of God and of His choices in the creation.⁸⁵³ Even more, Formey suggested that Crousaz's own ideas on this topic were actually compatible with those of his adversary Leibniz.⁸⁵⁴ In his review of Crousaz's *De l'esprit humain*, Formey hence downplayed and relativised the same criticisms that he had apparently – at least in the eyes of Crousaz – agreed upon only two years earlier. It is thus clear that the apparently successful influence of the Swiss philosopher on him was not as profound and stable as it had appeared to be, or as Crousaz might have wished.

We can thus conclude that, although his correspondence with Crousaz had only a superficial and short-term influence on Formey, it had at least the effect of inciting Formey to engage with the concept of pre-established harmony. As we saw in the letter that Formey sent between December 1739 and April 1740, he must have only just started familiarising himself with Wolff's teachings: at that point, he had only read Wolff's ontology and logics, which he also discussed in the first volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*. Moreover, we might assume that Formey was generally very receptive to the moral and religious arguments that Crousaz used as a basis for his judgement of the pre-established harmony, given his own self-perception and self-presentation as a defender of morality and religion. This self-perception was probably also particularly strong when he initially encountered Crousaz for he might have still been more firmly tied to his pastoral office than to his new office as a professor of philosophy. Besides this, in late 1739/ early 1740, Formey had not yet read Wolff's *Psychologia rationalis*, as he himself stated in his letter to Crousaz. He must have read it immediately afterwards since he used it in his first account of pre-established harmony in the appendix of the first volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*. As we will see in the next chapter, it was through his engagement with the question of free will, that Wolff advanced in his psychology, that Formey changed his view concerning the fatalistic consequences of Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy, which Crousaz had so strongly emphasised. Before this, Formey seems to have sought elsewhere for counter-arguments to fatalism, namely among his correspondents.

Formey's Search for Potential Replies to Crousaz

Before inserting Crousaz's critical-polemical letter into his novel, Formey discussed the doubts that

article seems to have already been written in autumn 1743, see Pérard to Formey, 27.11.1743 (FF), yet the publication was delayed because of changes in the publication of the journal.

851 See [Formey], "Article VI," 327 and also 336 where Formey presents his overall opinion on the work: 'je soupçonne qu'il [Crousaz] est parvenu à cette Epoque d'années, où l'Imagination reprend la place du Jugement.'

852 See [Formey], "Article VI," 331-2.

853 See [Formey], "Article VI," 333-4.

854 See [Formey], "Article VI," 335.

Crousaz had raised concerning pre-established harmony with others. In November 1740 he spoke about the potential failures and risks of Wolff's system with his Wolffian mentor Count Manteuffel, as well as with his Huguenot peer, the pastor Abraham Bocquet. Formey's aim in addressing these two different regular correspondents was apparently to collect arguments that he could insert into his *Belle Wolfienne*, in order to counter Crousaz's and others' criticism of pre-established harmony. To Manteuffel, Formey explained his doubt that the Wolfian *nexus rerum*, i.e. the inevitable connection between all things, might lead to fatalism,⁸⁵⁵ and he told Manteuffel that he would introduce this doubt and the critical issues linked to it into his *Belle Wolfienne*.⁸⁵⁶ On the one hand, Manteuffel seems to have been alarmed and tried to destroy Formey's doubts. He immediately suggested that Formey read Johann Jakob Köthen's pro-Wolffian text *Principia Quaedam Metaphysicae Wolfianae* (1737).⁸⁵⁷ Moreover, Manteuffel urged his friend, the Wolffian theologian Johann Gustav Reinbeck several times to speak personally to Formey and to provide him with the necessary theological arguments, with which to defend the *nexus rerum* against religious and moral criticism.⁸⁵⁸ On the other hand, Manteuffel could not find an objection to Formey's plan to introduce the critical aspects of Wolff's philosophy into the *Belle Wolfienne*, as long as these aspects were in turn discussed and rectified as Formey had planned to do. Manteuffel even defended Formey's intentions against another member of the *Aléthophiles*, the publisher Ambrosius Haude, who considered Formey's work as dangerous and feared that Formey would not form a reply to his criticism of Wolff.⁸⁵⁹ That the publication of the *Belle Wolfienne* proved Haude's fears to be true and that it became Manteuffel's main accusation against Formey in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, is somehow ironic but was, in my view, a consequence of the *Aléthophile's* neglect of Formey's problems. Manteuffel had prevented Formey from addressing his concerns about fatalism directly to Wolff; and, Reinbeck, who was supposed to instruct Formey instead of Wolff, postponed this task for too long. As Manteuffel's letters to Reinbeck reveal, Reinbeck's answer to Formey was still missing in April 1741, when the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* was about to appear.⁸⁶⁰ As a consequence, Manteuffel and the *Aléthophiles* were only able to retroactively destroy Formey's doubts concerning pre-established harmony. To do so Manteuffel chose to interfere directly with Formey's plot through the publication of the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*. This reaction made the whole

855 See Manteuffel to Formey, 30.11.1740 (CV).

856 See Manteuffel to Reinbeck, 24.1.1741 (UBL, Ms 0344).

857 See Manteuffel to Formey, 30.11.1740 (CV).

858 See Manteuffel to Wolff, 10.2.1741, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, 212; as well as the several letters from Manteuffel to Reinbeck between January and April 1741 in UBL, Ms 0344.

859 See Manteuffel to Reinbeck, 24.1.1741 (UBL, Ms 0344). Manteuffel's conviction of Formey's stability in the support of Wolff appears also in his letter of 23.2.1741 in which he claimed Formey to be immune against even the (anti-Wolffian) influence of Maupertuis.

860 See Manteuffel to Reinbeck, 9.4.1741 (UBL, Ms0344). Instead Manteuffel eventually had organised that Wolff would reply to Formey's doubts.

affair publicly appear like there was an internal controversy among the Wolffians themselves, instead of being an (intimate) constructive discussion as Formey might have wished at the beginning.

Unlike Manteuffel, Wolff and the other *Aléthophiles*, Formey's Huguenot friend Abraham Bocquet had engaged with Formey much more about his doubts. However, Bocquet gave credence to Formey's concerns about the potential fatalistic or deterministic implications of Wolff's philosophy, and largely explained his own doubts concerning Wolff and his idea of human liberty. Besides finding that Wolff was less likeable as a person, he also agreed with the weakness of Wolff's account of human volition:

J'aime la philosophie de Wolff. Mais entre nous je ne me sens pas trop d'inclination pour le philosophe. Il y a longtems que je me suis appercu que Lange avoit raison d'accuser Wolff de détruire la liberté. Mais je voudrois qu'il eût aussi renverser ses démonstrations: je vous avoue que plus je les examine et plus elles me persuadent. Il ne me reste en faveur de la liberté que la seule preuve de sentiment. Mais n'est il pas fâcheux que ce sentiment se trouve en opposition avec la raison. Qui des deux a le plus d'autorité? [...] Je me rappelle une objection qu'on lui fait; dont il se tire assés mal: après quoi il continue la chaine de ses démonstrations, comme si le chaînon qu'on lui dispute etoit aussi bon que les autres. C'est au § 498 de la metaphysique allemande. Il souhaite que la volonté ne se determine jamais sans motifs. On lui objecte qu'un homme qui doit choisir entre deux ducats qui lui paroissent parfaitement égaux, en choisira l'un quoiqu'il n'y ait pas plus de raison pour lui que pour l'autre. À cela Mr. Wolff répond qu'il y a plus de raison pour le ducat qui a été choisi, qu'il etoit plus à la portée de celui qui devoit en prendre un. Qui ne voit que c'est là une supposition gratuite, et qui va contre la premiere supposition, puisque l'on suppose que les deux ducats paroissent à tous égards parfaitement égaux à celui qui doit en choisir un. Cependant Mr. Wolff pretend que cet exemple n'est pas une exception à la regle qu'il établit, et ne se fait aucun scrupule de passer outre.¹⁸⁶¹

Interestingly, Bocquet referred to the criticism of Joachim Lange, Wolff's main and fiercest antagonist amongst the Halle Pietists, to explain his concerns. The arguments of Lange, as we will see shortly, also dominated the second part of the fictional discussion in Charlottenburg in Formey's *Belle Wolfienne*.

Bocquet's example shows that the doubts concerning Wolff's theory of pre-established harmony and free will were not only common for a Cartesian philosopher, like Crousaz, who considered himself to be a defender of religion and morality (as Formey himself), but that they also existed amongst the second-generation Prussian Huguenots, who were generally rather enthusiastic about Wolff's teachings. However, their doubts were quite different in kind when compared to the

861 Bocquet to Formey, 21.11.1740 (FF).

fundamental criticism that Crousaz had demonstrated in his correspondence with Formey. As Bocquet's comment shows, his criticism of Wolff's explanation of human liberty resulted from a very detailed and close analysis of Wolff's text. More importantly, Bocquet's arguments against Wolff's theory were inspired logically not theologically: Wolff's demonstration did not seem coherent to him and consequently, human liberty could not be rationally proved, which Bocquet – as it seems reading between the lines – regretted. In contrast to Bocquet's objections of Wolff's ideas, Crousaz's critical arguments derived from a purely philosophical standpoint; as we have seen he argued from the perspective of morality and Revelation. This also affected the style of his criticism, which appears not only more dogmatic but also much more superficial and less erudite than Bocquet's meticulous analysis.

It seems that in Formey's view, it was the kind of criticism that Bocquet pursued – the erudite or philosophical one – that was legitimate and worthwhile to present and to discuss in the *Belle Wolfienne*. This would explain why after the presentation of the anonymous letter, the second part of the novel's second volume contained a rather erudite discussion on the problem of fatalism in connection to Wolff's philosophy. Although this second part also contained arguments that were inspired by a more religiously orthodox position – from Wolff's Pietist opponent Joachim Lange – its style is more analytical and much less polemical. That Formey did indeed dislike the polemical aspect of Crousaz's criticism, can be observed in the censorship that he carried out on Crousaz's original letter before inserting it into the *Belle Wolfienne*. The original letter contained some fierce attacks against Wolff as a person, which Formey omitted in the publication; this was probably not only for reasons of decency but also because he simply did not agree with Crousaz's opinion of Wolff's character. In Crousaz's view, Wolff had adapted Leibniz's theory of pre-established harmony only because of his lack of genius and narrow-mindedness. However, according to Crousaz, behind all this apparent stupidity lay a tactical behaviour, namely the one that was also applied by Bayle, which is to attract more and more readers by presenting coarse or provocative arguments.⁸⁶² In my view, the fact that Formey censored this polemical content, shows that his possible doubts concerning some of Wolff's ideas did not overthrow his general esteem for the philosopher. Furthermore, it is likely that Formey's choice to add a 'second round' of arguments against pre-established harmony to his *Belle Wolfienne*, resulted from his aim to counter Crousaz's polemical and intellectually rather poor criticism. In this sense, I argue that the second part of the *Belle Wolfienne*'s second volume is actually the answer to Crousaz that Formey had sought from the

⁸⁶² See Crousaz to Formey, s.d. [between December 1739 and April 1740] (Fonds Crousaz, BCU Lausanne, IS 2024/XIII/A/7). By the way, Formey omitted also a passage of Crousaz's letter in which the immoral behaviour of the French was criticised. This censorship is understandable in the light of Formey's aim to distribute his book in France.

Aléthophiles and his other acquaintances but did not obtain in a sufficient way.

Finding Help in the Enemy's Camp? Lange's Criticism Revisited

Formey then also did everything to stage the contrast between Crousaz's polemical letter and the highly learned criticism of Wolff's philosophy. The shift in setting was introduced in two instances in the novel: First, the characters agreed to base their discussion on Wolff's learned reply to Joachim Lange's (equally learned) criticism, namely Wolff's 1724 Latin treatise *De Differentia Nexus Rerum sapientis, & fatalis Necessitatis*, which was indicated by Monsieur P... after having been asked by Monsieur** to disprove the accusations in the letter that Monsieur M... had read.⁸⁶³ Considering that Formey did not receive constructive help with his doubts from the *Aléthophiles*, he seems to have chosen this treatise instead. However, it seems that for Formey, Wolff's treatise was not sufficiently convincing to answer Crousaz; hence he not only replicated Wolff's answers in the treatise but also discussed them critically. Moreover, it has to be said that there was also a rather significant chronological distance between Wolff's own defence against Lange in 1724 and Formey's defence against Crousaz in 1740: as we will see more in detail below, the theory of pre-established harmony had already lost a lot of support in 1740, even among Wolff's disciples themselves, and the theory of physical influx became increasingly popular. Wolff's arguments in 1724 thus were most probably no more up-to-date, and therefore could not be replicated without Formey adjusting them for his *Belle Wolfienne*. This is why the part of the novel that seems to have been dedicated to the refutation of the fictional letter's author's (i.e. Crousaz's) attack, also appeared rather like a second criticism of Leibniz and Wolff than as a defence of them.

However, as we have said, the discussion of Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy in the second part of Formey's book was supposed to be of an erudite and scholarly virtuous nature, which was secondly emphasised by the fact that Monsieur M... preceded his eventual criticism of pre-established harmony with a general appraisal of the merits of Leibniz and Wolff as philosophers: concerning the whole of Wolff's philosophical oeuvre he claimed:

'Un Système, qui a de pareils Auteurs, ne peut donc qu'avoir des Côtez, qui lui font Honneur,
& je les reconnois avec plaisir. Beaucoup d'Ordre, d'Exactitude, de Solidité, tant qu'il se

863 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 35. The treatise by Wolff is *De Differentia Nexus Rerum sapientis, & fatalis Necessitatis, nec non Systematis Harmoniae Praestabilatae & Hypothesium Spinosae luculenta commentatio, in qua simul genuina Dei existentiam demonstrandi Ratio expenditur et multa Religionis Naturalis capita illustrantur* [1724], ed. Jean École. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 2, vol. 9 (Hildesheim, 1983). The discussion of the arguments of the treatise begins on page 55. For the details of the dispute between Wolff and Lange in the 1720s see Bianco, "Freiheit gegen Fatalismus," and Albrecht Beutel, "Causa Wolffiana. Die Verteilung Christian Wolffs aus Preußen 1723 als Kulminationspunkt des theologisch-politischen Konflikts zwischen Halleschem Pietismus und Aufklärungsphilosophie," in *Reflektierte Religion: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Protestantismus*, ed. Albrecht Beutel (Tübingen, 2007), 125–69.

renferme dans certaines Bornes; d'excellentes Observations sur Dieu, sur l'Ame, sur le Monde, sur les Phénomènes de la Nature, sur les Devoirs de l'Homme & du Citoïen: tout cela s'y trouve, & peut s'y lire avec Fruit.⁸⁶⁴

This general recognition of Wolff's person and philosophy by Monsieur M... shows that the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* – unlike contemporary and later observers might have considered it – was not aimed at destroying Wolff's reputation as a philosopher and his philosophy as a whole. Moreover, this appreciative comment highlighted the contrast to the fictional letter with its slander on Leibniz, Wolff and their followers, and thus also the contrast between Formey and Crousaz.

The erudite or learned discussion of pre-established harmony that was based on Wolff's own defence against Joachim Lange in 1724, can hence be understood as Formey's answer to Crousaz, given that it was presented as a means to recapitulate the rather vulgar popular-philosophical arguments quoted in the letter.⁸⁶⁵ More precisely, the discussion evolved on a much more abstract level than in the letter, in the sense that it overlooked the very practical consequences for the morality and religiosity of the human being that were developed by Crousaz and instead contained mainly considerations on the logic and coherence of Wolff's theories. This does not mean, however, that the motivation for the discussion was different from Crousaz's arguments: also the criticism of the Halle Pietists that was at the centre of the discussion in the book's second part was inspired by religious and moral concerns, and therefore revolved around the problem of fatalism, but the Pietists' criticism dealt with the metaphysical roots of fatalism in Wolff's philosophy rather than with its consequences. Moreover, besides the theory of pre-established harmony, the metaphysical discussion in the second part of the narrative also included other problems in Wolff's philosophy that allowed for fatalistic consequences, namely the concepts of sufficient reason, hypothetical necessity and *nexus rerum*. It was through a discussion of the latter, the *nexus rerum*, that Monsieur M... started the debate, more precisely, he emphasised the apparent contradiction between this concept and the idea of the world's contingency. The notion *nexus rerum* designated the interdependence of all existing substances in the world, both in a synchronic and a diachronic perspective;⁸⁶⁶ hence it was intimately linked to the core element of Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy, i.e. the concept of sufficient reason. The causality that was implied in these concepts traditionally encountered the criticism of allowing for a deterministic world order. A criticism that Wolff had previously denied by referring to his natural theology in which he had established the proof of God's existence on the claim of the world's contingency (see Ch. 3). As Formey stated, to

864 Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 43. Compare also to Monsieur M...'s statement on page 54 where he claimed that Wolff's system was too strong to be destroyed in its entirety by him.

865 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 55.

866 See Jean École, "De la nature de l'âme, de la déduction de ses facultés, de ses rapports avec le corps, ou La 'Psychologia Rationalis' de Christian Wolff," *Giornale di Metafisica*, no. 4–6 (1969), 507.

this general contingency, the *nexus rerum* was only an additional concept which had allowed Wolff to account for some of God's attributes like His almightiness, omniscience and wisdom. Such attributes could only be understood by assuming that there was a consciously arranged interconnection between His creatures.⁸⁶⁷ Hence, Formey depicted it in such a way that, in order to account for both the existence and attributes of God, Wolff had used two different approaches, which he himself had claimed to be compatible; yet, his adversaries, like Monsieur M... in the *Belle Wolfienne*, argued that they were mutually exclusive.⁸⁶⁸

After having revealed this apparent global mismatch in Wolff's reasoning, Monsieur M... went on to discuss in greater detail the flaws of Wolff's concept of contingency while trying to demonstrate its similarities with Spinoza's philosophy. First, he challenged the plausibility of Wolff's definition of contingency. Wolff had defined contingency as an assemblage of things, the contrary of which was possible. This meant that the world as it existed, was a result of contingency since it was only the realisation of one possibility among many other possibilities. Spinoza, instead, was known for not distinguishing between possible and real existence: in his *Ethica*, he had claimed that all things were determined because of God's necessary existence, and His effect on them and that therefore nothing in nature was contingent.⁸⁶⁹ In Monsieur M...'s view, Wolff's distinction between possible and real existence lacked plausibility and was thus only a poorly disguised version of Spinoza's argument.⁸⁷⁰ As a consequence, Wolff's idea of contingency was bereft of its theoretical foundation. Second, as Monsieur M... pointed out, even if there had been a variety of possible worlds and hence the existing world had come into being contingently as Wolff claimed, its essence must have been determined, in the sense that it must have owned all the prerequisites for coming into being that the other possible worlds had not.⁸⁷¹ Besides this discussion of whether the process of creating the world was determined or not, Monsieur M... argued, that the result of it, i.e. the world as it actually existed, was completely determined:

'Mais, après tout, que la Nécessité absolue découle du Décret de Dieu, ou de l'Essence & de la Combinaison des Choses, n'est-ce pas pour nous la même chose? Nous nous trouvons dans une certaine Combinaison, dans une certaine Enchainure, où nous sommes déterminés nécessairement à telles ou telles Actions, à tels ou tels Etats: en serons-nous plus avancés, quand Monsieur Wolff nous aura appris, que tout cela est en soi contingent & hypothétique; & la Nature de nos Actions & de notre Sort ne demeure-t-elle pas la même que dans le Système

867 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 56-7.

868 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 57.

869 See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, part 1, proposition 29, in Edwin Curley, ed., *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1 (Princeton, 1985), 433-4.

870 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 59.

871 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 59-60.

de Spinoza?⁸⁷²

The practical criticisms that Crousaz presented in his letter to Formey also predominantly relied upon this argument: all the bad consequences for the human beings' morality and religiosity resulted from the assumed pre-determined structure of the world, no matter if Wolff repeatedly called this structure contingent or hypothetical.

Also the second main argument against the *nexus rerum* that was discussed by Monsieur M... seems to have been linked to the criticism raised by Crousaz in the sense that it dealt with the role played by God in Wolff's cosmology. However, while Crousaz had been obsessed with the negation of God's goodness in a fatalistic world order, Monsieur M..., following the legacy of the Pietist criticism, was more concerned with God's (self-imposed) lack of power in changing the world. According to this objection, God had always known the details of the ideal plan of the world's order and by having decided to enact this plan He had lost the opportunity to subsequently change it. An intervention in the existing order, due to a particular problem or situation, would, therefore, mean that God had not been completely satisfied with the plan in the first place and that he hence had not chosen the best of all worlds and was perhaps not as wise as Christian dogma supposed.⁸⁷³ This idea of the immutability of the single components of the existing world order entailed not only a negation of God's power and wisdom, but also a theoretical denial of the possibility of miracles: either one had to assume that miracles were as pre-conceived and foreseen by God as all other details of the world order, as Houtteville had claimed,⁸⁷⁴ or one had to assume that a miracle would destroy the foreseen course of the world. To this latter point, Wolff had replied that there was a distinction between the universe and the world: miracles interrupted the first, i.e. the assemblage of bodies, but did not harm the regular course of the supra-structure of the world.⁸⁷⁵ Moreover, Wolff had claimed that God as the initiator of miracles took also care of repairing the interruptions caused by them. Monsieur M..., however, did not buy these arguments and concluded that miracles would change the identity of the world and thus were incompatible with a pre-determined world order.⁸⁷⁶

Monsieur M...'s discussion of all these points in the *Belle Wolfienne* arose from one single fundamental question that had concerned theologians after the Reformation, namely how to conciliate the dogma of God's Providence with the idea of a contingent and free world order. In order to guarantee the dogma of God's goodness and the human responsibility for evil, Reformed as well as Lutheran orthodoxy had developed doctrinal solutions, according to which God was

872 Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 61; compare also to 68.

873 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 68-9.

874 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 69.

875 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 62.

876 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 64.

provident and human actions were at the same time contingent: in Lutheran orthodoxy after Luther (who had still defended the bondage of human will), God was considered to have installed free will in the human being and therefore God could be considered as the universal cause of everything without being directly responsible for the behaviour of the His creatures.⁸⁷⁷ The Reformed argued that God's will was free, i.e. contingent and that therefore also the things he willed, i.e. the behaviour of his creatures, was also to be considered as contingent (although this behaviour was a necessary consequence of God's will). This theory was however disputed, not only by Protestant Socians and Arminians but also by Catholic Jesuits.⁸⁷⁸ In the *Belle Wolfienne* it was Monsieur P..., the young lawyer from Marburg, who addressed the problem of the contested nature of the alleged compatibility of God's providence and contingency, and by this embarrassed his adversary Monsieur M...: 'En attendant, souvenez-vous, que cette Nécessité, que vous fuïez avec tant d'Horreur, se trouve dans tous les Systèmes, où la Prescience de Dieu est admise.'⁸⁷⁹ In response to this Monsieur M... felt constrained to admit that he did not know how divine prescience and liberty could coexist – and by this revealed his divergence from orthodoxy – yet, he categorically precluded for himself the option to adapt the idea of a necessary system.⁸⁸⁰ The problem with this position and the theologically inspired criticism of Wolff, in general, was that it created a situation in which one person's word stood against another's: also Leibniz and Wolff, like their orthodox critics, feared to conceive of the world's course as being absolutely necessary. In his considerations on the concept of pre-established harmony between the body and the soul, Monsieur M... eventually had to concede that according to the theory of pre-established harmony, the human soul could not be considered as less free than it could be according to divine prescience: in both cases it was God who knew all the future choices of the soul and according to pre-established harmony He moreover had associated it with a body whose movements were in harmony with the (free) choices of the soul.⁸⁸¹ Nevertheless, Monsieur M... claimed, that practically such a system would make people who agreed with it rather doubtful of their true liberty: 'En un mot, si le Système de l'*Harmonie préétablie* ne fait aucun Tort à la Liberté, il ne peut néanmoins qu'en ébranler la Persuasion dans ceux qui l'admettent. Du moins, il ne leur laisse aucun Moïen de s'en assurer, non plus qu'une Montre, qui auroit des Perceptions correspondantes à ses Mouvemens, ne pourroit se croire libre.'⁸⁸²

877 See Walter Sparr, *Wiederkehr der Metaphysik: die ontologische Frage in der lutherischen Theologie des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1976), 177.

878 See Andreas Beck J., "God, Creation, and Providence in Post-Reformation Reformed Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*, ed. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber (Oxford, 2016), 201-2.

879 Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 70.

880 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 71.

881 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 75.

882 Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 78.

Essentially, this statement was a more complex version of the repeated criticism of Leibniz's and Wolff's theories in general and pre-established harmony in particular, namely that it was not their theories themselves that implied heterodoxy, but rather the consequences of these theories. Monsieur M...'s discussion of pre-established harmony thus did not leave the territory of traditional religious criticism in which Crousaz's refutations of Leibniz and Wolff had also been located (which is obvious given that Monsieur M...'s discussion relied on another theological criticism, i.e. by the Pietist Lange); however, in contrast to Crousaz it lifted this criticism to another level, by making minor concessions to Wolff's arguments and alluding to the overlaps with doctrine. It is likely that such a proceeding corresponded to Formey's personal position, instead of the offensive strategy used by Crousaz and hence it can be seen as a – although very subtle – counterbalance to Crousaz's polemics.

Towards an Emancipation from the Religious and Moral Debate

Compared to the predominant position that the traditional theological and moral criticism of Leibniz and Wolff occupied in the *Belle Wolfienne*, criticism from a natural philosophical perspective was rather slight. Only in the very last section of the *Belle Wolfienne*'s second volume did the protagonists finally leave the debate on fatalism aside, and turned to the question of the physical possibility of the body-soul-interaction that was described by the theory of pre-established harmony. Monsieur M... concluded his considerations on pre-established harmony by evaluating its role with other theories on the interaction of the body and the soul. He stated that first, on a phenomenological level the relation between the body and the soul was always the same, no matter which theory was applied to account for it since the laws of the distribution of forces in the universe always remained the same. This meant to dissociate the metaphysical theories of the body-soul-relation from the actual physical (observable) phenomena.⁸⁸³ Going beyond this, he secondly pointed to the fact that the Cartesian and Leibnizian endeavours to account for a harmonic interaction between the body and the soul, i.e. the theories of occasionalism and of pre-established harmony (as opposed to physical influx), resulted from the assumption of an even distribution of forces in the universe, which at the time was facing several challenges, particularly in English philosophy.⁸⁸⁴ This idea superseded the traditional arguments in this debate in the sense that it put into question not only the theories of psycho-physical parallelism but also the cosmological convictions on which these theories had been established, namely the idea of a balance of forces in

883 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 83.

884 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 84; compare to the footnote on pages 81-2 where Descartes' and Leibniz's objection to the theory of physical influx is portrayed.

the universe.

To put it shortly: the protagonist of Formey's *Belle Wolfienne*, Monsieur M..., was suggesting that if physics brought new insights into the processes of nature and maybe even insights into the nature of the soul,⁸⁸⁵ religious theories like pre-established harmony or Cartesian occasionalism would become superfluous. It is interesting that in all these considerations, the theory of physical influx was not re-considered as an option (on page 79 it is even suggested that a fourth theory had to be found beyond the three 'classical ones'). Yet, the natural philosophical considerations, which concerned the theory of forces, point to a renewal of the influx theory, and it was also the reinvention of this theory that eventually dominated the discourse on body-soul-relations in Germany during the second half of the century.⁸⁸⁶ In this sense, Formey's *Belle Wolfienne* reflected to a certain extent on the attempts of German metaphysicians who had started to reconsider the theory of pre-established harmony by using Leibnizian and Wolffian principles. More than that, this section of the *Belle Wolfienne* reflected the general developments in philosophy during the mid-Eighteenth Century, i.e. the increasing interest in natural philosophical solutions to problems that had previously been considered metaphysically, and as such it forecasted the shift in conceptions of body-soul-interactions without already being capable of naming the result of this shift. It seems that in the German scholarly world of the early 1740s, the time had not yet been ripe for applying physical knowledge and methods to these sort of problems, unlike in England to which Formey had alluded (on page 84).

However, more than 20 years later, in the 1760s, the possibility of the theory of physical influx had gained a considerable place in German discussions, in the light of which Formey also seems to have eventually renounced the theory of pre-established harmony (at this point he was also able to do it in terms of the 'politics of philosophy' since the *Aléthophiles* movement, as well as Wolff himself, were long dead). Nevertheless, it was not clear which theory he was willing to embrace instead. In the Academy's yearbook of 1764, he discussed the rehabilitation of the physical-influx-theory, which a German professor of Mathematics, Johann Jakob Hentsch had advanced in an article in the *Acta Eruditorum* in 1759.⁸⁸⁷ Hentsch's argument for a physical influx relied on the natural philosophical revision of the Aristotelian theory of the equilibrated distribution

885 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 79.

886 See Watkins, "From Pre-established harmony to Physical influx," especially 167-83 and Falk Wunderlich, "Meiers Verteidigung der Prästablierten Harmonie," in *Georg Friedrich Meier (1718-1777): Philosophie als "wahre Weltweisheit,"* ed. Gideon Stiening and Frank Grunert (Berlin, 2015), 115-6.

887 Formey, "Nouvelles considérations sur l'union des deux substances dans l'homme, ou sur le commerce de l'âme et du corps," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin* 1764, (Berlin, 1766), 364-73. Given the distance between the publication of Hentsch's article and the date of Formey's discussion of it, it seems difficult to identify the moment in which Formey wrote it. Yet, a letter from Hentsch to Formey, 2.4.1763 (Slg. Darm.) suggests that Hentsch had sent his article to Formey for review in this moment.

of forces in the universe,⁸⁸⁸ to which, as we have seen, Formey also had already alluded to in his *Belle Wolfienne*, without however drawing logical consequences from it. On this basis, Hentsch established his theory of an 'in distans'-influence of the body and the soul according to which the soul moved the body without a real mechanical contact (this means that Hentsch also did not want to return to the idea of a real physical influence).⁸⁸⁹ Formey did not agree with this theory as for him this meant that the soul would need to carry out the same type of action that God had carried out in the Creation, i.e. to put all beings in this world into existence and to bestow them successively with determinations and modifications. According to Formey, this was not possible for such a simple and finite being as the soul.⁸⁹⁰ So in 1764, Formey still rejected the emerging new theories of physical influence, yet at the same time he openly acknowledged the importance of natural philosophical, more precisely anatomical, research to understand how it could be that bodily states found an expression in the mind and vice versa: He declared that a dissection of the brain would be a better means to understand this than the theory of pre-established harmony.⁸⁹¹ Formey's reasoning here seems to have been influenced by his insights into psychological and physiological theories, and their interaction which he had gained in the years between the first volumes of the *Belle Wolfienne* and this discourse.⁸⁹²

He not only familiarised himself with Wolff's psychological theory (as we will see in the subsequent chapter), but he also seems to have read the medical and anatomical observations of Boerhaave and Haller. He reflected on these psychological and physiological theories in his works on the state of sleeping and dreaming: the first, the *Essai sur les songes*, appeared as an academic discourse in the Academy's 1746 yearbook in 1748, and, by closely following Wolff's empirical psychology, he tried to explain how mental processes like dreams could occur while the bodily machine was not receptive to external influences.⁸⁹³ The second, the *Essai sur le sommeil*, which he wrote in 1751 and was published in 1754 in the *Mélanges Philosophiques*, instead described the physiological processes that nevertheless took place in the body during a period of detachment from

888 See Formey, "Nouvelles considérations," 371.

889 See Formey, "Nouvelles considérations," 372.

890 See Formey, "Nouvelles considérations," 373.

891 See Formey, "Nouvelles considérations," 369.

892 On the development of physiology as an autonomous discipline during the Eighteenth Century, through the works of Haller, Boerhaave and others as well as its influence on the change in the conception of the human being see François Duchesneau, *La Physiologie des Lumières: Empirisme, Modèles et Théories* (The Hague, 1982). For the development of physiological theories of the brain in Britain in the Seventeenth Century around William Hartley and Thomas Willis see Carl Zimmer, *Soul Made Flesh: The Discovery of the Brain and How It Changed the World* (New York ; London, 2004). See also Thomson, *Bodies of Thought*, ch. 3, who shows how innovations in biological and medical research helped to give rise to conceptions of a material soul beyond the Cartesian mechanistic view of the human being.

893 Formey, "Essai sur les songes," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin*, 1746 (Berlin, 1748), 317-34.

the external world as well as from mental processes.⁸⁹⁴ These two different approaches to sleep – from the perspective of the mind and of the body – must have been conducive for Formey in questioning the hypothesis of pre-established harmony in sense that they showed that there were moments of being, in which there was no correspondence or harmony between mental and bodily processes. In Formey's explanation, dreaming was the uncontrolled imagination of things that were currently not happening, and sleeping was a state in which muscles and organs moved without the soul actually being conscious of it. It was also this crucial assumption, i.e. that the soul's (independently generated) perceptions necessarily had to be in harmony with the body's (mechanically proceeding) movements (and vice versa), which in 1764, Formey declared was the most difficult part of the theory of pre-established harmony to accept.⁸⁹⁵ Moreover, Formey's engagement with Boerhaave's and Haller's neurological ideas in the *Essai sur le sommeil*, seems to have conveyed the theory of a two-part bodily machine, composed of the 'solid part' of the body like limbs and organs and of the 'animal spirits', i.e. the liquids that move via the nerves and incite bodily movements.⁸⁹⁶ This two-part machine with its driving seat in the brain was Formey's main object of interest in the *Essai sur le sommeil* and, according to his descriptions, it was able to assure the activity of the body in a waking or a sleeping state. It is thus not surprising that in 1764, in reply to Hentsch, Formey called for the need to obtain a better knowledge of the brain's functioning in order to see how it was connected with the soul, the existence of which besides the bodily machine was, for Formey, beyond doubt. Despite all these new physiological insights, Formey, however, did not 'convert' to the theory of physical influx in 1764. Instead, he seemed to have remained ambivalent to the three traditional theories.

This seems to have changed in 1769 with his publication of an abbreviation of Charles Bonnet's *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme* that had appeared ten years earlier. Formey, who had been in close personal contact with Bonnet since 1760 and had appreciated his work,⁸⁹⁷ transformed the *Essai* into a dialogue between a master and his disciple.⁸⁹⁸ In Formey's

894 Formey, "Essai sur le sommeil," *Mélanges philosophiques*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1754), 117-56. For the writing date of this treatise, see Luzac to Formey, 1.9.1751, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 197. It seems that Formey originally only wanted to publish the "Essai sur le sommeil", but Luzac advised him to add his "Essai sur les songes" to it.

895 See Formey, "Nouvelles considérations," 370.

896 See Formey, "Essai sur le sommeil," 130-2.

897 See Formey to Bonnet, 23.12.1760, *Lettres de Genève*, 524 where he praised the *Essai analytique* in particular. However, Formey never sent Bonnet a detailed comment on it, which he justified due to a lack of time. On 13.5.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 535 Formey declared to have read its introduction and the first seven chapters. Nevertheless, Formey seems to have written an *extrait* in seven parts of the *Essai* which he wanted to be published in the *Journal Encyclopédique* (see Formey to Bonnet, 4.9.1761, *Lettres de Genève*, 558-9). Already at this point Formey claimed that he considered writing an abbreviation of Bonnet's work at some point in the future. Compare also to Formey to Bonnet, 14.1.1762, *Lettres de Genève*, 563.

898 Formey, *Entretiens psychologiques, tirés de l'Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'Âme* (Berlin, 1769). It is not very clear whether this writing simply re-used the lengthy *extrait* of the *Essai analytique* that Formey had written in 1761 for the *Journal Encyclopédique* and which seems to have never appeared. In a letter to Bonnet of 8.4.1763,

appropriation of Bonnet's work, the latter replicated (and presumably adopted) the Swiss natural philosopher's claim that observable natural phenomena were independent of the theories of the body-soul-relation. This was a very similar argument to the one that Monsieur M... had advanced at the end of the *Belle Wolfienne*, namely that on the phenomenological level a compatibility of mental perceptions and bodily movements existed, yet we were not able to explain how this compatibility happened.⁸⁹⁹ Bonnet seems to have gone one step further since he considered the origin of bodily movements to lie in neurological processes that were regulated by the brain; yet he still did not have an explanation of how the soul was linked to the nervous system, which would have allowed it to act on the body and vice versa.⁹⁰⁰ Since he lacked these insights into the nature of the soul and its link to the brain and nerves, Bonnet, in theory, had to grant equal epistemological status to all three traditional hypotheses on the body-soul-relation.⁹⁰¹ Nevertheless, he declared his preference for the hypothesis of physical influx. In his view, which Formey replicated, it was more likely that the body and the soul were actually linked than not, since the mere observation of phenomena suggested it.⁹⁰² Obviously it is difficult to evaluate to what extent Formey's replication of Bonnet's defence of physical influx was a sign of his genuine opinion on this – the *Entretiens psychologiques* lack any comment by Formey – yet, if it had been completely alien or contrary to his own opinion, he would probably not have published it.⁹⁰³ We can hence say that Formey appropriated these new approaches.

These observations of Formey's new position on the concepts of body-soul-relations, 20 years after his critical engagement with the theory of pre-established harmony, show how quickly these concepts were transformed within this period, due to natural philosophical approaches to the human being. Although Formey's *Belle Wolfienne* had already tentatively pointed in this direction, it had not yet fully addressed this development.

Reactions to the Belle Wolfienne and Formey's Reconciliation with the Aléthophiles

Instead, Formey's *Belle Wolfienne* was rooted in the German debate of the late 1730s/ early 1740s which was still deeply influenced by the metaphysical and theological discussion of pre-established

Lettres de Genève, 595, Formey had declared that Pierre Rousseau, the publisher of the *Journal encyclopédique*, had never sent his *extraits* back to him.

899 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 83-4; see above, p. 235.

900 See Formey, *Entretiens psychologiques*, 15.

901 See Formey, *Entretiens psychologiques*, 16.

902 See Formey, *Entretiens psychologiques*, 16-7 and 22.

903 Actually, after the eventual publication of Formey's *Entretiens psychologiques* in 1769, Bonnet himself seems not to have been very satisfied with it: he was not convinced of its format and he complained that he missed Formey's own comments on the original; for Bonnet it was nothing else than a third edition of his own writing (Bonnet to Formey, 19.6.1769, *Lettres de Genève*, 775).

harmony. Also in this debate pre-established harmony increasingly experienced corrosion, particularly from inside the circle of its traditional defenders; yet such natural philosophical arguments as Bonnet later put forward, played no role in this. Only with the process of Wolff's rehabilitation in Prussia in 1736, had the controversy on the fatalistic implications of Wolff's system been reanimated: the criticism by Joachim Lange and the other Pietists had been reiterated and opposed with old and new arguments of defence by the Wolffians. In 1736, Manteuffel, for example, had published a French version of Lange's attack on Wolff together with an imagined reply by Wolff as well as Wolff's eventual own answer.⁹⁰⁴ In 1737 Johann Gustav Reinbeck had also published a treatise that dealt exclusively with the question of pre-established harmony, and which served as an addition to the expert report that he had written one year earlier for King Frederick William's inquiry on Wolff's possible rehabilitation.⁹⁰⁵

However, as Reinbeck's text emblematically showed, the position of the Wolffians towards pre-established harmony was not unanimous: In his *Erörterung* Reinbeck claimed that he found this theory to be logic and compatible with the idea of human liberty; nevertheless, he stated that he would not adhere to it.⁹⁰⁶ A similarly reluctant position towards the question of body-soul-interaction, in general, can be observed in the writings of the journalist and *Aléthophile* Gottsched. Already in the late 1720s and mid-1730s, he had worked on destroying the (mainly Cartesian) doubts concerning the theory of physical influx. Although he never took a clear position, either for physical influx or against pre-established harmony, he is considered to be a forebear of the reappraisal of physical influx that increasingly gained ground after the mid-Eighteenth Century.⁹⁰⁷ Other disciples of Wolff, like Georg Friedrich Meier, developed modified theories of pre-established harmony, partially through a stronger reference to Leibniz's original idea of it.⁹⁰⁸ In addition to all this, we have to consider what we stated at the beginning, namely that Wolff himself, over the years, had also steadily downplayed the role of pre-established harmony in his works.⁹⁰⁹ It seems thus that

904 *Nouvelles pieces sur les erreurs pretendues de la philosophie de Mons. Wolf. Contenant I. Memoire de Mons. Lange, contre cette philosophie. II. Reponse preliminaire d'un auteur anonime a ce memoire. III. Sommaire de la reponse de Mr. Wolf meme avec un avis au lecteur de l'histoire de ce nouveau differend*, ed. [Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel] (1736). A second edition appeared only one year after. See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 390-3 and 395-6.

905 Johann Gustav Reinbeck, *Erörterung der philosophischen Meynung von der sogenannten HARMONIA PRAESTABILITA, [...] aus Liebe zur Wahrheit und zur Verhütung fernerer verworrenen Streitigkeiten, nebst einem nöthigen Vorbericht herausgegeben* (Berlin, 1737). Reinbeck's expert report that had been published one year earlier is entitled: *Bedencken über die der Wolffischen Philosophie von Joachim Langen in seinem kurtzen Abrisse beygemessenen Irrthümer, Commißionswegen aufgesetzt* (Berlin, 1736).

906 See Stefan Lorenz, "Problemanzeigen," 32-5.

907 See Watkins, "From Pre-established harmony to Physical influx," 170-3.

908 See Wunderlich, "Meiers Verteidigung der Prästabilierten Harmonie."

909 See above, p. 215. See also Michel Puech, *Kant et la causalité: étude sur la formation du système critique* (Paris, 1990), 88 who believes that Wolff was reluctant to adopt the theory of pre-established harmony in his *Psychologia rationalis*. In Puech's view, he adopted it only because of a lack of a better solution.

Formey's *Belle Wolfienne* captured and presented this situation of crisis among the Wolfians themselves, in which one of the fundamental principles of Leibnizian and Wolffian philosophy increasingly lost its doctrinal character and – if we believe the evaluation of Michel Puech – eventually entailed the destruction of Wolff's whole philosophy.⁹¹⁰

Considering the concrete circumstances of the genesis of Formey's *Belle Wolfienne*, we can say that it was even a by-product of the uncertainties that existed among the supporters of Wolff. As we have demonstrated above, Formey, presumably at first did not want to accept the critical arguments with which Crousaz had confronted him; on the contrary, he sought help from his intellectual role model Wolff and from Wolff's strongest defender Manteuffel. That Formey did not obtain this help (in time), I argue, was due to their own difficulties in accounting for the relation between the body and the soul and its implications in our understanding of God. (That they were even aware of this difficulty might be inferred by the fact that Manteuffel did not want Formey to address his concerns directly to Wolff.) These difficulties that existed behind the scenes can best be observed best in the objections that Manteuffel had against the potential reply that Reinbeck drafted to counter Formey's doubts in 1741. In Manteuffel's view, Reinbeck's arguments for a pre-established harmony would rather confirm Formey's doubts and would distance him even further from Wolff's philosophy, instead of bringing him back to this doctrine. Reinbeck had apparently emphasised the two-faced character of the *nexus rerum*, which suggested that it stood for the perfections of God on the one hand and implied the non-existence of moral decisions in human behaviour on the other. Manteuffel imagined that Formey would answer Reinbeck's idea of a two-faced *nexus rerum* in the following way:

'Il [Formey] accordera tout cela: il avouera même que ce seroit se plonger dans une abime d'erreurs et detruire toutes les idées que nous avons de la sagesse, de la bonté, de la Providence et de la pluspart des perfections divines, que de se représenter le nexus rerum autrement ou d'attribuer les evenemens à un pur hazard. Mais il n'en inferera pas moins une nécessité absoluë, où le bon usage de la Raison, ny la liberté de nôtre Volonté ne peuvent rien changer. S'il est vrai, comme il est; dira-t il; que le nexus rerum est une complication, une suite d'evenemens prévus, fixez et determinez, de toute Eternité, par l'Etre Suprême infiniment sage, bon, juste, et tout-puissant, il faut necessairement, que ce même Etre-suprême ait prévu, fixé et déterminé aussi toutes les actions morales, toutes les Volontez et Vellëitez des hommes;⁹¹¹

It was clear to Manteuffel that less ambiguous arguments had to be found to reply to Formey's doubts and eventually he agreed with Reinbeck's second attempt which he inserted, together with the above-mentioned passages from Leibniz etc., in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*.

910 See Puech, *Kant et la causalité*, 103.

911 Manteuffel to Reinbeck, 29.6.1741 (UBL, Ms 0344).

It seems that in the long run Manteuffel's and Reinbeck's instruction of Formey in the theological confirmation of the doctrine of pre-established harmony had been effective. However, the proceeding of the *Aléthophiles* and the conditions of the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte's* publication had a rather negative effect on Formey and seems to have caused a personal crisis concerning his affiliation to the *Aléthophiles*. He must indeed have felt slightly betrayed by them due to the fact that he obtained the answers to his doubts on pre-established harmony only after he had published the *Belle Wolfienne*, although he had begged for help long before then. As a letter by the Genevan pastor Jean Peschier suggests, Formey had been angry about Manteuffel's publication of the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* and had felt misunderstood in his endeavour with the *Belle Wolfienne*. Interestingly Peschier seems to think that Formey had dealt with the problem of determinism from a theological instead of a philosophical perspective. He commented: 'La condition des philosophes a toujours été plus douce et plus tranquile [sic] que celle des theologiens.'⁹¹² This suggests that Peschier considered the purpose of Formey's second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* to be apologetic and that he, therefore, had been attacked by Manteuffel.

At the same time, although Formey disliked Manteuffel's behaviour, he did not think that his relationship with his patron would be harmed by it, particularly because he did not attribute an intellectual authority to Manteuffel. On the contrary, Formey considered Manteuffel's capacity as a philosopher and particularly his interpretation of Wolff's ideas to be inferior. To Crousaz he wrote 'Ce Compte [=Manteuffel] est un fort beau genie et d'un Caractère fort aimable, mais par raport à la Philosophie il sy est mis trop tard pour avoir des saines idées & il sest déclaré un des Piliers du Volfianisme sans scavoir trop bien ce qu'il soutient.'⁹¹³ In contrast, Wolff himself presumably had an important intellectual authority for Formey. Yet this authority must also have suffered in Formey's eyes in respect to the question of pre-established harmony. In September 1741, i.e. directly in the aftermath of the affair around the *Belle Wolfienne*, Formey visited Halle where he met Wolff personally and had a conversation with him. It is very likely that Formey also addressed the question of the assumed fatalism of pre-established harmony and of the *nexus rerum* in this meeting, yet, as Formey reported to his wife, the philosopher avoided any questions that went into too much detail.⁹¹⁴ In the description of this encounter that Formey gave to his friend Peschier, he apparently had portrayed this conversation as a kind of dispute in which Wolff eventually might have succumbed to Formey's arguments if he had engaged more with it. This is at least what Peschier's letter to Formey suggests: 'j'auois fort souhaité vous voir aux prises avec Mr Volf, il

912 See Peschier to Formey, 20.2.1742, *Lettres de Genève*, 19-20.

913 Formey to Crousaz, 5.12.1741 (BCU Lausanne, Fonds Crousaz, IS2024 XIII/F/57).

914 See Formey to Suzanne Formey, 23.9.1741 (FF).

auroit falu pour cela un peu moins de prudence de son côté, il a craint la <?> touche et avec raison'.⁹¹⁵ It is very likely that this intellectually rather unsatisfying experience with Wolff troubled Formey's confidence in his role model and in the purpose of the *Aléthophiles*. Finally this also contributed to his decision to suspend the continuation of the *Belle Wolfienne* after its third volume.⁹¹⁶

Nevertheless, Formey's apparent distance taking from the *Aléthophiles* and his abandonment of the *Belle Wolfienne* did not last long. After a short break in the correspondence between Manteuffel and Formey from April 1741 to July 1742, Formey returned ready to engage deeply into the *Aléthophiles'* politics of promoting Wolffian philosophy: he signed up for the task of translating Johann Gustav Reinbeck's treatise on the immortality of the soul into French, a project that Manteuffel had conceived of as a means to undermine the influence of Voltaire on the young Prussian King Frederick, regarding this important religious doctrine.⁹¹⁷ Formey's own writings in the subsequent years, particularly his contributions to the Academy, were mostly faithful appropriations of Wolff's teachings, no matter if it was concerning the question of God's existence or – as we shall see below – on human volition or other subjects of psychology.

This re-orientation of Formey, back to the apparently unsullied appreciation for the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff, had very probably been enhanced or perhaps even provoked by his acquaintance with the young philosopher and later renowned author of a *Law of Nations* from Neuchâtel, Emer de Vattel. In 1741 Vattel had published a defence of Leibniz (and Wolff) against the criticism of Crousaz in which he had emphasised that Crousaz's arguments were more politically than philosophically motivated for he did not judge the truth of the theories but attacked their assumed consequences.⁹¹⁸ Since May 1742 Vattel was *pensionnaire* in Formey's house in Berlin and the intimate correspondence that evolved between Formey and Vattel after the latter's stay in Berlin, suggests that the two men had developed a very close relationship to each other in the years of their personal encounter as well as a common intellectual standpoint, which was certainly due to Vattel's

915 Peschier to Formey, [?]bre 1741, *Lettres de Genève*, 12.

916 See Formey to Marchand, 24.11.1742, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 291. Distinct from the depiction given by Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 356, was the rupture that happened in the *Belle Wolfienne* series as it was not between the second and the third volume and as a direct result of Manteuffel's intervention with the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*. Formey had already finished and handed the third volume to the printer before the *Lettre* appeared (see Marchand to Formey, 19.9.1741, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 274). It was only due to a delay in the printing process that there was a gap between the second and third volume.

917 See Manteuffel to Formey, 28.8.1742 (CV) and Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 94-7; 403-5; 419.

918 Emer de Vattel, *Défense du système leibnitien contre les objections et les imputations de Mr. de Crousaz [...]* (Leiden, 1741). See Zurbuchen, "Die Schweizerische Debatte über die Leibniz-Wolffsche Philosophie," 96. Formey also made a very positive reference to this work on the first page of the preface of the fourth volume of his *Belle Wolfienne*. In 1746 Formey also published a very favourable review of Vattel's treatise: Formey, "Article VIII. Défense du Système Leibnitien [...]," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique*, 2, no. 1 (Juillet – Septembre 1746), 85-102.

persuasive arguments.⁹¹⁹ In a letter from March 1747, Vattel emphasised that he was happy to see that Formey had become ever more a 'leibnitien', an assessment that had certainly been incited by Formey's above-mentioned defence of Leibniz's monadology in the context of the Academy's prize essay contest in 1747 (*Recherches sur les Éléments de la matière*).⁹²⁰ The same letter however, also provides a very telling sign of precisely how the conception of the body-soul-relation posed problems to eighteenth-century philosophers on the level of their every-day-experience, without, however, apparently harming their persuasion of Leibniz's philosophical explanation: Vattel referred to what we would call nowadays a psycho-somatic syndrome, i.e. he explained that one of his friends felt sick because of his depressed state of mind. In respect to this, Vattel wondered why it was that the bodily machine had so much influence on the soul, which to me sounds like a rather clear acknowledgement of the theory of physical influx between the body and the soul. Vattel seems to have been aware of this himself and stated that by saying this he was not behaving as a 'leibnitien'.⁹²¹ This comment seems very revealing to me in the sense that it shows that practically-inspired or popular assumptions on how the body and the soul interacted co-existed with seemingly contrary philosophical theories without them necessarily interfering with each other.

In 1743, one year after having met Vattel and having re-established his connection with Manteuffel, Formey also decided to continue the *Belle Wolfienne*, the fourth volume of which appeared with Jean Néaulme in 1746.⁹²² However, with this fourth volume Formey introduced a change in the *Belle Wolfienne*'s concept and form that lasted until its sixth and final volume in 1753. He abandoned the novelistic form and instead presented mere translations of Wolff's German ontology (volumes 4 and 5) and his Latin natural theology (volume 6), to which he added only a few explanatory and judgemental notes. Through this significant change the book acquired a completely different function: instead of being, as originally intended, a means of enhancing a larger public's interest in Wolff's ideas, by combining philosophical axioms with an appealing romantic plot, the *Belle Wolfienne* became a mere reference work for the French-speaking readership which, in the words of Formey, was supposed to 'servir de règle, de tablature, de principe fixe'. In order to achieve this, Formey abundantly emphasised the faithfulness of his translation which only permitted him to cut some superfluous ornaments from the original style. Moreover, in

919 On the general consensus in opinion between the two correspondents see Vattel's remark in a letter to Formey of 24.2.1747, *Emer de Vattel à J.H.S. Formey*, 60: 'Que n'avons nous été destinés à vivre ensemble, mon cher ami! Nous aurions passé de beaux jours & n'aurions pas été inutiles au monde, si je puis le dire sans vanité par raport à moi. Une assés grande conformité de sentimens & d'inclinations nous auroit fourni des agrémens continuels dans notre commerce.'

920 See Vattel to Formey, 27.3.1747, *Emer de Vattel à J.H.S. Formey*, 67.

921 See Vattel to Formey, 27.3.1747, *Emer de Vattel à J.H.S. Formey*, 69-70.

922 See Néaulme to Formey, 17.10.1743 (FF) and Formey to Marchand, 26.11.1744, "La correspondance entre Formey et Marchand," 317. As Formey himself declared in the preface to the fourth volume, he had been incited to continue the *Belle Wolfienne* by his older friend and predecessor as the Academy's secretary, Joseph de Jariges.

light of what the *Belle Wolfienne* had become at least in its second volume, i.e. an engagement in the scholarly debate about Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy, Formey highlighted that its subsequent volumes could be used as authoritative texts in controversies, as an 'oracle' that allowed them to ascertain the truth of certain criticism made against Wolff. At the same time, he claimed to have cut all of Wolff's comments that dealt with previous and now outdated controversies concerning his philosophy, in order to avoid an eternal renovation of them. This new program of the *Belle Wolfienne* and particularly the two last points, reflect the main criticism that the book's second volume had provoked among Formey's Wolffian friends, i.e. to have unnecessarily repeated the traditional criticism against Wolff without taking a clear position against it.

It appears hence, that the last three volumes of the *Belle Wolfienne* were indeed intended to present the reconciliation with the Wolffians, and to provide a reparation for the potential damage that the second volume had caused to Wolff's reputation. Formey also confirmed and strengthened this purpose outside the tight framework of the book: In a letter to Wolff in spring 1746, he had apparently stressed his personal 'recovery' from his doubts concerning pre-established harmony.⁹²³ Furthermore, Formey referred to his temporary 'deviation' from Wolffian core doctrine in the introduction to his Latin philosophy textbook, the *Elementa philosophiae* which also appeared in 1746. There he claimed that he indeed had had doubts about Wolff's philosophy when he was writing the *Belle Wolfienne*, but that these doubts eventually vanished.⁹²⁴ Also this work, the *Elementa philosophiae* was a way of appropriating Wolff's ideas that was based very closely on Wolff's original texts and hence shows once again Formey's altered approach to his task as an *Aléthophile* after the experience with the relatively free form of the novel *La Belle Wolfienne*.

We might thus sum up by judging the *Belle Wolfienne* as a partially autobiographical work that illustrated Formey's acquaintance with Wolffianism. It showed that Formey's interest for Wolff was neither linear nor without conflict. Unfortunately, when speaking about the Wolffian influence on Formey, we also tend to forget the highly contested nature of Wolffianism from a theological point of view during the first half of the Eighteenth Century. So far I have stressed the continuities between Formey's Calvinism and Leibniz's and Wolff's conception of philosophy, yet, as I hope to have shown here, there were certain questions that constituted an exception from this general resemblance. The alleged fatalistic implications of pre-established harmony and *nexus rerum* were difficult to defend from a theological and moral point of view, for a trained pastor like Formey. What added to this problem was that not only Leibniz's and Wolff's 'usual' critics – Crousaz and the

923 See Wolff to Manteuffel, 11.5.1746, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, 158.

924 "Praefatio", *Elementa philosophiae seu medulla Wolfiana*, without pagination.

Pietists – but also several of their supporters struggled with these elements of their philosophy. The fact that Formey's immediate intellectual reference points of the time – the *Aléthophiles* and Wolff himself – did not provide sufficient clarifications to these problems reinforced his apparent inner conflict concerning them. Nevertheless, it seems that he emancipated himself from the discussions on the potential religious and moral consequences of pre-established harmony, *nexus rerum* and sufficient reason, and instead focussed increasingly on the natural philosophical implications of mind-body-interaction. As we will see in the next chapter, in respect to this he was able to return to Wolff's philosophy, more precisely his philosophy on the soul. Although this psychological perspective did not allow him to maintain the theory of pre-established harmony in the long run – as we have seen he turned away from it at the latest in the 1760s – it made him seek out a way to reconcile human liberty and divine predetermination with respect to the question of the human will.

9. The Determination of Free Will: The Relation between Liberty and Causality in Psychology

In the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* the debate on the compatibility of a pre-established and causal world order on the one hand and the contingency of divine, as well as human action on the other hand, was not yet resolved for Formey. A milestone in his occupation with this problem, more precisely with the definition of human action and will, was certainly his *Réflexions sur la liberté* which he pronounced at the Academy in December 1747, and which was published in 1750.⁹²⁵ The difference between the *Réflexions* and the earlier *Belle Wolfienne* lies in the fact that the latter argued predominantly from a natural theological and moral perspective, whereas the former tried to smooth out the problem of fatalism by concentrating merely on the processes that evolved inside the human soul. More precisely, in the *Réflexions sur la liberté*, human liberty is understood and depicted as a faculty of the mind, and as such is considered to be independent of the question of pre-established harmony and a determined world order. In this regard, the *Réflexions* were not only on the opposite side to the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* but they were also part of a couple of Formey's writings that emerged in the mid-1740s due to his engagement with Wolff's psychological theory.

The psychological part of Wolff's philosophy is contained in the third and the fifth chapter of Wolff's *Metaphysik* (1719), which, as we have mentioned in the previous chapter, Formey had started to translate into French in 1743, with the purpose of publishing it as the sequel to his *Belle Wolfienne*, more precisely in its fourth and fifth volumes. The bi-partition of Wolff's considerations on the nature and faculties of the human soul corresponded to his distinction of two different epistemological approaches in psychology, namely the empirical and the rational.⁹²⁶ In Wolff's view, the empirical part, as the name says, was meant to establish certain notions of the human soul on the basis of experience; whereas the second, rational part departed from a preliminary concept of the soul and deduced a-priori laws for its functioning. Although being based each on a different epistemology, the two parts interacted with each other in the sense that the empirical part had the function to help to establish general rational principles and to confirm the a-priori principles stated in the rational part. This is why Wolff called his empirical psychology a touchstone ('Probierstein') of his rational one. In contrast, the rational psychology, could not be entirely considered as a

925 Formey, "Réflexions sur la liberté," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin* 1748 (Berlin, 1750), 334-355. Although the discourse was held on 14.12.1747, it appeared only in the 1748 yearbook.

926 In his Latin oeuvre Wolff made this distinction more visible by publishing a *Psychologia empirica* (1732) and a *Psychologia rationalis* (1734).

touchstone of the empirical one, since it was additionally able to form hypotheses on other aspects of the soul that could not be perceived via experience.⁹²⁷

In his studies, Formey seems to have focussed on the empirical part of Wolff's psychology: he translated this part, i.e. the third chapter of the *Metaphysik*, for the fifth volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*⁹²⁸ and he seems to have used it as a source for several of his writings in this period. The influence of Wolff's empirical psychology is most obvious in one of Formey's first contributions to the Academy, the above-mentioned *Essai sur les songes* in 1746. Here he claimed to uniquely base his theory of dreaming on experience, more precisely on the observation of the phenomena that accompanied the process of dreaming.⁹²⁹ Vis-à-vis Manteuffel Formey stated even explicitly the indebtedness of his *Essai* to Wolff's empirical psychology.⁹³⁰ Less obviously linked to Wolff's empirical psychology but also very likely, was the article "Entendement" that Formey had written for his *Dictionnaire philosophique* in the 1740s and which later appeared in the *Encyclopédie*. Besides defining the differences between the two mental faculties of imagination and understanding, this article emphasised the perfectibility of human understanding that was possible through the exercise of reason; an argument that we also find at the end of the *Réflexions*. The *Réflexions* themselves reveal their source not only through their quite faithful replication of Wolff's Leibnizian-inspired account of the process of willing, as we will see below, but implicitly also by insisting on the epistemological division between empirically proven – certain – facts and possible – hypothetical – theories.

According to this epistemological division and its incarnation in the bipartite structure of Wolff's psychology, freedom of will was independent of the hypothesis of pre-established harmony, since the first counted as an experience-based steadfast truth (and is thus demonstrated in empirical psychology) whereas the latter was considered to be a hypothesis, based only on a-priori conjectures (and hence belonged to rational psychology). This methodological/epistemological division allowed for – and this seems to have been a major intention behind – the strengthening of Wolff's practical philosophy, especially morality. Within Wolff's system of philosophy, moral philosophy was based on the knowledge of the soul, i.e. psychology. Given the importance of moral philosophy for society, it was important for Wolff that its claims were free of any ambiguity, that is, that they were based on solid, unassailable epistemic grounds. Yet, since it was not possible that

927 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen*, §727, compare to Jean École, "Des rapports de l'expérience et de la raison dans l'analyse de l'âme ou La Psychologia Empirica de Christian Wolff," *Giornale di Metafisica* 4–5 (1966), 593.

928 Formey, *La Belle Wolfienne: Tome cinquième, qui contient la Psychologie expérimentale* (La Haye, 1753). The correspondence with the book's publisher, Jean Néaulme, shows that Formey had handed in the manuscript of this volume already in 1746 (Néaulme to Formey, 29.[8].1746 (CV)).

929 See Formey, "Essai sur les Songes," 317.

930 See Formey to Manteuffel, 27.1.1748 (UBL, Ms 0347, 391r-392v).

such an unassailable nature could be gained for all the knowledge on the soul – due to the difficulty of studying spiritual objects – Wolff split off the empirical from the conjectural knowledge and deduced his moral laws uniquely from the empirical knowledge of the soul. By this, he could hope that his moral laws were safe against scepticism. Formey revealed the reasoning behind the bipartition of Wolff's psychology in the very first footnote of his translation: there he emphasised in particular that the principle of pre-established harmony, which he described as a controversial hypothesis (and which was ranged in Wolff's rational psychology), had no impact on morality. In Formey's view, the critics of Wolff, who claimed the contrary were simply wrong.⁹³¹

As we have seen, however, this was precisely what Wolff's adversaries like Crousaz and Lange had done: they had blended the hypothesis of pre-established harmony with moral laws by claiming that a causal world order and a pre-established harmony automatically meant to curtail human freedom and hence moral responsibility. Formey, by dissociating these elements on the grounds of Wolff's epistemological considerations, in his *Réflexions*, hence, implicitly stepped back from his *Belle Wolfienne* where he had reproduced the method and arguments of Wolff's adversaries (perhaps because he had not been fully aware of Wolff's psychology at this point). Therefore, I argue that Formey's *Réflexions*, and the fact that they are so neatly based on the Wolffian model, can be considered as an expression of Formey's reconciliation with the *Aléthophiles'* circle, after the conflict that he had with Manteuffel regarding his critical engagement with Wolff in the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*. Besides being rooted in Wolff's empirical psychology, the writing also contains several references to Leibniz's *Théodicée* that had been quoted by Manteuffel in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* in order to solve the problems with Wolff's philosophy that were revealed by Monsieur M... in the *Belle Wolfienne*.⁹³² Moreover, I would suggest that from the beginning Formey's concerns with the fatalistic implications of Wolff's philosophy were only possible because in his early year he had not yet read and understood Wolff's psychology.

Formey's recognition of Wolff's dissociation of free will and pre-established harmony enabled him to answer the two major objections to the Wolffian theory that were revealed in the *Belle Wolfienne*: First, the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge with the contingency of human actions which were both necessary components of religious dogma, and second, the logical problem of how to conceive of a relation between body and soul that precluded an active influence on each other.

931 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, footnote 53 on pages 6-8.

932 Hence, Formey's 'learning process' after Manteuffel's reprimand in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* did not show its results as soon as Bronisch suggested (with the third volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*) but apparently was only concluded in 1747 with the *Réflexions*.

The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Liberty

The first issue originated with the religiously orthodox stakeholders' view on pre-established harmony, which was formulated in the letter read by Monsieur M... in the *Belle Wolfienne*: a pre-established, necessary world order would impede that human actions were contingent and consequently humans would have no responsibility for their actions. However, and this was the crucial, although the fainthearted suggestion of Monsieur P..., one could not entirely remove such a necessity, as it was present in pre-established harmony and the *nexus rerum* because it was the basis of divine foreknowledge which was constitutive for Christian dogma.⁹³³ Monsieur M..., in reply, acknowledged this issue but did not accept it as an argument for the defence of Wolff's theory since it did not provide an answer on how God's foreknowledge and human liberty could coexist.⁹³⁴ In contrast to this, Formey, in his *Réflexions*, claimed that it was easy to reconcile such religiously and morally important but seemingly irreconcilable things as the contingency of human action, and the eternal foreknowledge of God. At the end of his essay, after having extensively demonstrated the functioning of human willing on the basis of empirical psychology, Formey provided the following solution:

'La souveraine intelligence de Dieu nous est incompréhensible, [...] mais l'imparfaite & mediocre connoissance que nous en avons, suffit pour nous autoriser à conclure qu'il a tout prévu, parce que connoissant intimément & en lui-même l'infini, à plus forte raison son Entendement a-t-il aperçu de toute éternité la nature de toutes choses, & les différentes liaisons où elles peuvent se trouver. Ainsi la liberté étant une fois établie sur les preuves les plus convaincantes, il est certain que nous pouvons déterminer nos actions librement, non pas par la raison que Dieu les a prévues, mais parce que la Liberté est conforme à notre nature.'⁹³⁵

The key sentence in this explanation is definitely the last one in which Formey cut every causal connection between God's prescience and human liberty: the latter was not a result of God's knowledge of our future actions (i.e. was not determined by it), but of the functioning of our soul, i.e. was inherent to our nature. That our nature allowed for a freedom of choice, Formey was convinced to have shown by the most evident proofs ('preuves les plus convaincantes'), that is, via an experience-based psychology. In his depiction, knowledge on the human soul (and hence about the free will) was even more certain than the knowledge that God knew about all of our future actions since we, as finite creatures, were not able to entirely comprehend God's infinite nature. In terms of its certainty, Formey thus believed that our knowledge of human beings was more certain than our knowledge of God, which was due to the different epistemic roots of these two types of

933 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 70.

934 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 71.

935 Formey, "Réflexions sur la liberté," 352-3.

knowledge: the first was based on experience, the second was an a-priori knowledge, i.e. it resulted out of analogy or conjecture (as did pre-established harmony). It was uniquely on the basis of this epistemic distinction between knowledge of God and knowledge of the human being that Formey, in the cited passage of his *Réflexions*, eventually solved the problem of how to make foreknowledge (necessity of human action) and liberty (the contingency of human actions) compatible. To treat the question of human liberty as a problem of (empirical) psychology and not of (natural) theology was hence the perfect solution.

It was precisely this question of the compatibility between divine foreknowledge and human liberty that was also addressed in the extract of Leibniz's *Théodicée* that Manteuffel had added to the appendix of his *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*. It seems that Formey had also been partially inspired by this piece, in addition to the influence of Wolff's epistemological division of knowledge of God and knowledge of human nature (the division of rational and empirical psychology).⁹³⁶ Leibniz portrayed the problem through the allegory of a discussion between the god Apollo, the oracle of Delphi, and Sextus Tarquinius, the son of an Etruscan king who had conquered a city through deceit and had violated the chaste Lucretia and had eventually died a dishonourable death. Sextus blamed the god Apollo for his own bad actions and faith since He had foreseen them, whereupon Apollo answered that it was not His divine foreknowledge which determined Sextus' actions, but that they were determined by his nature alone.⁹³⁷ Hence the hierarchical relation between foreknowledge and contingency was inverted: contingency, as contained in human nature, came first and God, in turn, was only able to foresee our actions because he knew our nature. Leibniz's allegory contained exactly the same essence as Formey's explication in the *Réflexions*.

Yet, Leibniz, unlike Formey, went beyond the (relatively easy) dissociation of God's foreknowledge and human behaviour: he also asked about God's role in determining human nature, which could be considered as the basis of future actions. Continuing in allegorical terms, Leibniz introduced a second god besides Apollo, Jupiter, who had created Sextus' nature and hence, according to what had been previously said, was the one who was actually responsible for Sextus' actions. By this, Leibniz pointed to the difference between divine foreknowledge (incarnated by Apollo), and Providence (incarnated by Jupiter), and to the difficulty to account for the latter's compatibility with human liberty/ contingency.⁹³⁸ Leibniz nevertheless presented a solution to this difficulty, namely through the theory of the best of all worlds. He explained that from the beginning of the world there existed an infinite number of different possible variations of each human being's

936 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 47. Manteuffel's *Lettre* contains a one-to-one replication of §405-417 in Leibniz's *Théodicée*: Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée*, 605-20. In the following I will only refer to the replication in Manteuffel.

937 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 51.

938 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 53.

nature. God, with the intention to create the best of all worlds, chose in the moment of creation, one of these different possible human natures, and bestowed it with actual existence. This means that every human nature, and thus the sequence of a human being's decisions and actions, was contingent to start with, yet was determined by God in its actual/ present form.⁹³⁹ This answer obviously did not allow for human actions to be declared as independent of divine Providence, and hence was also not a solution to Leibniz's problem with Providence. On the contrary, going back to the soul's state prior to Creation, Leibniz significantly changed the conditions of the initial problem. This might also have been the reason why Formey did not deal with it in his *Réflexions*: he was interested in the determinations that acted upon the actually existing human soul and not in the determinations that guided God's decision in front of the possible souls.

The Independence of the Body and the Soul

The formation of will in an actually existing soul was not only independent of God's divine foreknowledge, it was also independent of the movement of the material body. This was the second major point that Formey's *Réflexions* stressed, and by this reacted to the criticism of pre-established harmony that was portrayed in the *Belle Wolfienne*. Remember what Monsieur M... had claimed regarding the 'psycho-physical parallelism' defended in the theory of pre-established harmony:

'Mes Actions ne peuvent plus y [dans le système de l'harmonie préétablie] être regardées comme contingentes, par rapport à moi. Mon Ame se trouve unie à un Corps, dont les Mouvements successifs doivent représenter les Pensées successives. Il n'est pas possible, qu'elle ait aucune Perception, que celle que demande la Succession des Mouvements du Corps: & bien que la Liberté réside dans l'Ame, & non dans le Corps, cependant le Corps ne laisse pas, par la Suite nécessaire de ses Mouvements, de nécessiter l'Ame à telles & telles Perceptions.'⁹⁴⁰

The problem that Monsieur M... revealed here was that, even if we assumed that the body had no direct influence on the soul (and vice versa), and that the will was formed in the soul and not in the body, the soul necessarily had to perceive and to will what corresponded to the body's movements in order to guarantee the harmonic parallelism between the two entities. Manteuffel, as the author of the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* had already corrected Monsieur M...'s 'misunderstanding': in his text, Monsieur P... admitted that the external world and the bodily processes determined the perceptions that the mind formed, in the sense that these perceptions had to be compatible with the stimulation of the sensory organs:

'l'Ame developpe de son essence les perceptions sensuelles, c'est-à-dire, tout ce qui touche les

939 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 62-3.

940 Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 76.

organes de nos sens. Et cette sorte de représentation tient lieu de nécessité, selon tous les Systèmes Philosophiques; parce qu'il n'est pas au pouvoir de l'Ame, de ne pas appercevoir ce qui frappe les organes du Corps, tant qu'ils se trouvent dans leur assiette naturelle & duement disposés.⁹⁴¹

Nevertheless, in a second step Manteuffel made Monsieur P... claim (and here he relied on Leibniz and Wolff as we will see below) that these perceptions did not automatically lead to a volition. On the contrary, the mind had a certain power of self-determination which it was able to perform on the basis of the perceptions that were determined by the body: 'Mais ces représentations ne necessitent, ne forcent pas l'Ame à avoir telles ou telles volitions. C'est, au contraire, l'Ame elle-même qui determine librement ses volitions, comme bon lui semble.'⁹⁴² It was this idea of the eventual independence of the mind that was the foundation of Formey's merely psychological description of the process of willing that he presented in his *Réflexions* as we shall see below.

Besides using this idea of the soul's self-determination as the premise for his entire argument, Formey also engaged in a debate on the epistemic legitimacy of the idea of an independent and free soul, in which he revealed once again his indebtedness to Wolff's epistemological considerations on the study of the soul. Just as in the case of the compatibility between divine foreknowledge and contingent human actions, Formey contrasted the different types of evidence on which the idea of a real mutual influence of bodily movements and decision-making on the one hand, and the idea of a uniquely mental process of willing on the other, relied. First, although declaring it as illusionary, he admitted that the idea of the body having a direct influence on the mental process of will was a legitimate feeling for it seemed, at first sight, to be confirmed by experience: we can observe that we form a certain will and that we make a certain move which corresponds to that will.

[Je demande donc, où est la preuve de sentiment, à laquelle tout homme, Païsan, ou Philosophe, qui voudra admettre l'influence réelle & physique de l'Ame sur le Corps puisse en appeller? Que sent-il? Qu'il veut, & que ses organes agissent, après qu'il a voulu. Mais oseroit-on dire que qui que ce soit voye & sente ce passage, ce noeud entre la determination de l'Ame sur le Corps.] Je fais un mouvement, que j'avois conçu comme possible, avant que de le commencer. Je comprends, & je puis assurer, qu'il est une infinité de mouvemens, dont l'un n'est pas moins faisable que l'autre. Je sais de maniere à n'en pouvoir douter, que quand je veux marcher je marche, & que plusieurs mouvemens de mon corps répondent parfaitement aux déterminations de ma volonté.'

Yet, while this congruency between will and movement was confirmed by experience, everything

941 [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 19.

942 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 20.

which went beyond it, was not. As Formey continued in his essay:

'Mais je ne saurois aller plus loin, sans passer les bornes de l'expérience. Elle garde un profond silence sur la manière dont la chose se passe, elle ne me fait appercevoir en aucune manière que ma volonté pousse mon bras. Quand je m'imagine donc qu'elle produit cet effet, de la même manière que mes doigts dirigent ma plume, je ne fais que m'embarasser d'une opinion très confuse, qui a plutôt l'air d'un instinct grossier que d'un raisonnement.'⁹⁴³

There was no empirical evidence of what happened in the moment of the passage between mental volition and bodily movement; it remained a black box, the content of which, could only be conjectured. For Formey, to conjecture that there was an actual, almost mechanical effect of the will on the body – as his adversaries according to him did – was far from serious metaphysical reasoning; instead it was based on instinct, i.e. an illegitimate source of knowledge.⁹⁴⁴

In contrast to this theory of the existence of an actual impact of the will on the body, which Formey considered to be epistemologically unstable, he described the feeling of being free as being strikingly evident:

'En croyant mouvoir ses membres par l'action de sa volonté, il [le Paisan] croit ce qu'il ne sent point, il met une conjecture à la place d'un fait. Mais quand il se juge libre, il en a la preuve de fait en main; car en faisant un pas à droite, il a une certitude égale qu'il fait ce pas, & qu'il pourroit le faire à gauche. Ainsi, qu'on admette ou qu'on rejette l'influence de l'âme sur le corps, les vérités de sentiment, telles que la Liberté, n'en sauroient souffrir aucune atteinte.'⁹⁴⁵

The crucial point that divided the idea of being entirely free from the idea of a mechanical relation between will and action, was in Formey's view the epistemological category of feeling ('sentiment'). As he explained, the idea of an influence between body and soul was a conjecture, a belief, whereas the idea of human free will was a 'vérité de sentiment', which seems to have had an empirical value for him: the human being could experience in himself that he had the choice between doing one movement or the complete opposite.

Formey used the term 'sentiment' or 'sentiment de la pensée' to name the mental faculty of (self-)consciousness, called 'conscience' in French.⁹⁴⁶ By associating the terms 'sentiment' and 'conscience' with each other, Formey seems to have made use of the term 'conscience' as it was established in French on the basis of Locke, while however meaning the Cartesian concept of consciousness. This requires a brief explanation: historians of philosophy generally acknowledge that Descartes has to be considered as the 'inventor' of the concept of consciousness as a mental

943 Formey, "Réflexions," 342.

944 Formey cited the same argument, i.e. that the mechanical influence of the soul on the body could not be proved empirically, in the above-mentioned academic essay of 1764: "Nouvelles considérations," 367-8.

945 Formey, "Réflexions," 342-3.

946 See "Réflexions," 341.

faculty (i.e. the perception of our inner self), even though he did not use a proper term to designate this concept. Instead, the establishment of the psychological meaning of consciousness for the term 'conscience' in the French language is usually traced back to the French translation of John Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding* by the Huguenot translator Pierre Coste in 1700.⁹⁴⁷ Before Coste's translation the French term 'conscience' had merely a moral meaning, in the sense of English conscience. Hence, with the translation of Locke's 'consciousness' into French 'conscience', the French term obtained a double connotation which it has pertained until today, yet at the moment when Formey wrote his *Réflexions* it was still rather recent. Interestingly, Formey's *Réflexions*, reveal the novelty of the introduction of a second connotation to the French 'conscience', that Coste had defined, and demonstrate how he tried to appropriate it. Formey, like Coste before him, put the term into italics in order to distinguish the psychological and the moral meaning of the term from each other. Likewise, however, Formey provided his – as it seems – very own explanation for the homonymy of the French 'conscience', which he tightly linked to his concept of human liberty: the consciousness that human beings have of their ability to act in many different ways, was the prerequisite for us judging the moral quality of our actions. Consequently, as Formey claimed, this link between psychological structure and moral practice justified that consciousness and conscience were named by the same term. Formey reflected more explicitly on the recent introduction of an additional meaning to the term 'conscience' in his academic treatise *De la conscience* of 1751, which however dealt predominantly with the moral conscience. In this treatise he defined the new, psychological (in his words metaphysical) meaning of 'conscience' as follows: 'le sentiment réfléchi, qui nous met en état de connoître que c'est nous qui sommes le sujet de quelque action, ou de quelque passion, & de faire de la distinction entre nous-mêmes, l'état où nous nous trouvons, & les causes de cet état. C'est le *Conscium sui* des Latins, & l'*Apperception* de M. de Leibniz.'⁹⁴⁸ Formey linked this new concept of consciousness to scholastic and Leibnizian theories.

Empirical Knowledge between Self-Consciousness and Observation

Formey's explanation of the homonymy of 'conscience' had a clear Wolffian root in the sense that it relied on Wolff's theory that morality was founded on the empirically-proven faculties of the soul.

947 See Étienne Balibar, *Identité et différence: l'invention de la conscience* (Paris, 1998), 12-29. On the development of the concept of consciousness in France see also Catherine Glyn Davies, *Conscience as Consciousness: The Idea of Self-Awareness in French Philosophical Writing from Descartes to Diderot*, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century 272 (Oxford, 1989). A much more comprehensive study of the concept of consciousness and its link to the idea of personal identity is Udo Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume* (Oxford; New York, 2011).

948 Formey, "De la conscience," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin 1751* (Berlin, 1753), 3.

Likewise, Formey's concept of consciousness, or 'sentiment', as he applied it in his *Réflexions* seems to have had its origin in Wolff who in turn had developed it on the basis of Descartes. At the beginning of his empirical psychology (third chapter of the *Metaphysik*), as translated into French by Formey, Wolff defined the soul – his object of inquiry – as the thing that was conscious of itself and the things external to it.⁹⁴⁹ This definition relied on Descartes' proof of the existence of the human being, i.e. his (purely intellectual) soul: according to Descartes, thought ('pensée') and self-consciousness ('sentiment de soi-même') were intrinsically tied to each other: the human being experienced the existence of his faculty of understanding through the understanding itself (he was conscious of his thought); this experience, in turn, proved the existence of the rational human being and more precisely his mind. On the basis of this Cartesian definition of the soul as a (self-)conscious thing, Wolff attempted to undertake his inquiry into the different faculties of the soul: he stated clearly that (self-)consciousness was a crucial condition for his empirical approach to these mental faculties, in the sense, that we can only perceive of or observe things in our soul if we were were conscious of them.⁹⁵⁰ The first faculty that the human being could distinguish through consciousness was, according to Wolff, understanding/thought.⁹⁵¹ However, Wolff claimed at the same time to not entirely follow the Cartesian model and rejected the idea of a purely intellectual mind (i.e. a mind that contained only the faculty of a reason-based consciousness). On the contrary, Wolff thought that in our soul there were things that we were not conscious of, yet, he stressed that these things could hardly be proven empirically (and thus should not appear in the empirical psychology), and had instead to be understood via deduction from empirical knowledge.⁹⁵² Formey definitely adopted this notion of consciousness as the foundation of an empirical method to account for the faculties of the soul in general, and he applied it to the faculty of volition in particular. More precisely, with a direct mention of Descartes, Formey argued that, since it was his consciousness of thinking that proved that he existed, similarly his consciousness of choosing between several options proved that he was free.⁹⁵³

Formey in his *Réflexions* hence adopted the concept of consciousness as an epistemological category from Wolff, in order to justify the truth of the freedom of our will. To strengthen his claim, he emphasised the outstanding value of this epistemological category in comparison to both a-priori knowledge and the other types of a-posteriori knowledge, such as sensory experience. We have

949 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott*, §192 and Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 9.

950 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott*, §193 and Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 9-10.

951 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott*, §194-§195.

952 See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott*, §193 and §197 and compare to Werner Euler, "Bewusstsein - Seele - Geist. Untersuchungen zur Transformation des Cartesischen 'Cogito' in der Psychologie Christian Wolffs," in *Die Psychologie Christian Wolffs. Systematische und historische Untersuchungen*, ed. Oliver-Pierre Rudolph and Jean-François Goubet (Tübingen, 2004), 22-4.

953 See Formey, "Réflexions," 341.

already quoted how Formey claimed the advantage of consciousness ('vérité de sentiment') over mere conjecture in order to reject the hypothesis of a mechanical effect of the will on the body. That by this confrontation he also discredited the hypothesis of pre-established harmony for its unstable epistemological foundations is something that he only alluded to.⁹⁵⁴ Generally, in the *Réflexions* he still 'safeguarded' the idea of a pre-established harmony; only 15 years later, in the above-mentioned discussion of the Johann Jakob Hentsch's revised version of the physical-influx-theory, Formey admitted that all three different hypotheses concerning the relation between the body and the soul were equally counter-intuitive to the feeling of liberty – yet not by referring explicitly to epistemological reasons.⁹⁵⁵

What is even more interesting in Formey's reflections on the epistemic stance of knowledge on the human soul in his *Réflexions*, besides his emphasis on the pre-eminence of self-consciousness compared to conjecture, is his discussion of the difference between consciousness and another kind of empirical knowledge, namely sensory experience. In his opinion, the latter was to be used to account for the qualities of the body, while the former served only for apprehending the soul.⁹⁵⁶ Yet, it seems that he considered these two different types of experiences to be not equivalent; on the contrary, he emphasised the superiority of the inner experience (consciousness) over the sensory one by stressing the universality of the former and the unreliability of the latter:

'Que la vuë, ou même l'accord complet de tous les sens, soit plus propre à nous conduire à la conviction que le sentiment interieur, c'est ce qu'il n'est pas aussi aisé de prouver que d'avancer. Tout au contraire nous affirmons qu'il n'y a point de comparaison à faire entre la force du sentiment & le témoignage des sens, la premiere se soutenant en tout tems & en tout lieu, au lieu que les sens sont sujets à mille variations & mille erreurs, dont on trouve l'enumeration par tout.'⁹⁵⁷

This passage suggests that Formey was referring to the failures of sensory experience in general, including its 'usual' object of inquiry, i.e. material bodies. In his view, it was an illusion to think that our ideas concerning bodies were entirely based on our experience of the external world.⁹⁵⁸ Yet, in Formey's view, this kind of experience seems to have been even less appropriate for the endeavour to account for the soul. The reason for this was most probably that if one wanted to account for the nature of the soul through sensory experience, i.e. knowledge obtained via the body, one had to admit to a physical relation between the body and the soul, which, as we have said, Formey tried to avoid in the 1740s. Therefore, Formey's concern with depicting the reliability of consciousness, or

954 See Formey, "Réflexions," 343.

955 See Formey, "Nouvelles considerations," 366.

956 See Formey, "Réflexions," 343.

957 Formey, "Réflexions," 340 and similarly p. 343.

958 See Formey, "Réflexions," 339-40.

inner feeling, as a source of knowledge of the soul has to be seen as a means to uphold the theory of the psycho-physical parallelism that was maintained by Leibniz and Wolff. At the same time, the emphasis on this kind of knowledge became ever more necessary for actors like Formey in light of the increasing dominance of the methods of observation and experiment in natural philosophy, and the attempts to also apply them to non-material objects of inquiry such as the soul.

I would argue that the increasing trust in empirical knowledge in the study of nature, which was transferred to the study of spirits like God and the soul, had provoked in Formey's era a certain epistemic scepticism concerning the possibility to entirely apprehend the nature of such spirits. As Paul Wood has shown, the 'science of the mind' which developed in the Eighteenth Century drew its methodological premises not only from the epistemological considerations of Newtonian physics, but also largely from the 'traditional' Lockean and Baconian natural historical approaches to the study of the mind and natural history, as has been professed by scholars like Buffon or Linnaeus.⁹⁵⁹ Fernando Vidal, in his study of the emergence of the discipline of empirical psychology in Germany after the mid-Eighteenth Century, accounts for endeavours to introduce mathematics and experimentation into the methodological toolkit of this science that, however, proved rather quickly to be inappropriate and was abandoned by the contemporary practitioners.⁹⁶⁰ In the methodological discussion that revolved in turn around the idea of combining observation and a-priori reasoning or self-consciousness, the epistemological uncertainties that occurred in the study of the soul were also a frequent subject: in the considerations of Christian Gottfried Schütz and Johann Nicolas Tetens in the 1770s, which Vidal presents, the traditional doubts concerning the soul's capacity to reliably observe its own inner states appeared together with the acknowledgement that observations were prone to error, and the assumption that physiological knowledge was nothing else than conjectures.⁹⁶¹ Therefore it can be assumed that the different methodological advances in the 'science of the mind' in the second half of the Eighteenth Century came together with certain concerns about their scientific reliability, which in my view, were marked by the doubt whether at all it was possible to obtain certain knowledge of the soul. In this situation Formey upheld, in a Wolffian manner, the reliability of introspection or self-consciousness. Wolff had still been very optimistic about the power of introspection or self-consciousness as a means to account for the nature and faculties of the soul; in his Latin empirical psychology he had also highlighted the similarities between empirical psychology and experimental philosophy, i.e. physics, which suggests that he considered self-consciousness to be as epistemologically reliable in the study of the

959 See Paul Wood, "Science, Philosophy, and the Mind," in *The Cambridge History of Science. Volume 4, Eighteenth-Century Science*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge, 2003), 800–824.

960 See Fernando Vidal, "Le Discours de la méthode dans la Psychologie des Lumières," *L'Homme et la Société* 167-168–169 (2008): 53–82.

961 See Vidal, "Le Discours de la méthode dans la psychologie," 63-4; 66 and 69.

soul as experiment in the study of physical objects.⁹⁶² Nonetheless, Formey likewise alluded in his *Réflexions* to the epistemic scepticism that the method of introspection (based on self-consciousness) and the study of the soul, in general, seemed to have already encountered in the 1740s: he reported that some of his contemporaries viewed the 'preuve de sentiment' with suspicion, calling it a mere illusion.⁹⁶³ Moreover, this epistemic scepticism, in my opinion, had already been expressed in the passage of Formey's *Belle Wolfienne* in which Monsieur M... claimed that only a better understanding of the human soul could allow us to acquire a more reliable knowledge of the relation between the body and the soul.⁹⁶⁴ Although Formey, in the *Belle Wolfienne* did not explicitly make a point about the sort of knowledge of the soul which his protagonist wanted to improve, it is very likely that he meant the traditional knowledge on the soul gained through inner experience, which Monsieur M... (and with him Formey?) thus considered as insufficient. It seems hence that, with his references to the contemporary criticism of the Wolffian reliance on self-consciousness alone, Formey anticipated to a certain extent the development that the epistemological and methodological considerations in empirical psychology underwent during the second half of the Eighteenth Century, and which presumably also subsequently affected his thought.

This development away from Wolff's exclusive reliance on inner experience in empirical psychology can be observed in the psychology of Charles Bonnet, with whose work Formey increasingly engaged in the 1760s. In 1760 Charles Bonnet published his *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme*, that Formey not only appreciated but also re-worked into a popular version in which Bonnet's theories were presented in a dialogue between a master and his disciple. Bonnet had a significantly different view on the role of empirical knowledge on the soul to Wolff, and he had also embraced the theory of physical influx to account for body-soul-interaction. As Ratcliff has shown, the general method that Bonnet had developed and that he applied to both natural philosophy and psychology was the 'esprit d'observation', which relied on the psychological category of attention and Leibniz's metaphysical conception of the contingent world.⁹⁶⁵ Unlike Wolff, the observation for which Bonnet pleaded was not based on inner rational self-consciousness, but on the bodily senses which he believed were able to directly produce knowledge.⁹⁶⁶ In Bonnet's view, which Formey replicated, the soul acted 'on and through its body'

962 See École, "Des rapports de l'expérience et de la raison," 594-6.

963 See Formey, "Réflexions," 339.

964 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 2, 79.

965 See Marc J. Ratcliff, "Une Métaphysique de la Méthode chez Charles Bonnet," in *Charles Bonnet. Savant et Philosophe (1720-1793). Actes du colloque internationale de Genève (25-27 Novembre 1993)*, ed. René Sigrist et al. (Geneva, 1994), 51-60.

966 See Vidal, "Le discours de la méthode dans la psychologie," 73-4 and 81-2. Vidal emphasises that Bonnet himself actually had a less rigid view on the linear connection between sensory experience and knowledge in the sense that

and therefore the method applied to understand the soul had to be physics.⁹⁶⁷ Bonnet hence claimed that all knowledge on the soul – as limited as it might be – had to be gained directly through the body: 'l'ame ne peut se connoître elle-même; elle ne connoit que par le ministere des sens: & comment des sens matériels lui donneroient-ils la perception d'elle-même? Elle ne connoit pas plus la matiere qu'elle ne se connoit elle-même; elle ne la voit qu'à travers un milieu; elle n'en juge que dans le rapport à ses sens.'⁹⁶⁸ Hence, Bonnet had a very different concept of empiricism, with respect to the inquiry of the soul compared to the one that Formey portrayed in his *Réflexions* in 1747, and as a result of this Bonnet also embraced, unlike Formey, a scepticism of the intelligibility of the soul's essence.⁹⁶⁹ Formey's replication of Bonnet's ideas might be a sign that he himself had likewise, 20 years after the *Réflexions*, adopted this conception of empirical psychology that was different from Wolff's.

As I suggested, such views as Bonnet's, were already in the air when Formey wrote his *Réflexions*; one of Formey's academic colleagues in particular, Antoine Achard, who had apparently directly triggered Formey's writing,⁹⁷⁰ seems to have been caught by a certain epistemic scepticism on the (consciousness-based) intelligibility of the human soul.⁹⁷¹ In one of the first sessions of the *Société littéraire*, the interim institution that existed between August 1743 and May 1746, when the renewed Academy was officially inaugurated, Achard, a preacher and philosopher from Geneva, presented a discourse on human liberty that was supposed to be the introduction to a more substantial treatise on the subject, yet it remained only a fragment.⁹⁷² Achard had conceived of his work being a discussion of several philosophers' opinions on this subject, which would lead to the affirmation of human liberty, and enable him to refute the doubts concerning this alleged liberty of authors such as Bayle, Spinoza and Anthony Collins (the latter, as we will see below, was also a subject of Formey's discussion on the topic). According to the report of his discourse that Formey wrote for the Academy's first yearbook, Achard's focus lay on Spinoza's arguments for the determined character of human actions. Spinoza's theory that all creatures of the universe were only modifications of the Supreme Being's substance, and hence necessary beings, seems to have encountered wide interest at the Academy, which can be seen in a treatise on this subject by Joseph

he conceded that the sensory experience had to be combined with hypotheses and analogies in order to form knowledge on the soul. Yet, many of his contemporaries, particularly the above-mentioned Germans Schütz and Tetens considered his theory as purely sensualist.

967 See Bonnet, *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme* (Copenhagen, 1760) XIII and Formey, *Entretiens psychologiques*, 7.

968 Bonnet, *Essai analytique*, XX and Formey, *Entretiens psychologiques*, 14.

969 See Bonnet, *Essai analytique*, 14 and Formey, *Entretiens psychologiques*, 26.

970 See Formey, "Réflexions," 334.

971 Interestingly enough, Formey dedicated his *Entretiens psychologiques*, i.e. his abbreviation of Bonnet, to Achard and also alluded to the difficulty of entirely comprehending the soul.

972 Antoine Achard, "Sur la liberté," *Histoire de l'Académie* 1745, 91-3 (= summary of Achard's discourse by Formey).

de Jarriges.⁹⁷³ It was however not Spinoza's theory of necessity in the world – which was commonly rejected by the Berlin academicians of the time – that interested Formey and incited him to write on human liberty himself. Instead, it seems to rather have been Achard's doubts over the possibility and strength of potential counter-arguments to Spinoza.

As Achard had indicated to Formey, it was due to these doubts and the lack of a clear solution to the problem of liberty that he eventually suspended his research on the topic.⁹⁷⁴ It seems thus quite likely that this was one of the immediate reasons for Formey (besides his reading of Wolff's psychology) to stress so strongly the empirical nature of his argument for the freedom of will. Nevertheless, and this is perhaps even more interesting, Achard seems to not have been satisfied with Formey's considerations on the function and probative force of inner feeling, or consciousness as proof of the freedom of will. Even after Formey had presented his *Réflexions* Achard insisted on his doubts: according to him, the theory of human liberty lacked an empirical basis because it was not yet possible to know the nature of the soul. However, he seems to have also rejected the sensualist approach that Bonnet deepened later in the century, and which was already implied in Locke: according to Achard, Locke's empirical method was also no help since it only accounted for the results of actions and not their foundations. On the contrary, Achard claimed, if we simply observed human action we would rather be convinced of its determination through competing causes.⁹⁷⁵ Achard's concerns were hence partly similar to the issues with sensory experience that Formey had raised in the *Réflexions*, while at the same time he seems to not have been convinced by Formey's account of consciousness, and repeated the epistemic scepticism on the intelligibility of the human soul as was stated at the end of the *Belle Wolfienne*. Formey's strong argument for the role of inner experience or consciousness allowed him to strengthen the argument of the contingency of the uniquely mental process of willing as opposed to the determination of the soul's behaviour by the body. However, as we have seen, this epistemological argument seems to have already been controversial in the 1740s and became ever more debated towards the end of the century.

973 See Philipp Joseph Jariges, “Examen du Spinozisme et des objections de Monsieur Bayle sur ce systeme,” *Histoire de l'Académie* 1745 (Berlin, 1746), 121-42 and “Examen du Spinozisme et des objections de Monsieur Bayle sur ce systeme. Seconde partie,” *Histoire de l'Académie* 1746 (Berlin, 1748), 295-316. Jariges even announced a third part of his treatise which seems however to not have been achieved by him.

974 See Formey, “Éloge de M. Achard,” *Nouveaux Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences et Belles-Lettres* 1772 (Berlin, 1774), 62.

975 This is based on the summary of a letter by Achard to Formey, 2.2.1748 in Rolf Geissler, “Antoine Achard (1696-1772), Ein Prediger und Philosoph in Berlin,” in *Schweizer in Berlin des 18. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Martin Fontius and Helmut Holzhey (Berlin, 1996), 135. According to Geissler the letter is conserved in the collection Autographa in Krakow, yet, when I visited this archive in July 2014 Achard's letters in this collection were marked as lost.

Free Will between Necessity and Pure Chance

After having discussed the links between free will and pre-established harmony on the basis of Formey's Wolffian epistemology of the science of the soul, and his defence of this type of epistemology, we will now turn our view to the actual explanation for the mental process of volition as Formey presented it in his *Réflexions* in the legacy of Leibniz and Wolff. This explanation reflected a similar dichotomy between determination and contingency as it was presented in the cosmological considerations on the interaction between God and the universe within the theory of pre-established harmony. Moreover, Formey's explanation of volition as a mental process offered the concept of a middle way between these two apparently mutually exclusive categories, determination and contingency. More precisely, in his account of human will, Formey developed a position between 'nécessité absolue' – an inevitable link between judgement and choice – and 'liberté d'indifférence' – the opportunity to make a choice just for the sake of choosing, without having any motive behind it. Styled as a battle on two fronts, Formey's essay presented first the arguments against the former before destroying the latter.⁹⁷⁶ A look into Formey's Genevan correspondence reveals that his contemporaries considered it to be important to present such a middle way on the question of the human will, mainly because several of the Calvinist pastors and theologians had – according to Gabriel Cramer – adopted the concept of the soul's indifference, in order to avoid the opposite extreme, i.e. fatalism, which they considered to be even worse than the former, even though the assumption of indifference made it extremely difficult for them to claim God's providence at the same time.⁹⁷⁷

However, to argue against a fatalistic 'nécessité absolue' without falling into the complete opposite argument was a difficult task and hence Formey's first claim sounded rather like a plea for determinism: he claimed that he wanted to 'justifier la nécessité indispensable de l'existence des motifs dans toutes les déterminations de notre Liberté, & d'expliquer, avec toute la netteté dont je suis capable, leur influence, & leur efficace.'⁹⁷⁸ By this, he explicitly kept and reinforced the Leibnizian premise that everything that existed had to have a sufficient reason – a motive – while he only alluded to the possibility that these motives only had a limited power over human choice. However, he made this aspect more explicit when he subsequently described the processes that occurred in the mind of the human being while he was making a decision: in his opinion – which was inspired by 'the ancient philosophers' as he claimed – the external world, i.e. the sensory

976 See Formey, "Réflexions," 345.

977 See Gabriel Cramer to Formey, 17.11.1750, *Lettres de Genève*, 285-6. The case of the pastor Jean Peschier confirms this for he stated that Formey's *Réflexions* had made him finally renounce the concept of indifference, see Peschier to Formey, 27.10.1750, *Lettres de Genève*, 282.

978 Formey, "Réflexions," 334-5.

experience of it, did not directly incite the will; instead the will derived from inside the soul, in the sense, that the 'external world' first passed through the filter of our understanding which established motives that in a second step were presented to the volition. The volition, conceived as a process separate from understanding, was, however – and this is the important point – not constrained to act according to any motive and consequently could be considered as free.⁹⁷⁹

It seems that with this explanation of an only partially determined freedom of will, Formey elaborated on §45 of Leibniz's *Théodicée* which reads: 'Il y a toujours une raison prevalante qui porte la volonté à son choix, & il suffit pour conserver sa liberté, que cette raison incline sans necessiter.'⁹⁸⁰ Leibniz referred to Platon, Aristotle and Augustinus as his intellectual forebears, which were most probably the 'ancient philosophers' that Formey also invoked. Wolff, in his empirical psychology, had also used the image of a soul that was inclined towards a certain choice without being determined.⁹⁸¹ Moreover, Wolff had also emphasised that the will was entirely rooted in the mind, not only because of the fact that it formed motives on the basis of sensory experience but also because it was able to circumvent these motives. As an example, Wolff stated that somebody was able to form the resolution to buy a book based on the information that he had obtained on it, but that this did not mean that he would eventually buy it.⁹⁸²

The Debate between Libertarians and Necessitarians

In the debates on free will, the idea that the human will was determined by motives was common to both, philosophers who claimed the freedom of will (libertarians), and to those who denied it (necessitarians). The crucial point which separated these two positions was, in fact, the idea of the non-binding character of motive in the formation of will, or, to put it differently: the idea of the active self-determination of the human being despite or against certain motives.⁹⁸³ A famous defender of necessitarian thought was Anthony Collins, a British Deist and friend of John Locke, who in Formey's *Réflexions* played the role of his (fictive) opponent.⁹⁸⁴ In his *Philosophical inquiry concerning human liberty* of 1717, Collins had pointed to the similarity between traditional libertarian and necessitarian arguments and even claimed that declared libertarians such as the

979 See Formey, "Réflexions," 336. This explanation is the one that Manteuffel had also provided in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 19-20 as indicated above.

980 Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée*, 157.

981 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 291.

982 See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 314.

983 For the terminology see James A. Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity: The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy*, (Oxford, 2005), 7.

984 By this Formey broke with the emphasis on Spinoza that had determined the interventions of Jariges and Achard. Yet, Achard had also cited Collins in his essay.

English ecclesiastic and famous Boyle lecturer, Samuel Clarke, as well as Leibniz had actually been necessitarians.⁹⁸⁵ Collins agreed with Leibniz's idea that certain motives – based on sensory experience and reasoning – made the human soul inclined towards different choices.⁹⁸⁶ Yet, following Thomas Hobbes' arguments, Collins, unlike Leibniz, believed that these inclinations were absolute, i.e. they inevitably led to a certain choice. Moreover, he held that, even if one assumed that the human being sometimes acted despite a preconceived motive, it was an illusion to think that he was then acting freely. In the debate on fatalism, Collins denied the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human liberty,⁹⁸⁷ which Formey defended. This is why Formey refuted Collin's standpoint in his *Réflexions*:

'Il n'en faut pas davantage pour faire abjurer le sentiment de *Collins*, & de tous ceux qui croient avec lui que la détermination de nos actions est d'une nécessité absolue; que, quand nous prenons un parti, il étoit impossible, dans toute la force de ce terme, que nous en prissions un autre, & que notre apparence de liberté consiste en ce que nous portons quelquefois de bon gré les fers dont la Fatalité nous charge.'⁹⁸⁸

Formey's rejection of Collins, besides providing the Leibnizian-Wolffian psychological explanation for the process of willing, also contained an explanation for the difference between an absolute necessity on the one hand and a hypothetical necessity on the other hand. According to Collins, the first was at work in the relation between motives and choice, whereas his direct opponent Clarke, as well as Leibniz and Wolff, preferred to use the second notion to account for this relation. Actually, what we have called so far, in reference to Leibniz and Wolff, the 'non-binding-character' of motives was at the time also very often called hypothetical necessity, or more precisely moral necessity. Clarke, for example, had described the motives that the human judgement established, as moral motives because they resulted from the human being's perception of good and bad, and since it was these motives that influenced the will, he called the establishment of will a moral necessity. He depicted these moral motives as being the spiritual equivalent to physical causes which – through the human power of self-motion – affected the movements of the body and hence he called the actions of the body a physical necessity. Moreover, what is more important for our context, was that Clarke had declared the moral necessity to be hypothetical – for the reasons that we have mentioned above: according to this, the human being was able to decide against his moral convictions.⁹⁸⁹ Also in the parts of Wolff's empirical psychology that Formey translated for

985 See Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, chapter 2 (41-63), especially p. 55. Compare also to Charles T. Wolfe, "Determinism/Spinozism in the Radical Enlightenment: The Cases of Anthony Collins and Denis Diderot," *International Review of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1 (2007): 37-51, particularly 39-47.

986 See James O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins. The man and his works* (The Hague, 1970), 99-100.

987 See Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, 54-5.

988 Formey, "Réflexions," 335.

989 See Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, 50-1.

the fifth volume of his *Belle Wolfienne*, we find a reference to the role played by morality in the process of willing. Very similarly to Clarke, Wolff had claimed: 'On ne sauroit nier qu'un homme qui connoit une chose pour meilleure, ne sauroit lui en préférer une pire, & qu'ainsi le choix du meilleur arrive nécessairement. Mais cette nécessité n'est point contraire à la liberté – car l'homme n'est point forcé à choisi [sic], le meilleur, il pourroit également choisir le pire, s'il lui plaisoit, l'un étant possible en soi tout comme l'autre.'⁹⁹⁰ This assumed situation, i.e. the existence of (universal) moral concepts and their relation to human action, was the only means to estimate future behaviour not only among men but also between God and men. As Formey stressed in the note to this passage in Wolff's empirical psychology, the moral necessity was the basis on which God's prescience relied.

At the same time, however – and Formey stressed this in the same note to his translation – the term of moral necessity was problematic for the defenders of libertarian arguments since it could lead to misunderstandings. Collins, for example, had (falsely) appropriated Clarke's term of moral necessity in order to justify the actual determined character of human will.⁹⁹¹ It might be for this reason that in his *Réflexions* Formey considered it to be important to provide clear notions of the different types of necessity and to dedicate a long digression to it. As he said, for this purpose he said, he had to go beyond the common sense explanations that were provided by a basic ontology; instead he resorted to Leibniz's ontology of substances as well as to the theory of contradiction that was contained in his *Logics*.⁹⁹²

According to this Formey declared that the term 'nécessité absolue' was linked to the essence of a subject whereas the term 'nécessité hypothétique' referred to the additional elements that could determine an existing subject besides the features that were already contained in its essence. The features of this essence, which were considered to be the nature or the core of every object or being, had an absolute character in the sense that their opposite implied a contradiction, i.e. were impossible. Hence, all the actually existing attributes of a being which stemmed from its essence had to be considered as determined or absolutely necessary. According to the scholastic doctrine, as Formey stated, all attributes of a being had to result from this being's essence, or, to put it otherwise, in their view the essence of a being was equal to its actual existence.⁹⁹³ That this view had led these scholars to the dangerous conviction that the human being was absolutely determined, i.e. that there did not exist any liberty at all, was understandable in Formey's view. However, Formey countered that this was not true since essence did not inevitably lead to existence. On the contrary, essence

990 Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 315.

991 See Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, 55.

992 See Formey, "Réflexions," 337.

993 See Formey, "Réflexions," 338.

was only a possibility. Instead, there had to be external, rather arbitrary factors, which intervened on the passage from essence into being, i.e. from the possible to the actually existing. As we have mentioned above, in Leibniz's and Wolff's terminology these factors were the sufficient reason for an existence and, since every being needed a sufficient reason to come into existence, every being could be considered as hypothetical or contingent.⁹⁹⁴

These long reflections were a significant digression from the discussion of moral necessity's role in the process of willing. Taken in itself it demonstrated rather the contingency of human existence in general, and as such was very likely inspired by Reinbeck's explanation of the axiom of sufficient reason that had been contained in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*. In this short demonstration of 21 paragraphs, Reinbeck had deduced the principle of sufficient reason from the premise that nothing can exist and not exist at the same time. He had shown, amongst others, that everything that existed was possible but that in contrast, everything that was possible did not necessarily exist.⁹⁹⁵ From this Reinbeck had finally concluded that there had to be a sufficient reason at play in order to transform the possible into the existing.⁹⁹⁶ As a reply to the reproach of fatalism that Formey had reiterated in the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*, Reinbeck's logico-ontological deduction of the principle of sufficient reason was meant to underline the contingency that was linked to sufficient reason as a central axiom of Wolffian philosophy. In the context in which Formey reused parts of this demonstration – the context of the debate on whether moral motives had a necessary effect on human will or not – it seemed not to be entirely adequate. Yet, there are obviously parallels: in Formey's depiction, the essence of a being and the moral motives of human actions were only potentially determining factors for the attributes of a human being and for the execution of an action; there had to be a sufficient reason to make them determining. This implies that there needed to be a sufficient reason for the mind when it willed against certain moral convictions. Whether such a view was once again vulnerable to accusations of determinism (even if one did not believe that the motives themselves determined the will, there remained still a taste of determinism in the view that a will emerged from a sufficient reason), was neither addressed nor answered by Formey.

The Rejection of Chance ('Liberté d'indifférence')

The question of the role of sufficient reason reappeared in the second part of the *Réflexions*, in the part where Formey objected to the opposite side in his battle, the so-called 'liberté d'indifférence'.

994 See Formey, "Réflexions," 338.

995 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 42 (§16).

996 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 43-4 (§18-21).

He defined this liberty of indifference as the faculty to will without being led by any reason or external cause, and he argued that it made the soul vacillating and undetermined.⁹⁹⁷ As Formey had been told in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, some philosophers like the character from his novel Monsieur M ... had considered indifference as more convenient to account for contingency than sufficient reason. However, with this – the *Lettre* went on – these philosophers had introduced the notion of pure chance which was not provable and hence did not exist.⁹⁹⁸ In the *Lettre* Leibniz had been designated as the most prominent or most vocal objector against the liberty of indifference and consequently, it is not surprising that Formey also quoted Leibniz in his *Réflexions* for the purpose of refuting this, in his eyes, unbearable possibility.

On this basis, Formey formulated his own argument against the existence of chance which he justified in two different ways: first, in reference to the tradition of rational axioms, he declared that chance was equal to nothing/ the void ('néant'), and thus could not produce anything; second, based on the experiences of the material world, he claimed that every change in a subject was caused by another subject.⁹⁹⁹ Finally, he turned this refutation of chance into an appraisal of the principle of sufficient reason as it was the only possible notion to account for a non-determined, contingent world. However, as usual, when Formey evoked the principle of sufficient reason, he made an effort to grant it additional legitimation against the common accusations of fatalism. This time, he used the authority of Descartes – 'l'immortel Des-Cartes' – to claim that sufficient reason was actually nothing else than Descartes' fundamental rule of acknowledging nothing of which we have no clear and distinct notion;¹⁰⁰⁰ as in his discourses on the existence of God, he portrayed the inventor of the concept of sufficient reason, Leibniz, as a direct follower of Descartes' premises.¹⁰⁰¹

Besides linking Leibniz to Descartes in support of sufficient reason, Formey also felt compelled to stress the distinction between Leibniz and the necessitarian faction within the debate on free will. Given the manifold positions in this debate, in which the adversaries of one argument were not automatically supporters of the opposite one, Leibniz and other vindicators of 'nécessité morale', had rejected the idea of a liberty based on chance just as much as their opponent Collins had done. In fact, Collin's necessitarian arguments, besides targeting Clarke were also against the Anglican bishop of Dublin William King who had promoted an extreme libertarian position in his *De origine mali* (1702): he had made the human being completely responsible of his actions but at the same time had not precluded the possibility of God's foreknowledge.¹⁰⁰² Although Formey did

997 See Formey, "Réflexions," 345.

998 See [Manteuffel], *Lettre du Jurisconsulte*, 30.

999 See Formey, "Réflexions," 346.

1000 See Formey, "Réflexions," 347.

1001 See Formey, "Réflexions," 348.

1002 See Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, 43 and 53-4.

not mention King, he seems to have been aware that Collins' reaction to him had included the adoption of concepts that were traditionally used by moderate libertarians, such as 'nécessité morale'. However, Formey stressed that this did not mean that Leibniz and co., the defenders of 'nécessité morale', had joined forces with the necessitarians. On the contrary, they made a different use of the arguments that they seemed to have in common with the necessitarians.¹⁰⁰³

The most debated argument in the discussion of indifferent liberty was the one which compared human will to a balance: according to this, will could only happen (or an action be executed), i.e. a dish of the scales lowered, when a motive or sufficient reason occurred, i.e. a weight was put into the dish. If there was no sufficient reason to our actions, as supposed in the theory of indifference, this would have meant that the two dishes of the scales remained in total equilibrium and hence no action at all could occur. Both Leibniz and Wolff had used this metaphor to illustrate the soul's inclination towards a choice, and they both had to fight against accusations of promoting (physical) determinism due to this. Formey, in his translation of Wolff's empirical psychology had reported on their attempts to defend this metaphor against a too literal interpretation: according to Formey, Wolff had admitted that it was not possible to compare the laws that applied to the movement of a body such as a scale to those of a spiritual substance such as the soul; yet, Wolff had argued for certain analogies, namely that, in order for the soul to be able to choose something or for the scale to move, one motive or weight must be heavier than the other. Besides this analogy, Formey underlined, the comparison between the soul and a scale did not allow for any additional conclusion concerning the soul, i.e. whether the eventual choice of the soul was necessarily executed or not.¹⁰⁰⁴

It is easy to observe how this informed Formey's considerations of the liberty of indifference in his *Réflexions*. He also referred to the scale metaphor as an argument against indifference, yet not without acknowledging its shortcomings. The point Formey made relied on the difference between external and internal determinations, in the sense that the balance metaphor implied an immediate execution of a will through an external impact. This was the case for the scales, the dishes of which moved immediately when a weight was put on them. In contrast, the human soul had the capacity to first evaluate the motives that resulted out of external influences before determining its will and actions;¹⁰⁰⁵ the determination of will was hence a completely internal process. Consequently, with respect to the hypothesis of an indifferent liberty, Formey claimed that the motives themselves did not allow for indifferent choices (on the contrary, they were determined by a sufficient reason) but

1003See Formey, "Réflexions," 346.

1004See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 292 and 306-8.

1005See Formey, "Réflexions," 348.

the exercise of taking a decision based on these motives was undetermined.¹⁰⁰⁶ This capacity of free choice was not a mechanical process, but a mere human capacity.

Conceived of as a merely human capacity as opposed to the capacity of a material object like a balance or an animal, this inner self-determination was predominantly linked to the human capacity of reason in Formey's account. However, as he continued his reflections on the impossibility of indifferent choices, he had to likewise acknowledge the role that irrational and unconscious feelings played in the formation of an apparently indifferent will:

'Une infinité de petites perceptions, qui nous rendent quelque fois joyeux, chagrins; & différemment disposés, nous font quelquefois plus goûter une chose que l'autre, sans que nous puissions dire pourquoi. L'on ne doit donc pas trouver étrange que nous supposions en nous des motifs qui nous déterminent, sans que nous soyons capables d'en rendre raison.'¹⁰⁰⁷

These almost imperceptible factors that determined the human appetite to choose one out of two or more apparently identical objects were not only part of the internal dispositions of a human being, but they also relied on the non-congruency of the objects themselves: nothing was ever identical to anything else. To underline this argument Formey referred to Leibniz's rejection of the allegory of Buridan's donkey that had died of hunger because it could not decide between two identical piles of straw.¹⁰⁰⁸

Although Formey did not mention it at this point, the same argument also underlay Wolff's depiction of a man who had to choose between two coins. As we have seen above, it was this part of Wolff's ontology that Formey's friend Bocquet had indicated to him was one of the weak points of Wolff's system during his preparation of the *Belle Wolfienne* in 1740. It seems, however, that it took some time for Formey to circle round this issue. In the second volume of the *Belle Wolfienne* he did not include it; instead, he dealt with it just before his *Réflexions*, namely in the fifth volume of the *Belle Wolfienne*, i.e. his annotated translation of Wolff's empirical psychology which he wrote in 1746.¹⁰⁰⁹ In this translation, Formey had added a note to the allegory in which he acknowledged the role of habit in situations that occurred without any apparently reasonable decision-making skills.¹⁰¹⁰ Taken together with his considerations on indifference in the *Réflexions*, it seems that Formey had eventually found various possibilities to demonstrate that, against all appearances, sufficient reason was never absent when making decisions: either sufficient reason lay in the human

1006See Formey, "Réflexions," 349. Formey, seemed to confirm this argument in 1764 in his reply to Hentsch's physical-influx-theory: there he claimed that our consciousness ('sentiment') allowed us to understand that the soul was free to decide between different motives, yet not to suggest that the soul could somehow influence the motives and how they were presented to it ("Nouvelles considerations," 367).

1007Formey, "Réflexions," 349.

1008See Formey, "Réflexions," 350.

1009See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 294-5.

1010See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 297.

mind itself, or in the objects under consideration or in the automatic execution of some human actions. We can imagine that this was sufficient to destroy not only Bocquet's concerns with the particular point in Wolff's philosophy but also of the defenders of extreme libertarianism at large. In the *Réflexions*, Formey concluded that the only reason why we sometimes believed that our decisions were fortuitous was the imperfection of the human mind: it did not always recognise the factors that determined its volition.¹⁰¹¹ Also, indifference was a sign of imperfection because it meant that we were not able to choose which was again due to a lack of knowledge.

Free Will and Moral Perfectibility

As Formey acknowledged that human mental faculties were imperfect, in order to explain why some people erroneously perceived their decisions as indifferent, he emphasised in his *Réflexions* that these mental faculties had to be improved and all the non-rational influences on the human being pushed back. Together with Descartes, he declared the correlation between knowledge and liberty: the clearer my notions of the world, the higher my liberty because then I am able to make clear choices.¹⁰¹² Consequently, as Formey demonstrated via a comparison with the constitution of the human body, a high degree of liberty signified that the soul was healthy, i.e. made use of its natural dispositions.¹⁰¹³ Indeed, as Formey continued to claim, although the human being was a narrow and finite being by nature, he was able to enhance his capacities in degrees, independently of his individual prerequisites.¹⁰¹⁴ Formey hence eventually linked his considerations on human liberty to his conviction of the human being's intellectual perfectibility, which was also a Wolffian notion as we will see in the next chapter. This link, in turn, enabled him to exhort his listeners to make more use of their natural prerequisites and to train their understanding (he criticised those who did not do this due to their laziness). At the same time this training of reason implied that one had to resist the temptation of simply following motives that originated from realms that were different from understanding, such as feelings, imagination or bodily desires: 'L'asservissement volontaire aux senses, à l'imagination, & aux appetits charnels, bien loin de nous laisser quelque prééminence sur les animaux, nous rend pires d'eux, entant que notre Entendement invente de nouveaux moyens pour étendre & pour assouvir ses passions.'¹⁰¹⁵ Therefore, this distinction between rather 'bodily inspired' faculties of the soul and purely mental ones, was translated by Formey into the distinction between the human being and the animal.

1011See Formey, "Réflexions," 351.

1012See Formey, "Réflexions," 351 and 353.

1013See Formey, "Réflexions," 354.

1014See Formey, "Réflexions," 355.

1015Formey, "Réflexions," 355.

The distinction between the human being and the animal, we might argue, lay not only in the human being's capacity for understanding and free will but also in his capacity to act morally. If we read Formey's account carefully, we realise that he considered that these two things – knowledge and virtue – had a close link to each other and that this link was the free will. 'Il faut donc pour perfectionner sa liberté, perfectionner ses connoissances par la culture de l'esprit & de la raison. La verité et la vertu sont liés par les liens les plus étroites. Ce n'est qu'en s'appropriant la première qu'on parvient à l'autre, & qu'on peut goûter les doux fruits de leur union.'¹⁰¹⁶ According to this, it was a high degree of knowledge that made us free, and our freedom made us creatures that acted morally. This opinion also already resonated in Formey's reflections on the moral necessity explored above: the more reasonable one was, the more likely it was that one would act upon a good moral motive. This demonstrates Formey's absolute confidence in the power of reason, in the sense that in his eyes, reason seems to always aim for the best. The perfect human being is likewise the most moral. These correlations between perfection, reason, freedom and morality were rooted in Wolff. Consequently, at the end of his *Réflexions*, Formey referred back to what Wolff had claimed to do with his bipartite psychology textbook: according to this morality was linked to the intellectual faculty of volition, yet independent of the theory of pre-established harmony.

To sum up, Formey's reading of Wolff's psychology, together with the impact of the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* and the relevance of the question of liberty among his academic colleagues in the mid-1740s, made him promote a positive affirmation of free will and the generally contingent nature of the human being. This was necessary for him in order to finally bury all his personal as well as the public's doubts concerning the fatalism of Wolffian notions of causality. The solution that Formey promoted in his essay was a compromise between the causality of each of the world's elements, mental actions included, and the opposite of this concept, i.e. the absolute fortuity of the world's course. Moreover, he took the important step to separate the issue of the body-soul-relation from the knowledge on the nature and the faculties of the soul. Through his emphasis on the independence of the soul in making decisions and his strong reliance on empirical knowledge, however, Formey diminished the legitimacy of the theory of pre-established harmony. This seems to have been a price that he was willing to pay and as we have seen, some 20 years later he actually seems to have done what in 1747 he had only alluded to: he discarded pre-established harmony as much as the other two traditional theories. This shows once again that what had been at stake in the debate on pre-established harmony was not so much the theory itself (its logical foundation etc.), but the question of human liberty to which it always gave rise.

1016Formey, "Réflexions," 355

10. Human Perfectibility and Divine Providence: The Relation between Liberty and Determination in Moral Philosophy

Formey's conundrum of how to exonerate the concept of a meaningful and teleological world from the accusation of fatalism, seems to have been solved at the last with his *Réflexions sur la liberté*: through the psychological explanation of the freedom of will, he substantiated the claim of human freedom within or despite a causal world order. From what we have seen so far, it seems though that this negation of fatalism through the affirmation of human liberty was only possible thanks to the disciplinary and epistemological separation of the theory of willing from the theory of the relation between substances that was part of the hypothesis of pre-established harmony. Formey depicted the first as an empirical truth established on the study of the human soul ('psychology'), whereas he considered the latter to be an a-priori hypothesis that answered the ontological question of the relation between the body and the soul, or matter and spirits more generally speaking. Since in the Wolffian conception of a system of philosophy both of these theories served as a foundation of practical philosophy, this chapter will address the question of the relation between liberty and a causal world order from the perspective of its practical philosophical implementation and effect. More precisely I will show how the metaphysical theories of free will and pre-established harmony (or determined causal world order) were transformed into a religious moral philosophy which was based on the assumption of the co-existence between human moral responsibility and divine Providence, an assumption that corresponded with eighteenth-century Protestant orthodoxy. It was through moral philosophy and the rules for human behaviour implied by it that the ideas on the nature of the human being, and its interconnectedness with the world were eventually transported to and became relevant for a larger public. This is why the question of the relation between human liberty and a determined/providential world was also a subject that infiltrated a practical religious context (as opposed to the theological context in which this question was traditionally also of relevance): Formey's moral theory was often displayed in his sermons. In the first part of this chapter I will, therefore, try to reconstruct the Wolffian moral theory of perfection as it was contained in Formey's three sermons on perfection, and how it translated the co-existence of free will and a determined world order into the relation between natural and divine law. Yet, moral philosophy was not only important for a popular and religious public: the second part of this chapter will show that it likewise remained an extremely important subject of debate among philosophers and a larger learned public, precisely because it relied on theories of the soul and the world. The

Academy's essay contest of 1751 and Formey's role in it will serve as an example of this.

The 'Psychologisation' of Moral Philosophy as a Support for Innate Morality

As we noted in the previous chapter, Wolff's purpose of basing the knowledge of the soul on the empirical method which he considered to be the most certain – human (self-) consciousness – was to provide moral philosophy with a secure basis. In other words, since morality relied, in Wolff's view, on the human soul, the establishing a certain knowledge of the soul would increase legitimacy of the moral philosophy that was based on it. In his note to the translation of Wolff's empirical psychology, Formey had not only emphasised that everything taught in psychology served to establish principles and rules of moral conduct, but also that the empirical foundation of these teachings likewise meant to pose moral philosophy on a stable empirical basis.¹⁰¹⁷ The tradition of basing practical (i.e. moral and political) philosophy on the study of the faculties and nature of the soul (instead of on the analysis of different virtues) was already present in the theories of Thomas Hobbes and Samuel Pufendorf.¹⁰¹⁸ However, as Hüning claims, the link between the 'science of the soul' (psychology) and moral philosophy only reached an unprecedented meaningfulness with Wolff, for it served to support his argument that morality was innate to the human being.¹⁰¹⁹ In another article, Hüning, in reference to Schwaiger, spoke of a 'psychologisation' of this central moral-philosophical argument, i.e. the natural obligation to morality.¹⁰²⁰ Before explaining this so-called 'psychologisation', or the strong systematic foundation of moral philosophy on the knowledge of the soul, we have to outline the concept of innate morality, i.e. the human being's natural obligation to moral behaviour, and how it differed from other early modern approaches to moral philosophy.

Contrary to this thesis of morality's innateness, Hobbes and Pufendorf had argued that morality had to be the result of positive laws imposed on the human being by God or a civil legislator. Similarly to a moral philosophy based on Revelation, this approach assumed that whether an action was to be considered as good or bad depended solely on the arbitrary will of the legislator, and hence it is commonly called a voluntarist approach to ethics.¹⁰²¹ Within this approach, the

1017See Formey, *Belle Wolfienne*, vol. 5, 6-7, footnote 53.

1018See Richard Serjeantson, "The Soul," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Desmond M. Clarke and Chaterine Wilson (Oxford, 2011), 137; Dieter Hüning, "Christian Wolff's Begriff der natürlichen Verbindlichkeit als Bindeglied zwischen Psychologie und Moralphilosophie," in *Die Psychologie Christian Wolffs*, 157.

1019See Hüning, "Natürliche Verbindlichkeit," 157.

1020See Dieter Hüning, "Christian Wolffs 'allgemeine Regel der menschlichen Handlungen'," *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik / Annual Review of Law and Ethics* 12 (2004), 102.

1021See Knud Haakonssen, "German Natural Law," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge, 2006), 252, who distinguishes three different approaches

capacities of the mind, such as understanding and willing, served the function of apprehending and obeying God's or a civil legislator's will. In contrast, Leibniz's and Wolff's moral philosophy can be described as rationalist since, according to these two philosophers, it was the human understanding itself that deduced moral rules from the observation of the human being's own nature. Human nature, according to Leibniz and Wolff, was characterised by perfectibility: human beings always sought their own perfection. In his German *Metaphysik* Wolff had generally defined perfection as the congruency of the actions of a thing with its overall purpose, and more precisely, the harmonic collaboration of all the single components/ actions of a thing in its pursuit to attain this congruency.¹⁰²² In his *Ethik*, he established a moral law based on this ontological principle by presupposing that everything that made the human inner and outer state more perfect was good, while in contrast, everything that made us less perfect was bad.¹⁰²³ As a consequence, Wolff claimed in his *Ethik* that the ultimate objective of all our (free) actions and hence the fundamental moral law, was the attainment of perfection and the omission of imperfection: 'Thue, was dich und deinen oder anderer Zustand vollkommener machet: unterlaß, was ihn unvollkommener machet.'¹⁰²⁴ Given the ontological foundation of this moral law it can be called a natural law, which released the human being from the need of any further positive law¹⁰²⁵ as the voluntarist approach of Hobbes and Pufendorf had assumed. Instead, in Leibniz's and Wolff's approach, the human being could be considered as almost self-governing.¹⁰²⁶ As we will see in more detail below, Leibniz's and Wolff's rejection of the need for a positive law given by God did, however, not attempt to diminish the power of religion but instead to render it a service.¹⁰²⁷

By putting forward the innateness of morality Wolff re-evaluated in his *Ethik* the scholastic concept of *intrinseca moralitas actionum*.¹⁰²⁸ Yet – and here we come back to Hüning's and Schwaiger's thesis of the 'psychologisation' – Wolff distinguished himself from the scholastics by ascribing the predominant role in this theory to human understanding or reason. This means

to moral philosophy in early modern Germany: the voluntarist, the rationalist and the Revelation-based approach.

1022See Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen*, §152. See also Hüning, "Allgemeine Regel," 94-5.

1023Christian Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen, zu Beförderung ihrer Glückseeligkeit* [1720], ed. Hans Werner Arndt. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 1, vol. 4 (Hildesheim, 1976), §3. In the following, I will refer to this work as *Ethik*.

1024Wolff, *Ethik*, §12.

1025See Wolff, *Ethik*, §19.

1026See Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, 438.

1027In the "Vorrede" to his *Ethik*, Wolff underlined his purpose to strengthen the perception of divine grace via an emphasis on the distinction between nature and divine law: 'Unterdessen darf sich niemand fürchten, daß ich der Natur zu viel zuschreibe, und der Gnade nichts übrig lasse. Die von mir behaupteten Lehren dienen vielmehr dazu, daß man den Unterschied der Natur und der Gnade, absonderlich den grossen Vorzug, den diese für jener hat, deutlich begreiffet, und sind also ein Führer zu der Gnade.' See also Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, 8 who generally rejected the claim that eighteenth-century moral philosophy pursued the purpose to 'secularise' morality.

1028See Anton Bissinger, "Zur metaphysischen Begründung der Wolffschen Ethik," in *Christian Wolff (1679-1754)*, 151.

basically that Wolff explicitly stated that, in order to act according to the natural law of perfection, the human being had to be conscious of this law, i.e. of himself. As Wolff put it, it was reason that recognised what was good and bad and therefore became 'the teacher of the law of nature'¹⁰²⁹ and if the human being gave in to his intelligent judgements he was automatically acting virtuously.¹⁰³⁰ Having stated this, we can also better understand Formey's conclusive remarks in his *Réflexions sur la liberté*, according to which virtue emerged from truth, a truth that the human being could acquire through the perfection of his understanding.¹⁰³¹ In his *Ethik*, Wolff established this link between the human cognitive faculties as described in his empirical psychology, and virtue by equating the natural obligation to become perfect with the motive that determined human volition.¹⁰³² We remember that in Wolff's theory of volition, as it was depicted in Formey's *Réflexions sur la liberté*, free will was determined by a certain motive that was judged by the human faculty of understanding before it was enacted in a certain behaviour. If the motive of the free will was the natural perfectibility of the human being, then the will would always tend to the morally virtuous. From this it follows that according to Wolff's overlap between psychological and moral philosophical concepts, the human being did not only have the law of his morality in himself, he also discovered it himself through reason and finally, the human being executed this moral law without external determination through free will. Therefore, we can say that, through his reference to the functioning of understanding and volition, Wolff was able to strengthen the natural obligation of morality. Wolff's link between morality and human reason (and thus of practical philosophy and psychology) was hence much more complex than Formey's short account at the end of his *Réflexions sur la liberté* suggested.

Instead, in one of Formey's series of sermons, which he wrote shortly before the *Réflexions sur la liberté*, in late 1746, there is a more explicit account of the Wolffian principles of moral philosophy. I have already referred to this series above as its form was somewhere between a philosophical treatise and a sermon (for which it had been called Formey's 'trois sermons Wolfiens'): the *L'idée, les règles et le modèle de la Perfection*. This sermon series, especially its first and second part, has to be considered as a complementary piece to Formey's *Réflexions sur la liberté*, in the sense that it substantiated, and at the same time popularised, the link between the psychological theory of the human soul and moral philosophy based on Wolff's *Ethik* and related writings. At the beginning of the first of the three sermons, Formey gave a simplified account of the spiritual nature of the human being, as opposed to the mere mechanical functioning of animals and material things

1029See Wolff, *Ethik*, §23.

1030See Wolff, *Ethik*, §24.

1031See Formey, "Réflexions," 355.

1032See Wolff, *Ethik*, §8.

in the world, which enabled the human being to be conscious and to determine his actions on the basis of this consciousness:

'Tout l'Univers se partage en deux Classes générales d'Etres. Les uns destitués d'intelligence & de raison ont à chaque instant tout ce qui convient à leur état [...] L'autre Classe d'Etres est distinguée par une propriété bien singulière, & bien merveilleuse, c'est celle de se connaître soi-même & les objets qui l'environnent, & de pouvoir déterminer ses actions par un principe qui ne dépend point des Loix aveugles du mécanisme, par la Liberté.¹⁰³³

By opening his sermons with this account of human nature it becomes clear that Formey, similarly to Wolff (*Ethik*, §1, 2),¹⁰³⁴ believed that human liberty was the precondition for human morality.

Yet, instead of immediately deducing the naturally virtuous character of human actions from this statement, Formey referred in the introduction of his sermons to the abuse of this freedom to act, which prompted sin:

'Quel est le sort le plus désirable? Celui des Créatures inanimées & brutes, ou celui des Etres intelligens & libres. A voir les affreux désordres que le péché, triste fruit de l'abus de la Liberté a causés dans le Monde, on seroit tenté de regarder cette Question du moins comme problématique, ou même d'envier un état qui met pour jamais à l'abri des redoutables traits de la Vengeance Divine.¹⁰³⁵

This emphasis on the negative side of human liberty has to be considered in light of the ecclesiastic/religious context in which Formey developed his moral theory, in the sense that he presumably wanted to render it compatible with the norms set by Christian doctrine. More precisely, his statement that the human being did not only have the seed of goodness in himself but also that of malignity, corresponded to the dogma of the Fall, which in theology was considered as an execution of the human being's free, but corrupted will. However, Formey did not leave it like this; instead he added the positive side of the human being's free will and the soul's spiritual nature, which in turn he based on the Christian dogma of God's goodness: God was as good as to give us an intelligent free will through which we could reach happiness by pursuing perfection.¹⁰³⁶ Formey hence made the divine attribute of goodness outweigh the dogma of original sin right at the beginning of his sermons.

Although Formey had to a large extent adopted Wolff's rationalist theory of natural morality through perfection in his sermons, he seems to have at the same time approached a voluntarist theory in favour of religion. He endorsed Wolff's definition of the ontological principle of perfection almost word-for-word in his first sermon: 'Nous ne commençons donc à connaître la perfection

1033Formey, *L'idée, la règle et le modèle*, 3-4.

1034See Wolff, *Ethik*, §1-§2.

1035Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 4-5.

1036See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 6.

d'une chose, que quand, instruits du but auquel elle tend, nous en examinons les pieces ou parties, & nous reconnoissons qu'elles se rapportent effectivement à ce but, qu'elles y tendent de concert.¹⁰³⁷

Nevertheless, as we have seen, he immediately linked it to the idea of divine goodness due to which the human being had the capacity to recognise this natural obligation to perfection. This suggests that for him, the human being's intelligence was not the ultimate origin of his morality, it was God. In his sermons on perfection, he generally seems to have endeavoured to combine Wolff's rationalist approach to moral philosophy with religious doctrine. For this purpose, he even went beyond the natural theological teaching of God's goodness in creation and emphasised the normative function of Revelation in questions of morality. This seems to have been the reason why he translated Wolff's fundamental moral law into a revealed teaching from which he deduced general laws of conduct for his congregation: Christ's exhortation of his fellows as was stated in the Bible, Matthew 5, v. 48: 'Be as perfect as the Lord in the heavens is.' By this, Formey associated what Wolff called natural obligation with divine obligation that emerged not only from God's role as Creator but directly from His word. To justify this combination of natural and divine (revealed) obligation in his sermons Formey stressed the almost absolute congruency of the laws prescribed by nature and those prescribed by God. More precisely, Formey underlined that the type and degree of perfection to which the human being should attain, was the same no matter which source this law used – God's word solely confirmed what nature prescribed to the human being. At the end of the first sermon he thus concluded:

'Le Fils de Dieu est venu tracer la route de la perfection aux hommes, & sa Doctrine en est le divin modele. Mais cette perfection, c'est celle qui a son fondement dans la nature, [...], & qui etant alterée & comme effacée par les prodigieux egaremens des hommes, avoit besoin d'etre retablie dans sa pureté primitive. [...] La Religion Chrétienne bien comprise & bien expliquée n'est autre chose que le parfait [sic] rétablissement de la Loi naturelle.'¹⁰³⁸

Hence, it seems that by translating Wolff's *Ethik* into the genre of a sermon, Formey transformed Wolff's natural morality into the morality of revealed religion.

Also Wolff, despite his strong rationalist approach, had claimed in his *Ethik* the congruency of natural and divine obligation by underlining that God and nature obliged the human being to the same behaviour, i.e. to strive for perfection. Yet, in Wolff's account divine law did not immediately emerge from Revelation, but from a natural theological concept of the Creator God similar to Formey's claims concerning God's goodness: However, Wolff simply argued that the human being's capacity to distinguish between perfection and imperfection depended – like everything else in the

1037Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 9.

1038Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 19.

world – on God's will;¹⁰³⁹ and he did not, like Formey, emphasise the goodness of God's will. Additionally to the Creation, Wolff also established divine law on a natural theological vision of God's providence on which the human being's good and bad fate relied: the usual correspondence between moral behaviour and good fate posed another obligation/motive for the human being to follow the natural law of perfection.¹⁰⁴⁰ Although Wolff's arguments served to show that divine law in many ways accorded with natural law, they did not necessarily end in favour of religion. The reason for him to underline this accord was his ambition to safeguard morality against atheism, i.e. to prove the universal and eternal obligation to act morally even if one did not believe in God. By this Wolff applied the *hypothesis impossibilis athei* which had a long tradition in philosophy since the late Middle Ages.¹⁰⁴¹ More precisely, Wolff had claimed that the moral law of perfection was also valid without the existence of God¹⁰⁴² and had concluded from this that atheists who justified their immoral and depraved lifestyle by claiming that there were no divine obligations, were wrong.¹⁰⁴³ The problem with this thesis was that it relied on the interchangeability of natural and divine law which meant that the one could exist without the other. Pushed far enough, this could lead to the claim that God's existence and divine law were superfluous for morality and hence support the idea of atheism rather than destroying it.

The Superiority of Divine Law

The potentially detrimental outcome of Wolff's application of the *hypothesis impossibilis athei* was presumably why Formey did not defend the equivalence of natural and divine obligation in his sermons. On the contrary, in the last of the three sermons on perfection Formey tried to offer reasons for why the human being needed God *additionally* to his innate morality. He argued to a large extent from a natural theological perspective, yet eventually also returned to Revelation as he had already done for the purpose of showing the congruency of natural and divine law. First of all, Formey rejected the possibility of atheism that Wolff's equation of natural and divine obligation had theoretically suggested. Formey did this by underlining that, despite any equivalence between them

1039See Wolff, *Ethik*, §29.

1040See Wolff, *Ethik*, §30. He can also be compared to Albrecht, "Die Tugend und die Chinesen," 242-3 who in the case of the *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica* of 1721, spoke of three consecutive stages in the foundation of morality in Wolff's moral philosophical oeuvre: the natural law, natural religion and revealed religion. Albrecht had shown that in the *Oratio de Sinarum* Wolff had attributed primacy to the natural law. I would argue that the same is true for the *Ethik*, given the chronological closeness of the two writings as well as the fact that he linked the argument of natural morality with the argument against the immorality of atheism, which is also common to both, the *Oratio* and the *Ethik*.

1041See Bissinger, "Zur metaphysischen Begründung," 154.

1042See Wolff, *Ethik*, §20.

1043See Wolff, *Ethik*, §22.

– which allowed for the theoretical possibility of virtuous atheism – in reality, natural obligation could not substitute for divine obligation. On the contrary, the latter, or more precisely religion, had to condition the former since the potential *vertu philosophique* of the atheist, i.e. the virtuous behaviour that resulted from the knowledge of our nature, was vulnerable to the vices by which the world was penetrated; the generally weak disposition of a person who denied God enhanced this person's vulnerability to these omnipresent vices.¹⁰⁴⁴ Moreover, Formey claimed that it was logical that the recognition of natural laws would depend on the recognition of God as creator and guide of the world: he assumed that there were logical parallels between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the self, and therefore argued that the negation of God's existence resulted from a disorientation of reason, which would also affect the ability to comprehend one's own nature and the duties that resulted from it.¹⁰⁴⁵ The use of such a logical argument in favour of divine law is a good example of Formey's practice to pose an argument as theologian while justifying it as a philosopher. From all the arguments that he put forward in favour of divine law and Revelation in his sermons, Formey concluded that the natural or philosophical virtue that atheists could also profess had an inferior status for it was much more difficult to realise than religious virtue, i.e. devotion: 'La simple vertu Philosophique est fort inférieure à la piété, & [...] il est beaucoup plus facile de travailler à sa perfection, quand on joint à l'obligation naturelle celle que nous imposent la connoissance de l'Etre Suprême & de ses divins attributs.'¹⁰⁴⁶

These considerations on how the recognition of God's existence and laws supported and conditioned the execution of the moral laws that were innate to us, enabled Formey to eventually claim the superiority of (natural) religion over natural law: in his view the obligation that religion exercised was much stronger in pertinence and efficiency, although the content of this obligation, the moral law of perfection, was the same as the one that nature prescribed:

'En partant donc de l'existence de Dieu, & en la prenant pour principe, je reviens à la connoissance de cette même Loi que je trouve dans ma propre Nature; mais si vous y prenez garde, cette obligation de travailler à ma perfection acquiert une force bien supérieure, quand j'apperçois un Dieu, qui s'est proposé cette même perfection pour fin en me créant; un Dieu, qui est le Spectateur & le Juge de ma conduite, auquel je plais en répondant à ses vûes, auquel je déplaïs en les traversant; en un mot un Dieu qui me donne dans sa volonté un motif de conduite infiniment efficace.'¹⁰⁴⁷

1044See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 41-2.

1045See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 40.

1046See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 43.

1047Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 45. This was already similarly expressed in the first sermon: 'Mais ce qui lui [à la religion chrétienne] donne une supériorité fort grande sur la Loi naturelle, c'est la force des motifs qu'elle [la religion chrétienne] propose & par lesquels elle nous détermine à la pratique des vertus & à la recherche de la perfection.' (19)

The superior force of a motivation that emanated from the wish to comply with God's will manifested particularly with respect to the weakness of the human being's internal motivation. According to Formey's description, the human being was not rational or perfect enough to engage in the pursuit of rationalist natural law: he was weak and easy to distract from his purpose of self-perfection; hence, God's will that we become perfect provided a stronger motivation.¹⁰⁴⁸ In addition to the superior motivation/ obligation that the mere knowledge of the existence and will of God provided, Formey also referred to the impact that God's attributes had as role models and motivators for our obligation to follow his rules. God's perfections were His almightiness, goodness and justice, which were all observable by the human being through the contemplation of the Creation. According to Formey, our admiration for these perfections incited us to both imitate them in our own behaviour and to refrain from acting against them. In this sense the religious moral system that Formey portrayed was based on both pre-remuneration and post-remuneration of good moral conduct: first, the human being acted virtuously because of his admiration for God's perfection, which was constantly present in all areas of the world,¹⁰⁴⁹ and second, the human being acted virtuously because he anticipated that he would eventually resemble God – who was the pinnacle of perfection – by becoming ever more perfect.¹⁰⁵⁰

However, Formey's most powerful argument for the superiority of divine obligation over natural obligation, which eventually even dispensed with natural law entirely, was the existence of Revelation: the divine obligation and role model was, of course, recognisable through the observation of nature and philosophy (natural religion); it incited in us a *piété philosophique* (not to be confused with the *vertu philosophique* which does not need God's recognition, even a deistic one because it relied entirely on the observation of human nature itself). Yet all these truths were communicated equally but much more clearly to us by Christ's revelation; it was the attributes of God and the laws described by Jesus that created in us a *piété Chrétienne*, which Formey argued was superior to the *piété philosophique* for it steered the human being towards perfection and virtue much faster.¹⁰⁵¹ Consequently, the moral theory that Formey depicted in his sermons on perfection underwent an internal evolution: first, he claimed the legitimacy of a secular moral theory that was based exclusively on natural law and rational human nature; then he transformed it into a moral theory based on natural religion (based on the recognition of a creator God) and eventually he pointed to an entirely Christian moral theory that was conveyed by Scripture.

This sequence of arguments from secular to sacred morality (the natural to the divine

1048See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 45-6.

1049See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 47-9.

1050See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 38.

1051See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 50-1.

obligation) corresponded to the heterogeneity of the structure of Formey's sermon series. The first two sermons exclusively stressed the natural obligation of acting morally: they contained a completely 'secular' ontological and natural-law-based explanation of the principle of perfection and the practical laws of conduct that it implied. Except for the conclusive remarks of the first sermons, in which Formey had already anticipated the superiority of divine obligation that his preaching would eventually lead to, the significant emphasis on divine obligation was achieved only in the very last sermon of his tripartite series. Only the third sermon was dedicated to the interpretation of the biblical exhortation to strive for perfection and underlined that the origin of our virtue lay in the divine example. For the audience, this argument was presumably the core of Formey's sermon series, in the sense that it fulfilled the purpose of the medium of the sermon the most, by offering religious instruction and guidance. This can be seen in the opinion of Formey's reviewer Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem, who was part of Manteuffel's *Aléthophiles* circle, and who, as a consequence, considered the sermon series to suffer from a stylistic mismatch. Judging the texts in their function as sermons, he found that the third sermon could easily do without the first two, for, in his opinion, the purpose of the religious context was to explain the congregation's duty to become similar to God, who was perfect in His love etc. In Jerusalem's eyes, Formey had not succeeded in combining the metaphysical considerations of the first sermons with the biblical message of the third: he had not developed God's perfection on the basis of the ontological concept of perfection.¹⁰⁵² We might argue that for Jerusalem the description of the natural obligation to morality was unnecessary since it did not stand in a causal connection with the superior divine obligation.

Given the apparent dissonance in style and meaning that the juxtaposition of the efficient natural obligation and the nevertheless superior divine obligation provoked within Formey's sermons series on the pursuit of perfection, we have to ask what were Formey's intentions by proceeding in this manner? Why did he pose divine above natural law when he had initially claimed their equivalence? Or, why did he bother to explain natural obligation over the length of two sermons, if eventually, he claimed that divine laws were more powerful? First and foremost, it seems that Formey in his sermons revisited a compromise between natural and divine obligation that Wolff himself had constructed in the early 1730s, as a reply to the criticism that his *Ethik* had incited among more orthodox thinkers. Wolff himself, in a letter to Manteuffel, hinted at this possibility: after having read Formey's three sermons, Wolff argued that they had been inspired by one of his essays in the *Horae Subsecivae Marburgenses*, a three-volume collection of short philosophical treatises that served as supplements to questions addressed in his major works: in a

¹⁰⁵²See [Friedrich Wilhelm Jerusalem], "Besprechung von drei Predigten von Formey." (UBL, Ms 0347, 33r-37r).

treatise written in the spring trimester of 1730, Wolff had attempted to show the analogy between the natural law to attain perfection, and Jesus' instruction in Matthew 5, 48, the same Bible quote that Formey later used for his sermons.¹⁰⁵³ As Wolff explained to Manteuffel, he had established this analogy in order to confront his critics who had argued that it was dangerous to make the (natural) principle of perfection the only drive of human behaviour.¹⁰⁵⁴ In the eyes of Wolff's critics, like the Lutheran professor of ethics and theology in Halle and Jena, Johann Franz Budde, his theory downplayed or even denied the role of God and the Revelation. Wolff had already answered this kind of criticism on several occasions in the 1720s, such as in *Nöthige Zugabe zu den Anmerkungen über D. Buddens Bedenken von der Wolfischen Philosophie*, where he had stressed that (by referring to § 29, 30 and 34 of his *Ethik*) he had never distinguished between natural law and God's will, as Budde had asserted. Instead, Wolff claimed that he had demonstrated the equivalence of the innateness of morality and God's command of morality which, contrary to Budde's allegation, was defended in the same way by many Lutheran theologians.¹⁰⁵⁵ Wolff did not consider his teachings as being contrary to theology, although he had been accused of it by many theologians. It was probably due to this sort of orthodox theological criticism that Wolff had equated his law of perfection to the Bible quote of Matthew 5, 48 in his *Horae Subsecivae Marburgenses*.

But why did Formey, more than 15 years later, reproduce Wolff's apology against his orthodox critics in a sermon? Given the increasing acceptance of natural philosophical theories in the mid-Eighteenth Century in general and the religious context of Formey's text in particular, it is unlikely that he pursued the same purposes as Wolff did in the 1730s, namely to protect a purely philosophical theory from the accusation of heterodoxy. On the contrary, I argue that it was rather the other way around. I think Formey's choice to use Wolff's treatise was an expression of his above-mentioned strategy to counteract the increasingly sceptical attitude towards biblical teachings in society at large, and – linked to this – the progressive dissolution of the Huguenot congregations in particular (see chapter 3). The extensive explanation of the moral principle of perfection as a principle of natural law seems to fit with Formey's homiletic convictions, according to which a sermon should appeal not only to the heart but also to the reason of the believer, i.e. to provide reasonable explications for the content of doctrine. By demonstrating the equivalence between Jesus' teaching to be as perfect as God, and the human disposition to perfection, Formey probably

1053See Christian Wolff, “De Principio Juris naturalis ex doctrina Christi, Matth. V. 48,” *Horae Subsecivae Marburgenses Anni MDCCXXX, quibus Philosophia ad publicam privatamque utilitatem aptatur* [1731], ed. Jean École. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 2, vol. 34.2 (Hildesheim, 1983), 343-365.

1054See Wolff to Manteuffel, 27.11.1746, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, 221.

1055See Christian Wolff, *Nöthige Zugabe zu den Anmerkungen über D. Buddens Bedenken von der Wolfischen Philosophie* [1724], in *Schutzschriften gegen Johann Franz Budde*, ed. Jean École. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 1, vol. 18 (Hildesheim, 1980), § 32.

wanted to diminish any potentially obscure aspects of this doctrine and to support it through a 'scientific' explanation. This approach, i.e. to enhance the force of Christian moral teachings by partially secularising them, was still very similar to the purpose that underlay Wolff's *Ethik* and which he had stressed against his opponents, namely to put his natural law theory into the service of the Christian religion.¹⁰⁵⁶ Moreover, in his *Horae*, §4 Wolff had stressed that his natural moral theory could be useful for preachers in sermons for it would help them to interpret doctrine – a piece of advice that Formey seems to have followed for his sermons on perfection.¹⁰⁵⁷ Yet, in his sermons, Formey went further than using Wolff's 'secular' moral philosophy as support for divine rules. As we have seen in his third sermon, he highlighted the outstanding role of the revealed moral laws. It seems that to this end – to highlight Revelation – Formey consciously compared the already very powerful natural obligation with the even more powerful divine obligation. It can thus be said that Formey needed both Wolff's argument of the congruency of natural and divine law and the argument of God's dominance over nature to make his point. He used Wolff's argument – which originally had been intended to block orthodox criticism to his moral theory – to promote a reasonable faith according to his objectives as a Christian philosopher. The argument of divine law's superiority served him to further strengthen this reasonable faith, particularly in a genuine religious context.

Considering that Formey had developed this rational-religious moral theory following the legacy of Wolff's law of perfection, what implications did this theory have for the relationship between human liberty and providential world order? As we have seen, the assumption on which Wolff's and Formey's moral theory of perfection – no matter if it was prescribed by nature or by God – was grounded was that human beings' actions were free, i.e. that they were determined by the rational will. In respect to this Formey had even added in his sermons that the truth of this freedom of will or human liberty was not to be contested since it was a 'vérité de sentiment'.¹⁰⁵⁸ The decisions that were made according to this free will were determined either by innate moral motives that were ultimately the result of God's creation, as Wolff had mainly argued, or – in the case of Formey's additional emphasis on the Revelation as moral legislation – by the immediate commands of God. Both possibilities implied the presence of a divine plan that exercised its power on the human being's behaviour: either indirectly as in the first, completely rationalist approach, or directly as in the second, voluntarist approach. The existence of divine Providence was hence an element that was as crucial as human liberty in Wolff's and Formey's moral theory, although it was never explicitly expressed. Through the recognition that human nature's origin could be found in God and through

1056See above, Wolff, "Vorrede zur Ethik", and also *Der Vernünfftigen Gedancken von Gott [...], Anderer Theil*, §428.

1057See Wolff, "De Principio Juris naturalis," 354.

1058See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 14.

the emphasis on Revelation, however, this became much more tangible in Formey's sermons in comparison to Wolff's *Ethik* or to Formey's own *Réflexions sur la liberté* where the only alleged determination of will was claimed to be human reason. Especially Formey's partial adoption of a voluntarist approach as well as the fact that he curtailed those elements of the theory of natural obligation that advanced human moral autonomy, seemed to limit human liberty in favour of an increased divine determination. Besides this, to argue, as Formey did in his sermons on perfection, that God's will to make us strive for perfection was a sign of His goodness, was already a hint in the direction of defining the nature of this Providence, namely a Providence based on an optimist worldview. Formey only gave a more substantial description of this concept of Providence when the co-existence of liberty and free will, on which he based his moral theory, was challenged by others, which happened in the 1751 essay contest of the Berlin Academy.

The Academy's 1751 Essay Contest on Providence

The position displayed (rather implicitly) in Formey's sermons that divine Providence and freedom of will co-existed, corresponded to seventeenth-century orthodox Reformed moral theory, in which the human capacity to choose freely was seen as the condition of human moral responsibility. This, in turn, made it possible to define sin as the misuse of free choice.¹⁰⁵⁹ At the same time, since the Seventeenth Century, Reformed orthodoxy considered human moral responsibility and the virtues and sins that emerged from it, as stemming indirectly from God's Providence, which had the purpose of conserving, governing and concurring with the created being.¹⁰⁶⁰ As mentioned above (chapter 8), in the view of orthodox Reformed theologians, the necessity that divine Providence exercised on the human will has to be considered as hypothetical instead of absolute because the human will chose what God wanted through His free will.¹⁰⁶¹ In the confessional context, more precisely in preaching, Formey's moral theory which was based on Wolff was hence not alien – except maybe for the philosophical rigour with which it was presented, and the importance that it gave to the innateness of moral laws besides God as a legislator. This however changed when his moral theory entered the context of learning: it was rejected by a section of the eighteenth-century philosophers, particularly by French Newtonians, as well as by freethinkers and atheists. Only two years after Formey had consolidated his moral philosophical view as described in the sermons, one of the Academy's essay contests incited a debate on this issue that had evolved inside and outside of

1059See Stephen Hampton, "Sin, Grace, and Free Choice in Post-Reformation Reformed Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*, ed. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber (Oxford, 2016), 228.

1060See Beck, "God, Creation and Providence," 207.

1061See Beck, "God, Creation and Providence," 208.

the Academy. In 1749 the class of speculative philosophy had suggested a moral philosophical essay topic that relied precisely on the assumption which also underlay Formey's (Wolffian) rationalist moral theory of perfection, i.e. that freedom and providence complemented each other in morality. The initiative for this question came from Formey's German colleague Philip Heinius,¹⁰⁶² yet it seems that it was mainly Formey (as a francophone) who defended and explicated it against the criticism that it received. As we will see, on this occasion Formey not only re-affirmed his moral theory in the discussion – in person and in print – with the critics of the essay question, but he also enlarged his own position concerning the role of Providence in it, by presumably adopting the arguments of the winning essay which he translated and re-published.

An internal debate about the prize essay question must have occurred immediately after it was presented at the Academy's public assembly on the 3 July 1749. The Academy's registers of this date prove that the class of speculative philosophy (on the initiative of Heinius) had originally intended the question to be as follows: 'Les Evenemens de la bonne et de la mauvaise Fortune, dependant uniquement de la Volonté, ou du moins de la permission de Dieu; On demande, si ces Evenemens obligent les hommes à la pratique de ce [sic] certains devoirs, et quelle est la nature et l'etendue de ces devoirs?'¹⁰⁶³ As it stood here, the question relied on the Wolffian (and Protestant) view of morality, yet it likewise pointed tentatively to the paradoxality, which certain contemporaries attributed to this view. The first sentence, before the actual question, presented the assumption that all apparently contingent/ fortuitous events in the universe were subject to divine providence. The question that followed this assumption seems to contain two opposing views concerning the human beings' role within such a providential world order. The first part of the question – a yes-no question – left the possibility to claim the freedom as well as the bondage of the human being, while the second part of the question seems to have already contained the claim that there was a certain degree of freedom in the human being's choice of behaviour. The latter part of the question, which asked about the nature and extent of human beings' (moral) duties in a providential world, was based on the concept of morality that was defended by Wolff and Formey and which corresponded with religious doctrine, i.e. that Providence and free will coincided. This supposition of a functional co-existence between Providence and freedom was to become the origin of the criticism against the essay question by the Parisian *philosophes*, voiced by d'Alembert. However, before the question even reached learned Europe via correspondence and journals, it had supposedly been contested by the other academicians since, the question that eventually appeared in the European learned journals was slightly different from what had been presented in the halls of

1062 See Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 2, 361.

1063 *Registres de l'Académie*, 3.7.1749, BBAW

http://akademieregistres.bbaw.de/exist/apps/SadeRegistres/data/protokolle/0136-1749_07_03.xml.

the Berlin Academy in July 1749.

In the summer issue of Formey's *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* of 1749, hence shortly after the Academy's public assembly, the essay question appeared as follows: 'Les Evènements de la bonne & de la mauvaise Fortune dependant inconstestablement de la volonté, ou du moins de la permission de Dieu, à l'égard duquel ce que nous appellons Fortune n'est qu'un vain nom dénué de réalité; On demande, si ces Evènements obligent les hommes à la pratique de certains devoirs, & quelle est la nature & l'étenduë de ces devoirs?' [my emphasis]¹⁰⁶⁴ In its essence the content of the question remained the same, however, the addition made to the first part of the formulation, seems to indicate that the academicians were divided on the concept of Providence that was contained in the presuppositions that underlay the moral philosophical question. The original formulation of this part by Heinius unveils a 'light' or 'hybrid' idea of divine providence according to which one could speak of a contingent world order (that enabled 'fortuitous events') which had its origin in God's will. This is the traditional Leibnizian view, the more or less faithful adoption of which through Wolff and Formey we have already encountered several times (especially for the proof of God: God is a necessary being because of the contingent world; in general all things are only possible in their essence and become necessary through a sufficient reason). Conceiving of Providence in this way allowed the prize question to be posed as such, i.e. to ask for the different moral duties that a providential world required, without being paradoxical, since only this conception theoretically allowed for a freedom of action at the same time. Contrary to this, those among the academicians who had succeeded in changing the formulation of the original prize question – whose identities I have unfortunately not been able to reconstruct – must have defended the idea of an 'absolute' Providence according to which God's omniscience automatically precluded the fortuity of actions. They made this clear by posing – in my view rather pejoratively – that chance ('fortune') was an inappropriate term to use when one was talking about Providence. Through this addition, however, the question about the moral duties, by which the essay question was concluded, seemed to be at best superfluous if not ridiculous. The form in which the Academy's prize essay question for 1751 was eventually issued, thus not only showed an apparent dissent among the Academy's members concerning the concept of Providence, it also betrayed a tension between the two parts of the essay question itself. In this way, it seems that the question explicitly guided the contest's potential participants into the discussion of its paradoxicality. It is, therefore, no wonder that the reactions from certain parts of learned Europe – particularly from France – were in turn predominantly perplexed by this alleged paradoxicality.

1064[Anonymous], "Prix proposé par l'Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Prusse. Pour l'année 1751," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* 5 (Juillet, Aout, September 1748), 230-1.

Inquiries concerning the meaning of the question and statements of discontent over the fact that it had been asked, reached Berlin rather quickly after the publication of the question. On the 21 August 1749, Maupertuis informed Formey that he had already received several complaints about the prize question and the way that it had been formulated. As President, he seems to have been quite upset himself about the derogatory effect that this could have on the reputation of the Academy and called for more precision in posing prize questions.¹⁰⁶⁵ Formey, who did not want to be held responsible for this situation and get into trouble with his President, disclaimed all responsibility for the choice of the question (and pointed to the fact that he had proposed other potential questions in his class). Nevertheless, as we have seen, the question must have been in accordance with his theological and philosophical beliefs and thus he told Maupertuis that he supported the legitimacy of the question and set out to defend it against the criticism that it could not be answered.¹⁰⁶⁶

This criticism had been voiced particularly by D'Alembert whose letter of complaint Maupertuis had forwarded to Formey, and who must also have personally addressed Formey on this issue. In a first round, D'Alembert's criticism consisted mainly of pointing to the paradoxicality of the proposed problem, which in his view made it impossible to be solved. In his letter to Formey in September 1749 he argued that the two parts of the problem contradicted each other since, in his view, the execution of moral duties presupposed liberty, the possibility of which, however, was negated by a necessary world order:

'D'un côté, la question du bien & du mal morale suppose, ce me semble, la liberté; de l'autre la volonté divine, maîtresse absolue de tous les événements, semble rendre tout nécessaire; c'est pourquoi il me paroît que votre question bien entendue se réduit à celle-ci: *attendu qu'il est fort douteux que nous soyons libres, on demande si nous le sommes?* En un mot, la dépendance où nous sommes de la volonté divine, formant une objection très forte, & peut-être insoluble contre la liberté & la question du bien & du mal, il me semble que cette dépendance ne devoit pas servir de donnée pour traiter cette question: c'est tourner le dos où l'on veut aller.'¹⁰⁶⁷

Formey, on the other side, did not endorse this apparent contradiction, as he explained to Maupertuis what he thought the proposed prize question intended to ask:

'Il faut developper le veritable Systeme de l'enchainement universel de toutes choses, duquel résulte la vraie notion de l'Univers, et qui prouve qu'il y a des relations, qui font de chaque individu une espece de centre, auquel tout se rapporte tandis que lui-même se rapporte à tout; d'où naissent des devoirs de gratitude et d'acquiescement, suivant que les choses fortuites qui

1065 See Maupertuis to Formey, 21.8.1749 (CV) and compare also to the letter of 24.8.1749 (CV).

1066 See Formey to Maupertuis, 22.8.1749 (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Nachlass 218).

1067 D'Alembert to Formey, 19.9.1749, printed in Formey, *Souvenirs*, vol. 2, 364.

nous arrivent sont avantageuses ou contraires &c.¹⁰⁶⁸

According to this, he saw the providential world order that was assumed in the essay question as a causal system, very similar to Leibniz's and Wolff's *nexus rerum*. The individual, although being an interconnected node in this entangled system, seems to not have been able to actively influence the global and individual course of it, but acted rather passively through approbation of the things that happened to him. The single motives (i.e. the events) that determined the individual's passive duties seemed to appear to be contingent to the individual, yet at the same time, it seems that the individual assumed a predetermined overall course of the world since he accepted everything that happened to him, no matter if it was good or bad: if good things happened to the individual, he was grateful and if bad things happened to him, he acquiesced to his destiny. Surprisingly enough, the question of human freedom to act was not directly addressed by Formey here: it seems almost, unlike what he had stressed so strongly in his *Réflexions* and sermons on perfection as if he was considering moral duties independently of free human actions. In this respect, Formey's position in his reply to Maupertuis seems much more exclusively oriented towards the traditional Calvinist theory of predestination, according to which the distribution of grace among people was independent of their actual behaviour and instead relied on 'divine election'.

In his direct reply to D'Alembert, Formey condensed this explanation of the theory that underlay the essay question into the simple formula that the providential/ determined world order required certain moral duties, and that the Academy's question simply asked which duties these were. Whether the human being acted freely or not, did not play a role. This explanation presumably did not change the fact that D'Alembert considered Providence and the liberty of moral choices as mutually exclusive, and hence he eventually concluded that the question of whether the provident world order required particular duties from us should not be asked: such a question would have only one simple answer, namely that all our actions had to comply with what God had planned for us – there was no diversity and freedom of choice in morality. In November 1749 he wrote to Formey:

'On n'imaginera jamais que le sujet de votre prix soit, les devoirs auxquels nous sommes obligés en consequence de la Providence, du moins je ne connois personne à Paris qui ait pris votre question dans ce sens, & j'en ay entendu parler à bien des gens, la plus part Philosophes & gens d'esprit. Je vous avoüeroy d'ailleurs, Monsieur, que cette question ne me paroît pas fournir beaucoup. Le Gouvernement Physique & morale de ce monde me semble une Enigme pour nous, ou plutot une espece de logogryphe dont nous devinons quelques syllabes [indéchiffrable word] mais dont presque tous les mots nous échappent. Il me semble qu'on ne peut dire la dessus que des choses vagues, telles que Malbranche & d'autres en ont dit, & quand

1068Formey to Maupertuis, 22.8.1749 (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Nachlass 218).

on n'a que de vague à dire, ce n'est pas la peine de parler. Tous les devoirs aux quels nous sommes obligés en consequence de ce système de la Providence servent ce me semble à nous y soumettre, & il ne faut point de dissertation pour cela.¹⁰⁶⁹

Like Formey in his reply to Maupertuis, D'Alembert concentrated very much on the concept of the presumably providential world order. Unlike Formey who, in his Wolffian rationalist approach, had postulated a very clear idea of the world's entanglement, D'Alembert was rather sceptical about describing the world in such a way. As he went on in the same letter, he considered Formey's description of the world's order – a rather stable entanglement designed by God, in which the human being was forced to comply with both good and bad fate – as an expression of optimism which he rejected in metaphysical terms. For D'Alembert an optimist world order could only be justified by Revelation.

D'Alembert was presumably right in his supposition that Formey's concept of Providence was based on Leibnizian optimism, although Formey did not explicitly refer to it in this context. Instead, he defended the philosophical optimism of Leibniz a few years later in a debate with the Huguenot philosopher and theologian David-Renaud Boullier,¹⁰⁷⁰ over Formey's refutation of Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles*, his *Lettre de Mr. Gervaise Holmes* of 1750: this debate, that consisted of several public letters in journals by both Formey and Boullier in 1752, and which had been incited by Boullier's critical review of Formey's book, Leibnizian optimism was confronted with the biblical doctrine of the eternal suffering that certain people expected. Boullier claimed that the co-existence of Leibniz's theory and this doctrine implied that God was responsible for such sufferings, whereas Formey argued for the contrary, namely that only the theory of optimism could guarantee that God was not responsible for suffering and other sorrow in the world but the human being.¹⁰⁷¹ Besides this, Formey's reaction to the winning essay of the Academy's prize contest of 1755, to which I will refer below, also showed his favour for Leibnizian optimism. Moreover, as we have seen above, an account of optimism from Leibniz's *Théodicée* was entrusted to Formey by Manteuffel in 1741 in the *Lettre du Jurisconsulte* as a means to overcome his doubts concerning fatalism, even though he does not appear to have made use of it in his *Réflexions sur la liberté*.

1069D'Alembert to Formey, 12.11.1749 (CV).

1070For Boullier see "Mémoire historique sur M. Boullier," *Bibliothèque des Sciences et des beaux arts* 14 (Juillet, Août, Septembre 1760), 444-482; in modern scholarship Boullier's role has been elucidated by Richard H. Popkin, "David-Renaud Boullier and Bishop Berkeley," in *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*, ed. Richard A. Watson and James E. Force (Indianapolis, 1992), 355-62 and Graham Gargett, "David Boullier: Pasteur du Refuge, adversaire des philosophes et défenseur de l'orthodoxie protestante," in *La Vie Intellectuelle aux Refuges Protestants*, ed. Jens Häselser and Antony McKenna, vol. 1 (Paris, 1999), 305-37. Boullier fought against pyrrhonism, materialism and irreligion by essentially following Berkeley's philosophy while despising Leibniz's metaphysic.

1071See David-Renaud Boullier, "Réponse à l'article IX de la Bibliothèque Impartiale, Moi de Mai & Juin 1752," *Journal des Sçavans augmenté* (Juillet 1752), 514-5 and for Formey's reply see "Lettre de Mr. Formey à l'Auteur de ce Journal au sujet de l'Éloge Historique de Mr. Boullier," *Journal Encyclopédique* 3 (Avril 1761), 130.

Leibniz's famous theory that God had created the best of all possible worlds argued that even when bad things happened to humans they also somehow contributed to the good of the world as a whole, and hence had to be accepted by the individual.¹⁰⁷² We easily see that this was the argument that Formey advanced in his letter to Maupertuis on the provident world. Moreover, for Leibniz, the theory of the best of all possible worlds had been the solution to the question of theodicy which tried to accord the existence of a good and an omnipotent God with the existence of evil in the world. By claiming that evil also had a good purpose in the Creation, Leibniz' theory placed the highest emphasis on the goodness and wisdom of God instead of His omnipotence (by which He theoretically could have avoided the evil). It is this aspect that demonstrates its similarity to Christian concepts of God's good Providence which we have already noticed for Formey's explanation in his sermons of why the God-given liberty of the human being led necessarily to moral actions.¹⁰⁷³ We can thus suppose that already in the context of his sermons on perfection, Formey was mainly influenced by a view of the Providence that Leibniz had shaped.

Yet, Leibnizian optimism was as controversial in the first half of the Eighteenth Century as the theory of pre-established harmony. The religious criticism of Leibniz's concept, by both Catholics and Lutherans, focussed predominantly on the determinism that it implied, in their view, and its consequences for central Christian doctrines such as original sin. The most pertinent criticism that all the opponents of the different confessions shared was that Leibniz's theory curtailed the freedom of God and hence contradicted the idea of voluntarism: if we believe that we live in the best of all worlds, God must have had no other choice than creating the best; His will was to be considered as determined. This criticism was shared by the Jesuit Louis Bertrand Castel who reviewed the second edition of Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée* for the *Mémoires de Trévoux* in 1737,¹⁰⁷⁴ in addition to the Lutheran theologian and critic of Wolff Johann Franz Budde.¹⁰⁷⁵ Besides this voluntarist criticism of Leibniz's optimism, that was later revived in the winning essay of the Berlin Academy's 1755 essay contest on optimism, Budde also emphasised that the theory of the best of all possible worlds undermined the distinction between the pre- and post-lapsarian state of the Creation: the best world can be said to have only existed before the Fall since in this state

1072For the development and reception of the concept of optimism in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe see Luca Fonescu, "Der Optimismus und seine Kritiker im Zeitalter der Aufklärung," *Studia Leibnitiana* 26, no. 2 (1994): 131–62 and Stefan Lorenz, *De mundo optimo: Studien zu Leibniz' Theodizee und ihrer Rezeption in Deutschland (1710-1791)* (Stuttgart, 1997). See additionally the proceedings of a German-French round table on the subject: Albert Heinekamp and André Robinet, eds., *Leibniz: Le meilleur des mondes. Table ronde organisée par le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris et la Gottfried-Wilhelm-Leibniz-Gesellschaft Hannover, Domaine de Seillac, 7 Au 9 Juin 1990*, *Studia Leibnitiana* 21 (Stuttgart, 1992) and most recently the monograph Paul Rateau, *Leibniz et le meilleur des mondes possibles* (Paris, 2015).

1073See Fonescu, "Optimismus," 144 who refers to the fact that metaphysical optimism included not only Leibniz's theory of the best of all possible worlds but also Christian teachings concerning predestination.

1074See Fonescu, "Optimismus," 134.

1075See Lorenz, *De mundo optimo*, 115-6.

neither moral nor physical evil existed. Instead, it was odious to call the post-lapsarian world with the evil it contained, the best of all possible worlds.¹⁰⁷⁶ On the side of the freethinkers, the criticism of Leibniz's optimism seems to have been predominantly linked to the theodicy that it tried to present: these thinkers fundamentally condemned the argument that evil was also a sign of God's goodness.¹⁰⁷⁷ Diderot, in his *Pensées philosophiques*, for example, claimed that it was not only illogical that one general purpose – the goodness of the world – was to be attained by completely contrary means – good and bad actions alike. He also considered it poor and futile to acknowledge the necessary existence of vices in order to highlight the virtues. In Diderot's case, this rejection of Providence in the legacy of Leibnizian optimism constituted the basis for rejecting the existence of God altogether.¹⁰⁷⁸ A criticism of optimism, similar to his, although not always one that led to atheism, gained a peak after the Lisbon earthquake in 1755 with the enormous suffering and misery it had caused. Voltaire was a central actor in the polemics about Leibniz's optimistic worldview which he mocked in his poem on the Lisbon earthquake and his satirical novel *Candide ou De l'optimisme*.¹⁰⁷⁹ In addition to the criticism of the theodicy that was proclaimed by Leibniz, his opponents without an explicit religious agenda (or sometimes even an explicit anti-religious agenda) – like D'Alembert – also claimed that the theory of the best of all possible worlds curtailed human freedom as much as the religious concept of Providence did. Consequently, neither the religious critics nor the freethinkers could accept the co-existence of free will and Providence in the best of all worlds.

Formey's Approval of Kästner's Winning Essay in 1751

Despite the existing criticism of Leibniz's metaphysical optimism/ theory of the best of all possible worlds, the winning essay, which was officially awarded in the Academy's public assembly on 27 May 1751,¹⁰⁸⁰ was based on the assumption of this metaphysical optimism, as well as on Wolff's moral philosophy of perfection. It was sent in by Abraham Gotthelf Kästner, a protégé of Gottsched and professor of mathematics in Leipzig, who in the late 1740s seems to have frequented Manteuffel's intellectual gatherings there and enjoyed the personal esteem of Wolff.¹⁰⁸¹ Given their

1076See Lorenz, *De mundo optimo*, 109-10.

1077See Fonnesu, "Optimismus," 147.

1078See Denis Diderot, *Pensées philosophiques* [1746], ed. Robert Niklaus. *Diderot. Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1975), 22-23 (Pensée XV).

1079Voltaire, *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* [1756], ed. David Adams and Haydn T. Mason. *Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 45A: Writings of 1753-1757 (Oxford, 2009); and *Candide, ou De l'optimisme* [1759], ed. René Pomeau. *Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 48 (Oxford, 1980).

1080See *Régistres de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Berlin*:

http://akademieregistres.bbaw.de/exist/apps/SadeRegistres/data/protokolle/0216-1751_05_27.xml.

1081See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 144-5; Wolff esteemed Kästner particularly for his translation of an English

common intellectual origins, it is very likely that Formey had voted for Kästner's treatise in the election committee of his class.¹⁰⁸² The most evident sign of Formey's approval was that after Kästner's Latin essay had been awarded, Formey translated it into French and published it on his own initiative. Formey undertook this translation despite the fact that Kästner had already translated it himself, which was to appear together with his Latin original and seven other pieces in the Academy's official publication of the best prize essays.¹⁰⁸³ At the same time, Formey also printed Kästner's entire essay in his *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique*.¹⁰⁸⁴ (Here he claimed to reproduce Kästner's own translation). This gives the impression that Formey considered its content to be extremely important and wanted to guarantee its wide diffusion.

Given Formey's support for a rather large diffusion of Kästner's winning essay, it seems that, besides favouring Kästner's opinions, Formey's publication of the winning essay was also a conscious expression of him taking a position in the controversy concerning the prize question that had evolved internally and externally to the Academy in 1749. This is most strongly underlined by the fact that he changed the title of Kästner's winning essay, which originally was *Dissertation sur les devoirs qui resultent de la conviction, que les evenemens fortuits dependent de la volonté de Dieu* and through Formey became *La vraye theorie de la fortune, avec les conséquences qui en résultent* [my emphasis]. This choice of title suggests that Formey wanted to clarify, in his view, the misguided assumptions concerning divine providence (and its inconsistency with free will) that prevailed among theologians and philosophers alike and which, as we have seen, were raised personally with Formey by D'Alembert at the announcement of the prize question. The 'right' concept of Providence that Formey wanted to promulgate was defined by Kästner in his treatise as lying in between of the two extremes of Epicure's concept of pure chance (*hazard*) and Spinoza's theory of fatalism. In Kästner's view (which we can extend to Formey's), the universe had been created by an almighty, omniscient and good being and he was convinced that in the world nothing happened that this supreme being did not foresee, and that it could not prevent and that hence all events that the common people called fortuitous aimed at one particular end.¹⁰⁸⁵ According to this explanation, contingency or the existence of fortuitous events seemed to only be empty notions

treatise on the origins of the action of materia, which Wolff referred to in several of his letters to Manteuffel at the end of 1747/ beginning of 1748; see *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3.

1082 For the procedure of the essay competition at the Academy, see Buschmann, "Die philosophischen Preisfragen." The reports of the election meetings inside the individual classes unfortunately did not survive.

1083 *Piece qui a remporté le prix sur le sujet des evenemens fortuits, proposé par l'Academie Royale des Sciences et Belles Lettres de Berlin pour l'année 1751. Avec les pieces qui ont concouru* (Berlin, 1751). In the dedication of Formey's translation, *La vraye theorie de la fortune*, he justified the publication of his own translation in addition to the official one with a reference to stylistic questions: according to him, Kästner as a non-native French speaker, had not rendered the French good enough to assure the essay's comprehensibility.

1084 See [Formey], "Article IX. Piece qui a remporté le Prix sur le sujet des *Évenemens fortuits* [...]," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* 10 (Janvier, Février & Mars 1752), 168-204.

1085 See [Formey], *La vraye theorie de la fortune, avec les conséquences qui en résultent* (Berlin, 1751), 10-1.

while the world was ruled by Providence. For Kästner and Formey, unlike for philosophers like D'Alembert, this would not potentially damage the human beings' choice of acting virtuously. On the contrary, Kästner defended in his essay the argument that it was precisely from the awareness of this Providence that the most powerful motivation for virtuous behaviour emerged.¹⁰⁸⁶ It was this thesis that Formey seems to have wanted to emphasise with the new title that he gave to Kästner's essay.

The moral theory that Kästner established upon this argument was very similar to what Formey had established in his sermons on perfection. Kästner followed Wolff's rationalist approach to moral philosophy in the sense that he rejected atheistic and voluntarist theories alike and instead pleaded for a congruency of human and divine motives for action. In his description, the human being was able to make his own plans for life and pursue them with all possible means, even though the ultimate decision on whether these plans were successful or not lay in Providence.¹⁰⁸⁷ However, as he underlined, if the human being conceived of his plans according to his natural disposition and possibilities, they would always coincide with the plans of Providence:

'Tant que nous nous servons de nos facultés conformément à nos lumières, nous ne travaillerons jamais en vain, quand même les choses ne tourneroient pas de la maniere que nous les souhaitons; nous remplissons les vûes de la Providence. Dieu n'exige pas que nous travaillions à la journée comme des mercenaires; il veut que nous agissions d'une maniere proportionnée aux inclinations & aux forces qu'il a mises en nous. C'est à lui de faire tourner nos actions au bien du l'Univers. Il ne convient pas de croire que, semblable à un Ouvrier mal-habile, Dieu ait fait de nous des roües inutiles à sa machine.'¹⁰⁸⁸

In this claim, we recognise Wolff's concept of perfection according to which perfection was the fulfilment of innate possibilities and hence a natural behaviour, that God had planted in the human being.

Additionally Kästner, however, seems to insinuate something that was not explicit in Wolff's *Ethik*, nor in Formey's sermons (although they implied it to a certain extent): the human pursuit of perfection, even though it coincided with God's will, did not always lead to results that the individual perceived of as a successful or good outcome. Yet, the individual's striving for perfection always led to the global good. As Kästner put it metaphorically: the purpose of the human being's existence was his contribution to the functioning of God's machine, rather than solely his personal satisfaction. This view corresponds to the Leibnizian metaphysical optimism according to which even suffering and misfortune belonged to the best world that He had chosen for the human being to

1086See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 12.

1087See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 14 and 15.

1088[Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 14-5.

live in.¹⁰⁸⁹ It is a sign of the summary and simplification of the Wolffian moral theory that was carried out by Kästner: he put the two components, perfectibility and best of all worlds, in such an explicit and close relationship to each other. In the logic of his argument this merging of the law of perfection and the theory of the best of all worlds predominantly served to offer sense to the human being's life: if the human being was convinced of a Providence in the manner of the best of all possible worlds, then he would never consider any of his efforts to be in vain or to be desperate about potential misfortune. Moreover, in contrast to the vision of a world in which everything happened by pure chance and without a greater purpose, the acknowledgement of good Providence was in Kästner's view the only reason why the human being acted at all and made projects in life.¹⁰⁹⁰ Lastly, Kästner emphasised that general and particular Providence were the same¹⁰⁹¹ which meant that the general good that God had provided for the world was likewise intended to bring happiness to the individual.¹⁰⁹² This emphasis of a Providence based on the best of all worlds added an important point to the justification of the necessity to act morally, besides the natural innateness of morality and God as a role model that were stressed by Formey.

If we however generally compare Kästner's view (i.e. his adaptation of perfectibility and metaphysical optimism) to the distinction of and relation between natural and divine obligation that we have discussed above for Wolff and Formey, we could say that he seems to have considered divine obligation as superior to natural obligation as Formey did. Yet, the source of divine obligation was, in his view, not only the congruency of our natural disposition to perfection and God's will but also the awareness that the individual's fate contributed to and was gratified by a global fate. While Formey had predominantly emphasised the will and role model of God as an incentive for the human being to pursue perfection, Kästner put an almost exclusive stress on the omnipotence, goodness and justice of God as they resulted from the fact that He had created the best of all possible worlds. Besides this, Kästner emphasised in his essay, as Formey had done before him, not only the similarities and advantages of a natural theological moral theory (the best of all worlds was recognisable through nature) over a mere anthropocentric moral theory, but also made it clear that ultimately it was Revelation that regulated human morality in the most efficient way. Formey achieved this, as we have seen, by comparing *piété philosophique* and *piété Chrétienne* with the outcome that the latter, which emerged from Revelation, had to be considered as the most efficient means to reach perfection.¹⁰⁹³ Kästner instead, underlined the power of Revelation and faith by referring to the rewards that the human being had to expect for his moral

1089See also [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 19-20.

1090See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 16 and also 58-59.

1091See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 25.

1092See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 28.

1093See Formey, *L'idée, les règles et le modèle*, 50-1.

behaviour: he distinguished between natural present-life rewards that the human being could predict to a certain extent through experience,¹⁰⁹⁴ and the rewards in the afterlife which human reason was not able to grasp at all. In order to know these rewards in the afterlife and the behaviour that they required, the human being necessarily had to believe in and follow God's Revelation; this was, in Kästner's view, an obligation that was ridiculous to not follow.¹⁰⁹⁵ The general emphasis that Christian moral theory was above natural theological and natural (anthropocentric) moral theory was hence the same in Formey and Kästner, yet they varied in their arguments for supporting this.

The particularity of Kästner's essay in comparison to Formey's sermons, besides relying so explicitly on a (Leibnizian) optimistic theory of Providence, was his attempt to enhance the predictability of Providence and to provide the human beings with help for speculating about the concrete nature of the behaviour that was required of them. Kästner developed his theory, which seems to have been inspired by the calculus of risk in mathematics, in the supplementary part to his prize essay, called *Nouvelles Reflexions sur les evenemens fortuits, pour servir de supplement aux precedentes*, which appeared in both the official publication of the essay by the Academy and Formey's 'private' one. Kästner claimed that there were certain 'fortuitous' events (i.e. events that resulted from God's seemingly arbitrary will), more precisely bad fates, which the human being was able to foresee through his experience and reason. To illustrate this he quoted the example of ships sinking in the tropical sea due to the ignorance of the existence and functioning of the trade winds. He argued that in his days, thanks to the geographical knowledge of this phenomenon people knew the 'bad fate' that awaited ships there, and thus they tried to avoid it.¹⁰⁹⁶ Establishing an analogy to mathematics, Kästner claimed that experience of good and bad fate enabled us to weigh hope against risk or, as according to Kästner Daniel Bernouilli suggested, to weigh the degree of happiness that success would imply against the degree of misery that failure would imply.¹⁰⁹⁷ Kästner's attempt to almost mathematically limit the apparent arbitrariness of human fate must be seen as an extreme application of the Wolffian trust in human reason to apprehend the universe: it suggested basically that the human being could comprehend his fate. Although bringing this trust to an unprecedented level, Kästner's argument was very similar to the one that Formey had put forward at the end of his *Réflexions sur la liberté*: the more we know about the world, the freer our actions become.

Nevertheless, despite this confidence in the human cognitive capacity to limit the fortuity of fate, Kästner had to concede that there was an insurmountable obstacle to this: it was not possible to

1094See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 29-30.

1095See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 32-4.

1096See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 42-3.

1097See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 43-4.

surely know (through a-priori reasoning) the intentions that God had in every single event that happened to us. Instead, Kästner stressed that God's will was only to be known retroactively, through the observation of the effects of our behaviour.¹⁰⁹⁸ This implied, as he stressed, that it was difficult or impossible to establish concrete rules of moral conduct:¹⁰⁹⁹ if we did not know what God wanted, how should we know how to please Him? Linked to this, Kästner was again concerned with the potential inactivity that the human unawareness of God's plans could cause in human beings: as a solution, he suggested that God had given us intuition in order to avoid inactivity.¹¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, it seems that Kästner also saw the human ignorance of God's plans as a drive for human action. This is why he eventually claimed that it was a sign of God's goodness and wisdom that the human being was not able to predict his own fate, good and bad alike: 'La crainte d'un mal à venir ne sert qu'à empoisonner les plaisirs présents; & l'espérance d'un bonheur éloigné est trop foible pour nous empêcher de sentir une douleur actuelle qui nous met aux abois, ou plutôt elle ne serviroit qu'à augmenter cette douleur par l'impatience d'arriver à l'état heureux qui nous attend.'¹¹⁰¹ Not knowing what awaited us in the future, reduced not only our hesitation to act, but also contributed to our earthly happiness. As Kästner at this point highlighted again, the human being was after all not faced with an absolute arbitrariness but could trust in the promise of metaphysical optimism, i.e. that the best would always happen.¹¹⁰² Consequently, after his brief considerations on the possible predictability of the apparently fortuitous fate of humanity, Kästner returned again to his preferred concept of Providence, i.e. that of Leibnizian metaphysical optimism: in this view, the greatest degree of predictability of fate emerged out of the promise that we lived in the best of all worlds.

This general direction of fate as it was contained in the promise of the best of all worlds – although it did not lend itself to the establishment of explicit moral rules – provided according to Kästner a general guideline for human behaviour: all human beings were always obliged to be good.¹¹⁰³ Based on this, the execution of particular virtues depended, in Kästner's view, on each individual's personal capacity, for example, the powerful and rich in a society were more strongly obliged to render their fellow citizens happy than the poor and weak.¹¹⁰⁴ Such a conception of rather unspecified, individually diverse rules of conduct appears almost contrary to traditional religious moral theories which aim to prescribe clear and universal rules of conduct. The same can be said for Formey's sermons on perfection, which were embedded in a religious context, but did not provide

1098See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 46.

1099See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 48.

1100See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 50-1.

1101[Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 51.

1102See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 56.

1103See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 56.

1104See [Formey], *Vraye theorie*, 57.

any specific instructions to the believers: as we have seen, Formey's only advice in reference to Revelation was to follow the example of God by becoming perfect. Kästner and Formey had hence the same – I would say Wolffian – approach to the normativity of morality in the sense that they both reduced it to its very basics, and by this granted much more self-responsibility to the human being. The Leibnizian and Wolffian ideas of human perfectibility and of the best of possible worlds, on which the two men focussed in their moral philosophical texts, had largely the same meanings for human morality, and consequently, we can say that Kästner's prize essay of 1751 mirrored and supplemented Formey's own moral theory of perfection that he had developed in 1747. Moreover, it might be suspected that it was Formey's perceived familiarity with Kästner that made him republish his sermons in the form of a philosophical treatise with the title *Essai sur la perfection* just after Kästner had won the essay contest, i.e. in autumn 1751.

The Aftermath of the Prize Question on Providence at the Academy

However, by re-publishing his *Essai sur la perfection* and by translating Kästner's essay, Formey not only stressed his own conformity to Kästner's position – one German reviewer actually took the latter as a piece written by Formey himself¹¹⁰⁵ – he also defended the legitimacy and utility of the 1751 prize question again. I have pointed to this possibility already with respect to the change in title that Formey made; beyond this Formey also hinted rather openly at this intention in his dedication of *La vraye theorie de la fortune* to the recently elected curator of the Academy, Count von Redern. There Formey recalled the criticism that the essay question had faced (by D'Alembert) in 1749 – its triviality and inutility – and claimed that a large amount of solid and good submissions to the competition had proved this criticism to be wrong. With this claim, however, Formey downplayed the troubles that the essay question had caused until very shortly before the final decision, particularly inside the Academy itself.

As an informal report on the election meeting of the class of speculative philosophy by Merian to Maupertuis shows, the former, who had joined the Academy only in 1750, when the contest was already in full swing, had opted to suspend the award in 1751. The award could be suspended every now and then, for example, if not enough essays were sent in. Then the period of participation usually was prolonged for another year; this happened for example to the prize contest in mathematics in 1754 on the diurnal movement of the earth.¹¹⁰⁶ However, in the case of the 1751

¹¹⁰⁵See *Allgemeine Gelehrte Nachrichten aus dem Reiche der Wissenschaften. Zum Hamburger Unpartheyischen Correspondenten* 49 (10 December 1751).

¹¹⁰⁶See *Registres de l'Académie* 6.6.1754:

http://akademieregistres.bbaw.de/exist/apps/SadeRegistres/data/protokolle/0345-1754_06_06.xml.

contest, the reason why Merian (and also most likely other colleagues) opted for a suspension seems to not have been due to a lack of contributions¹¹⁰⁷ but rather the insufficiency of their content. His colleagues in the class were Formey, Johann Georg Sulzer, Nicolas Béguelin, Philipp Heinius, François Achard and Johann Christian Uhden, all of whom, except for Sulzer, had been present at the conception of the question in 1749, however, they convinced him not to insist on such a suspension for the sake of the Academy's public image. According to Merian's description, their decision seems to have been largely motivated by political reasons: they were apparently also rather doubtful about the prospect of receiving a contribution that would sufficiently answer the problem. On the contrary, if we believe Merian's depiction, the majority of his colleagues precluded that any answer could be given to the question:

'Messieurs mes confrères me remontèrent alors, qu'on pourroit renvoyer la question encore plusieurs fois sans recevoir de meilleures, ni peut être d'aussi bonnes pieces, que celle pour laquelle nous avons décidé, qu'il n'y avoit rien de nouveau a dire sur le sujet proposé, et que ce renvoi produiroit toujours un plus mauvais effèt, que le couronnement de la piece. Je goutai ces raisons, et je me rendis n'ayant en vûe que l'honneur de l'Academie.'

The compromise that Merian, supported by Sulzer, was able to broker in this conflict was apparently that he would decide who was granted the award¹¹⁰⁸ and that the Academy, in the public proclamation of the winner, would make a statement about the general mediocrity of all the contributions that had been sent in. This was a means to safeguard the scientific integrity and excellence of the Academy which, amongst others, was judged in the European learned world by the texts to which it awarded prizes. At the end it was a political act to let Kästner's text win in 1751, and to award seven other pieces the title of 'accessit' (runner-up) at the same time: this presumably was intended to guarantee that the institution neither lost face for posing an unanswerable question nor was judged as being scientifically mediocre by singling out a work that in the eyes of many of its own members was considered to be mediocre. For the process that went on behind the scenes of this political act, we have only Merian's testimony to rely on, which did not go into detail about the individual opinions of his colleagues. However, given Formey's publication of Kästner's essay and the framing he gave it in his dedication, we can assume that he had opposed

1107Buschmann, "Philosophische Preisfragen," 166, note 3 indicates the existence of 14 manuscripts that are still preserved in the archives of the Academy; this number does not include the winning essay and the seven essays that obtained the mention 'assecit'. Hence, the total number of essays sent in must have been at least 22. I would suggest that it was significantly more, since, as the register for the Academy's assembly on the 27 May 1751 (the date of the awarding of the winning essay) indicates, one of the essays that obtained the 'assecit' had the number 56.

1108Merian told Maupertuis that he had opted for essay N° 29 in the internal assembly of his class, which however, as it seems at first did not gain the majority of votes. It is likely that the class changed its vote in a second round (see Formey to Maupertuis, 16.5.1751 (Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Nachlass 218) when he stated to send him the 'new' report of the '*commissaires*'. It could be that he meant by this the selection committee for the prize essay.) The announcement of the winning essay in the *Bibliothèque Impartiale* 3, no. 3 (Mai et Juin 1751), 469-70, testifies that Kästner's essay was N° 29.

Merian and the other doubters on this issue. Thus, his re-affirmation of the legitimacy of the prize question was apparently not only targeted against the external criticism by D'Alembert and other French *philosophes* but also against the internal opposition at the Academy.

In this light, the developments at the Berlin Academy in the 1750s might be seen as a sign of a backlash against the supporters of the 1751 prize question: Especially since the subsequent prize question of the class of speculative philosophy was an attempt to discredit Leibniz's metaphysical optimism that, as we have seen, was at the core of Kästner's essay in 1751. The question, posed in June 1753 for the prize contest of 1755, lumped together Leibniz's metaphysical optimism with the popular and simplified concept of optimism as it occurred in Alexander Pope's poem *An Essay on man* with its emblematic claim 'Whatever is, is right.' The participants of the contest were asked to explain Pope's dictum and to compare it with the theory of the best of all worlds that relied on Leibniz. Moreover, and this was the crucial part of the question, they were asked to evaluate the truth of this theory.¹¹⁰⁹ Contemporaries had already begun to consider this question and the way that it was posed as a deliberate challenge to Leibniz's philosophy, just as the question on monadology in 1747 had done.¹¹¹⁰ At the announcement of the question, Gottsched publicly criticised the Academy's choice, but Sulzer (and supposedly also Formey) seemed to oppose the choice within the Academy.¹¹¹¹ After the decision of the prize contest, the German writers Moses Mendelssohn and Gottfried Lessing also penned a protest against the Academy's formulation; they particularly highlighted the inadmissible confusion of the poet Pope with the metaphysician Leibniz before they made a plea for the truth of Leibniz's system.¹¹¹² Despite all this criticism the Academy eventually selected an anti-Leibnizian answer: among the 21 essays that had been sent in on this occasion, the essay of Adolph Friedrich Reinhard, which argued decisively against metaphysical optimism, won. Reinhard's main criticism of this theory was that it limited the power of God, more precisely His freedom of will. In strong contrast to Formey's and Kästner's plea for a Providence determined by God's infinite goodness that had provided the best for the human being, Reinhard defended divine voluntarism, in which the human being was exposed to pure fortuity.¹¹¹³ Interestingly it is reported that Formey had voted for Reinhard's essay, which his contemporaries supposed was motivated by

1109See *Registres de l'Académie*, 7.6.1753

http://akademieregistres.bbaw.de/exist/apps/SadeRegistres/data/protokolle/0304-1753_06_07.xml : 'On demande l'Examen du Système de Pope, contenu dans la Proposition: Tout est bien. Il s'agit: 1° de déterminer le vrai sens de cette Proposition conformément à l'hypothèse de son Auteur. 2. de la comparer avec le Système de l'Optimisme, ou du choix du meilleur, pour en marquer les rapports et les différences. 3. enfin d'alléguer les raisons qu'on croira les plus propres à confirmer ou à détruire ce Système.'

1110For an exemplary account of the prevailing contemporary criticism of the prize question see Lorenz, *De mundo optimo*, 167-9.

1111See Marion Hellwig, *Alles ist gut: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte einer Theodizee-Formel im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland, England und Frankreich* (Würzburg, 2008), 274.

1112See Hellwig, *Alles ist gut*, 297-309.

1113See Lorenz, *De mundo optimo*, 176-7.

his aim to please Maupertuis, who himself abstained from voting but presumably was against Leibniz's theory.¹¹¹⁴ This interpretation might actually be true, given the efforts that Formey had made to not displease Maupertuis in the conflict regarding the previous essay contest. That his vote, after all, did presumably not correspond to his actual opinion on this issue was suggested by the critical review that he wrote on Reinhard's winning essay.¹¹¹⁵

The conflicts around the Academy's two essay questions on the role of Providence in moral philosophy and Leibnizian metaphysical optimism in the 1750s show thus both the constantly controversial character of the relation between liberty and a determined world-order in general and the difficult situation of Formey in particular. This question (as the question on monads and the existence of God) seems to have also torn Formey between his convictions that were established on Christian dogma and Wolffian philosophy on the one side, and the dominant opinions and intellectual politics at the Academy on the other. In this situation it is interesting to observe how he skillfully used the means of publication at his disposal – translations and reviews – in order to implicitly defend his position and hence to exercise a kind of soft power in the debates. His position was philosophically more complex than the 'simple' rejection of a providential, determined world order by D'Alembert or Maupertuis, since he tried to build a compromise between traditional Christian dogma and the ideas resulting from both the natural philosophical disciplines and the absolute rationalism of Wolff's philosophy. Particularly in Formey's adoption of Wolff's moral theory in his sermons on perfection we have observed his attempt to make the Wolffian purely philosophical treatment of morality compatible with the exigencies of religious dogma and practice. In contrast, his defence of the 1751 prize question shows rather the opposite endeavour, namely to render such a genuinely religious concept as Providence appropriate for a 'secular' philosophical investigation, which however was not judged to be possible and legitimate by several of his contemporaries – D'Alembert for example considered the 1751 essay question as more adequate for a sermon than for an academic essay.

With the double-sided practical application of Formey's cosmological and psychological theories – in the religious and the learned context – we end our observation of his engagement with the problem of the relation between liberty and determination. After his first encounter with the problem, in the *Belle Wolfienne*, had been marked by religious and moral criticism of the allegedly fatalistic consequences of Leibnizian and Wolffian theories like pre-established harmony and *nexus rerum*, Formey subsequently turned his attention to the natural philosophical side of the problem by investigating free will as a capacity of the human soul. There his main concern was the

1114 See Hellwig, *Alles ist gut*, 275-6.

1115 See Formey, "Article II. Dissertation qui a remporté le Prix [...] sur l'OPTIMISME [...]," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* 18 (Janvier, Février, Mars 1756), 22-32.

epistemological foundation of his claim of human liberty in light of a growing scepticism concerning the comprehensibility of such an indefinite substance as the soul, which was significantly nourished by the new attempts to scrutinise the soul through the senses. The result for Formey was to claim, with Wolff, that there was a human capacity to will that functioned independently of the body's movement and was only indirectly influenced by the divine will. Finally, in this chapter, we have observed how in Wolff's moral theory, a psychological concept of a determined free will constituted the basis of an almost autonomous morality that nevertheless reflected the will of the Creator, whose role was conceived according to Leibniz's optimism. Formey embraced this moral theory and – as his transportation of it to a religious context has shown – particularly underlined its compatibility with revealed doctrines, but also – as became evident in his discussion of the 1751 prize essay question – with divine Providence. Compared to the doubts he had voiced in his *Belle Wolfienne*, these two instances of applying the philosophical middle way between liberty and determination as contained in Leibniz's and Wolff's philosophy, suggest that he had eventually overcome the criticism of fatalism and its negative impact on religion and morals. The following last chapter of this thesis investigates how Formey from these rather popular contexts, i.e. that of the religious community and that of the wider Republic of Letters, transferred this moral theory to a context which he considered to be scientific and which comprised, in his view, of a different audience than his popular-philosophical *Philosophe Chrétien*.

11. Constructing a Science of Morality or How to Link Science, Morality and Revealed Religion?

After having previously recognised the important role of moral philosophical ideas in my analysis of Formey's (self-) fashioning and his discussion on important religious and philosophical questions, particularly in the preceding chapter, I will conclude my study on Formey with a discussion of his project to construct a science of moral philosophy. This project had its origin in Formey's endeavour to provide a counterpart to his popular moral philosophical essays which predominantly served academic and other professional philosophers. However, for Formey, this project, which relied on the appropriation of Wolff's Latin ethics, proved to function only to limited certain extent. On a conceptual level Formey faced the problem of how to integrate this scientific moral philosophy, although it did not deny (natural) religious teachings, with the moral precepts provided by revealed religion, and on the practical level he seems to have had problems to demarcate to which audience a 'scientific', as opposed to a popular philosophical, book should be directed.

To begin with, I will connect with Formey's (Wolffian) conception of innate natural morality which was analysed to a certain extent in the previous chapter and ask how he transformed this conception into the structure of a scientific treatise that had a textbook-like function. On the basis of this, I will investigate the complex relations of this conception of scientific moral philosophy with theology and revealed religion, as well as with genres of popular moral philosophy. This final chapter with its analysis of Formey's scientific project on moral philosophy will help to complete the picture of what it meant to be a Christian philosopher in mid-eighteenth-century Germany. Being situated in the 1760s, the project of a scientific moral philosophy also stood at the peak of Formey's career and productivity which subsequently decreased over the ensuing 30 years until his death. In this sense, this final chapter also marks a chronological endpoint of my study. Finally, it is an observation not only of the maturation of Formey's thought and of his self-perception since the 1730s but also of the changes in the intellectual culture of the time which started to materialise almost precisely in the mid-Eighteenth Century with Rousseau's challenge to rationality and scientific progress. As we will see, it was in direct response to Rousseau's *Premier Discours* that Formey designed his science of morals and with it, he tried to find a solution to how moral philosophy could enhance human moral conduct by preserving its nature as a science and at the same time appealing the common people.

Transforming the Rationalist Conception of Innate Morality into a 'Moral Science'

By referring to Formey's project of a scientific account of moral philosophy I refer in particular to his *Principes de Morale* that he published in two parts in 1762 and 1765 with Elie Luzac in Leiden.¹¹¹⁶ These works will be at the centre of this chapter. Formey drafted the outline of this systematic work, which contained a theoretical and a practical part – each of them containing two volumes – in the dedication to the very first volume: there he announced the first part using the title *Principes de Morale déduits de l'usage des facultés de l'entendement humain*, which was called also 'Morale intellectuelle'; he explained that it was to be followed by a so-called 'Morale pratique'.¹¹¹⁷ When, three years later, he then eventually published this *Morale pratique*, under the title of *Principes de Morale appliqués aux déterminations de la volonté*, Formey stressed the unity and comprehensiveness of the two parts:

'Mon grand but dans ces deux Ouvrages, qui, à proprement parler, n'en sont qu'un, c'est de convaincre les hommes qu'ils ne parviendront jamais à posséder des vertus solides qu'après avoir acquis des lumières distinctes; & cela de manière que leur succès au premier de ces égards demeure toujours proportionnel à celui qu'ils ont eu préalablement au second.'¹¹¹⁸

This statement contains the perceived correlation between knowledge and virtue that we have already encountered rudimentarily in Formey's *Réflexions sur la liberté* and in his sermons on perfection. This correlation suggests that one can only become virtuous if one acquires distinct knowledge. More precisely, as we have previously seen in Wolff's theory of the natural innateness of morality, a distinct knowledge of one's own human nature and the purpose of one's existence, i.e. a distinct knowledge of natural law, was required. Formey made this precise distinction in the introduction of the *Morale intellectuelle* where he first explained that, since all our actions were animated by our natural faculties, we would become more enlightened, more virtuous, more perfect and happier if we applied these faculties in a way that corresponded to their destiny. He concluded from this that moral philosophy had to teach human beings what their natural faculties were and how they could be applied in the best way.¹¹¹⁹ Therefore, it can be said that Formey, with his *Principes de Morale*, moved towards an extension of the discipline of moral philosophy which comprised not only the rules of conduct but also psychological knowledge.

1116Formey, *Principes de Morale déduits de l'usage des facultés de l'entendement humain*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1762) (in the following referred to as *Morale intellectuelle*) and Formey, *Principes de morale appliqués aux déterminations de la volonté*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1765) (in the following referred to as *Morale pratique*).

1117See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XI. Here, the title of the second part appeared still as *Principes de Morale déduits des opérations de la Volonté humaine*.

1118Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XI.

1119See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XIV.

It was this conception of the task of moral philosophy, based on the perception of a correlation between understanding and virtue that provided the above-mentioned bi-partite structure of Formey's entire *Principes de Morale*. Translated into the content of the work's two parts, Formey's above-mentioned statement on the unity of these two parts means that the *Morale intellectuelle* was supposed to deal with the acquisition of distinct knowledge, whereas the *Morale pratique* was concerned with the establishment of 'solid (moral) virtues'. More precisely, the first part served to provide an explanation of the genesis and purpose of human understanding with the aim to animate its readers to increase it.¹¹²⁰ This is the reason why Formey's *Morale intellectuelle* a theory of the soul which treated the different mental faculties in its first volume and then, in its second volume, developed so-called 'intellectual virtues', i.e. examples for the perfect use of our understanding. The theory of the soul presented in the first volume distinguished between inferior and superior faculties: the first including sense, memory and imagination, produced only indistinct ideas of the world in the soul, while only the second were able to produce understanding in the sense of a distinct knowledge.¹¹²¹ Those superior faculties included reasoning as well as the formation of ideas and judgements, which were able to emerge out of inferior faculties with the help of so-called intermediary faculties, attention and reflection.¹¹²² From the description of the single mental faculties and their interconnection in the process of forming understanding, Formey deduced, in the second volume of the *Morale intellectuelle*, the so-called intellectual virtues which stood for the good use of one's understanding in the process of knowledge acquisition.¹¹²³ In reference to Aristotle, he developed general virtues that were linked to the way in which the human understanding functioned, like intelligence, soundness and profoundness. Besides this, he also dealt with particular virtues that were bound to the objects of the knowledge that was acquired through understanding, like science, wisdom, caution and art.¹¹²⁴ The obligation to develop these intellectual virtues was a natural one – due to Wolff's natural law of perfection – and Formey stressed that they were the indispensable prerequisite for the acquisition of moral virtue.¹¹²⁵

The second part of Formey's *Principes de Morale*, i.e. the *Morale pratique*, aimed to show how another predominantly mental faculty of the human being, the will, could be enhanced and corrected through the knowledge of our intellectual faculties and intellectual virtues – which was acquired through the study of human understanding as presented in the *Morale intellectuelle*. Moral duties directly emerged from the human will, in the sense that, as we have seen above, the will

1120See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, VI.

1121See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, 5.

1122See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, 7.

1123See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 1.

1124See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 3.

1125See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 5.

enabled behaviour through the execution of certain motives. These motives, more precisely the notions of good and bad, had to be known and judged by understanding¹¹²⁶ – yet, only in man's natural state. While the *Morale intellectuelle* had portrayed to a large extent the genesis of morality in the pre-lapsarian state,¹¹²⁷ the *Morale pratique* dealt with the human condition after the Fall: as Formey stressed at the beginning of this treatise, natural morality was only possible if the human being possessed distinct knowledge at his birth, which however was not the case after the Fall; instead the human being could only rely on his senses that however potentially incited wrong conceptions of good and bad in the human being.¹¹²⁸ Based on this assumption the *Morale pratique* contained a kind of educational treatise that had the purpose to teach people, especially children, how to obtain the 'right' ideas of virtue and vice through the rectification of sensory knowledge with the help of reason.¹¹²⁹ A large part of the treatise dealt with the question of how to regulate the effect of an excess of passions, i.e. of an excessive agitation of the soul through impressions of good and bad that were fired by the senses and imagination.¹¹³⁰ Formey claimed that, since the passions were innate, and therefore – as we might suppose – not bad *per se*, the purpose was not to oppress them but rather to excite or calm their excesses in a way that made them contribute to the human being's perfection and happiness.¹¹³¹ Having said this, the *Morale pratique* was not to be considered as 'practical' (or applied) – as Formey stressed – in the sense that it provided precise instructions on behaviour, i.e. duties to fulfil, but instead it was supposed to show on a general level how the passions could be regulated in the formation of certain behaviour.¹¹³² It seems that Formey considered this part of his *Principes de Morale* to be practical for it dealt with human behaviour in reality (after the Fall) and not, as the *Morale intellectuelle*, with the ideal (pre-lapsarian) state of the reasonable human being, the knowledge of which was, however, supposed to help humans to adjust their post-lapsarian reality.

This distinction between man's goodness and reasonableness in the state of nature and his (complete) depravity after the Fall corresponds to the Augustinian perception of the original sin, which was also inherent in the Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy. Yet, the idea, on which Formey's *Principes de Morale* relied, namely that this depravity could be 'corrected' through the use of reason – which was possible precisely because the human being was not entirely depraved, but kept the roots of his natural understanding and free will – was a modification of the Augustinian dogma.

1126See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, 4.

1127See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XIII-XIV.

1128See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, 2-3.

1129See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, 6.

1130See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, 288.

1131See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, 289.

1132See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XXXII. Besides this stress on the abstractness of his 'practical' treatise, Formey said that he would, however, also make use of the practical examples throughout his treatise.

This modification, as we have mentioned above, was to some extent already implied in Calvinist and Lutheran orthodoxy after the Reformation, but was particularly stressed in Leibniz.¹¹³³ Formey deepened this concept of a 'light version' of the dogma of original sin at the very end of his *Principes de Morale*, in the concluding chapter of the *Morale pratique*. There he made a plea to seek for the purity of the soul. According to him, this purity meant the uprightness ('rectitude') of our actions, that is, the intelligent determination of our will on the basis of the laws of nature¹¹³⁴ and hence it corresponded to the pre-lapsarian state of our soul. In fact, as Formey stressed, the purpose of trying to purify our soul was to return it to its Creator in the same state as we had received it from Him at the Creation, which finally would allow us to enter the afterlife.¹¹³⁵ As Formey explained, although only the 'Souverain Médecin', i.e. God, was capable of restoring this purity to our sick and depraved souls, 'earthly physicians', i.e. philosophers, were also able to cure the soul to a certain extent and to support the divine grace, since both God and men necessarily had to apply the same cure to the soul: they had to enlighten the understanding of the human being before his will could be rectified and his soul purified.¹¹³⁶ From this we can conclude that although Formey (and he explicitly stressed this) recognised the dogma of original sin and the natural weakness of the human being, he still argued that the human being could in a certain sense reverse these effects, simply by knowing the origins of his defects and by wanting to repair them. As we have mentioned above in respect to Formey's concept of philosophy, this rather 'liberal' interpretation of the original sin was the very prerequisite for the human philosophical endeavour, i.e. to understand the reasons behind the observable events. Formey's moral science with its aim to teach the human being the roots of morality¹¹³⁷ is hence an expression of the application of this concept of philosophy to morality. Although this philosophy was partially religiously inspired, Formey's moral science, which represented it, appeared largely as a 'secular' attempt to reach salvation, mostly because it relied on Wolff's rationalist conception of innate morality. As such, Formey's moral science seems to have potentially interfered with religious dogma.

The Place of Religion in a 'Secular' Moral Science

The interference of Formey's conception of moral science with religious dogma apparently caused him some trouble, in the sense, that within his *Principes de Morale* he seems to have been

1133See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Causa Dei asserta per iustitiam eius, cum caeteris eius. Perfectionibus, cunctisque actionibus conciliatam. Sive Synopsis methodica tentaminum Theodicaeae* (Frankfurt, 1719), § 98 (p.23).

1134See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 347.

1135See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 338-9.

1136See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 339-40.

1137Compare also to Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 348.

inconsistent in his estimation of the relation between philosophy and religion. To a large extent, Formey's moral science appears as an example of introducing philosophy into the traditional tasks of religion with the tendency of posing philosophy above religion. The above-mentioned metaphoric description of a collaboration between divine and human (medical) measures of enhancing the human being's moral rectitude shows that Formey attributed a similar efficiency to God and the human being in the purification of the soul. Moreover, since it was the laws of human nature on which the purity of the human soul essentially relied, the 'sole' fulfilment of religious duties did not suffice to gain this purity and with it, happiness. On the contrary, as Formey claimed, religion 'only' had the role of assisting nature in this endeavour and had to found its rules on the laws of nature: 'La Religion cependant ne fait ici que seconder la Nature, & bâtir sur les fondemens inébranlables qu'elle lui fournit. Oui, quoi qu'en pensent les mondains & les faux Philosophes, il y a une obligation naturelle très-étroite à acquérir, à réunir, à conserver, & à augmenter de plus en plus la pureté de l'esprit, celle du coeur, & celle du corps.'¹¹³⁸ Formey's determination of the relation between religion and nature in the effort to become virtuous, obviously corresponded to the argument of the congruency of divine and natural law that we encountered in his sermons on perfection, yet it seems that the slight imbalance in this relation shifted this time in favour of natural law: although in the sermons on perfection Formey had underlined the much greater efficiency of following Jesus' exhortation to become perfect in comparison to natural law, he stressed in the *Principes de Morale* that the natural disposition of the reasonable human being was the ultimate thing that obliged us to act morally. Formey stressed this particularly in respect to the devotional obedience of certain moral duties which he despised since he thought that the only guide of the intelligent human being was his intelligence.¹¹³⁹

This at first sight predominantly philosophical, as opposed to theological, appearance of the *Principes de Morale* seems to have corresponded to Formey's and others' conceptions of the character of modern apologetic writings. It has to be stressed at this point that also the *Principes de Morale*, just as almost each of Formey's writings, also had at its core the aim to safeguard the Christian religion with all its implications for human life, although it did not directly deal with religious dogma. As Luzac, the book's publisher, mentioned, the book was supposed to oppose the so-called 'fausse philosophie', a term that included many different ideas, such as materialism, atheism or immorality, which ultimately all threatened traditional Christian views and was usually directly associated with the French *philosophes*.¹¹⁴⁰ The privileging of natural law that we have noticed so far in Formey's *Principes de Morale* and the limitation of religious dogma that this

¹¹³⁸Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 349-50.

¹¹³⁹See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 352.

¹¹⁴⁰See Luzac to Formey, 18.10.1763, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 356.

entailed was actually in line with the apologetic strategy that Elie Luzac pursued and constantly defended in front of Formey. Luzac's strategy favoured arguments which excluded dogma and Scripture as much as possible if one wanted to confront the contemporary testimonies of impiety and immorality. As we have already remarked above for the genesis of Formey's landmark work *Le Philosophe Chrétien*, the Huguenot refugee and philosopher from Holland constantly tried to shape and influence the works of his authors according to his convictions about how to best combat the dangerous and 'wrong' philosophy of the times, and according to his notions of the contemporary readership's taste. The moral discourses that Formey had assembled in his *Philosophe Chrétien* did not entirely fit with these convictions because of their significant similarity – in form and in content – to religious writing and for this reason had provoked Luzac's complaints. Already in 1754, when the publication of the last volumes of the *Philosophe Chrétien* was still underway, Luzac had tried to persuade Formey to write a moral treatise that could be considered as a 'secular' counter-part to the overtly Christian moral philosophy deployed in the *Philosophe Chrétien*. He suggested that Formey write a *Philosophe Morale* in which he would discuss similar topics as in his *Philosophe Chrétien* but 'sans y faire regner le stile de predicateur'. As an example of the type of essay that Luzac wanted to see assembled in this *Philosophe Morale*, he quoted Formey's own *Système du vrai bonheur* and *Essai sur la perfection* of 1750 and 1751, without however noticing that the latter originally had also been a sermon.¹¹⁴¹ Luzac's suggestion to write such a 'secular' moral philosophical work contained an exposition of his ideas on useful books in times when there was a decline in trust in revealed religion: he claimed that (secular) moral philosophy was as good as revealed religion for inspiring virtue in the people and that therefore it was only opportune to resort to the first if the latter was not to the common reader's taste.¹¹⁴² Almost ten years later, at the time of publishing the *Principes de Morale*, Luzac reiterated his considerations on this issue: In his lengthy discussion on Formey's manuscript for the *Morale Pratique*, he urged Formey to camouflage his theological opinions for two reasons: first, for not enabling unbelievers to criticise moral teachings because they seemed to be deduced from dogma, and second for not alienating those readers who were learned and virtuous but critical concerning books that cited Scripture:

'En bien des endroits vous faites sentir que vous êtes théologien. Il ne faudroit pas cela. Il faudroit que votre livre fût composé de manière que les incredules ne fussent pas engagés à rejeter l'ouvrage. Je connois des personnes d'esprit et de moeurs qui, voyant citer des passages de l'Ecriture sainte, mepriseront un livre. En toute chose il faut, lorsqu'on veut reussir et se

¹¹⁴¹See Luzac to Formey, 12.10.1754, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 257.

¹¹⁴²See Luzac to Formey, 23.10.1754, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 260.

rendre utile, donner quelque chose aux prejugués et saisir les hommes par leur foible.¹¹⁴³

As we can see here, although Luzac seems to have considered the increasingly critical attitude towards Scripture as a misguided prejudice, he was convinced that, in order to sell books, one had to accept this prejudice and to even make use of it. It is, therefore, more than likely that statements by Formey that relegated the role of God and Scripture to a position behind the human being and reason in the task of shaping virtue were very much in Luzac's interest.

The source of this rather secular drift in Formey's *Principes de Morale* as compared to his earlier *Philosophe Chrétien* or his sermons on perfection was however not due to Luzac, but Christian Wolff. As I have already insinuated, the substance of Formey's *Principes de morale* and the argument of the necessity to treat them in two parts seems to have been generally grounded in the Wolffian conception of moral philosophy, as we encountered it previously in the discussion of his German *Ethik*. However, this was not all: Formey's *Principes de Morale* were modelled in particular on a later moral philosophical work by Wolff, which had been published between 1750 and 1753: Wolff's five-volume Latin Ethics, the *Philosophia Moralis sive Ethica*. Formey's intellectual and practical morality as united in his *Principes de Morale*, corresponded to the first two volumes of this monumental treatise: he entirely copied the chapter division of these two volumes, yet seems to have less faithfully translated the content of the different sections, although he did not contradict the general message of Wolff's treatise. Instead, he rather mixed up Wolff's rigid demonstration in paragraphs with descriptions of his own experiences and of other – very often francophone – contemporary authors' ideas. For example, when he discussed the intellectual virtue of profoundness and solidity in science, he made a digression contemplating the usefulness and feasibility of the Parisian *Encyclopédie*, together with an anecdotal account of his personal collaboration in this enterprise, and included long quotes out of his correspondence.¹¹⁴⁴ In the examples by which he illustrated his arguments, he often referred to his correspondents or colleagues at the Academy: for example to Charles Bonnet for the discovery of the reproduction of aphids,¹¹⁴⁵ or to Johann Nathanael Lieberkühn, a physicist at the Academy, for his excellent eyesight.¹¹⁴⁶

Yet, the most significant difference between Wolff's *Ethica* and Formey's *Principes de Morale* lay probably in the different positions that they occupied within the discipline of philosophy according to the perception of their respective authors. Wolff considered the five volumes of his *Ethica* as pieces of applied moral philosophy whereas Formey, as we have shown above, had

1143Luzac to Formey, 18.10.1763, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 364.

1144See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 332-45.

1145See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 412.

1146See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, 24.

conceived of the two parts of his *Principes de Morale* as a mix of theoretical and applied moral philosophy, the latter building upon the former. Unlike Wolff's German *Ethik*, which consisted of both the theoretical foundation of moral philosophy in natural law and a portrait of moral duties, the *Ethica* dealt – to much larger extent – only with the latter part. It aimed to show how the human being had to coordinate his various free actions in respect of natural law. According to the five parts of Wolff's *Ethica*, this included actions of the intellect, actions of the will, as well as actions towards oneself, towards others and towards God. The theory of the natural law of perfection which was the foundation of this applied moral science was instead developed by Wolff in the eight-volume *Jus naturae*, which had appeared previously between 1740 and 1748.¹¹⁴⁷ Formey was familiar with the German *Ethik* and also with *Jus naturae* of which he published an abbreviated French version in 1758,¹¹⁴⁸ and hence theoretically should have been aware of the re-conceptualisation that Wolff undertook in the structure of his moral philosophy in the transition from the German to the Latin writings. Nevertheless it seems that Formey read the *Ethica* in the same way as the *Ethik* and construed its first volume with its depiction of the psychological foundations of behaviour as the theoretical foundation of the volumes to come. As I have said, he explicitly regarded the first part of his *Principes de Morale* as subordinated to the second, whereas Wolff must have seen all the five volumes of his *Ethica* as equal. Moreover, Formey seems to have considered only the last three volumes of Wolff's *Ethica* as purely applied moral science, which might have been the reason why he omitted them in his *Principes de Morale*, which he conceived of as a predominantly theoretical moral philosophy that dispensed with offering concrete duties. It is very likely that Formey's 'misreading' of the structural function of Wolff's Latin *Ethica* was due to the conceptual similarities between Wolff's rationalist natural law-foundation of morality and his explanation of genuinely intellectual virtues that resulted from the perfection of human understanding. In his *Ethik* this 'intermediate step' via intellectual virtues did not exist as such for there it seemed that the perfection of understanding led automatically to moral virtue.

Compared to Wolff's 30-years earlier German *Ethik* and other early moral philosophical writings, which served Formey as a reference in his sermons on perfection, his Latin *Ethica* not only lacked an introduction into natural law as the theoretical basis of morality, but it also contained – perhaps linked to this – slight changes in the conception of the genesis of morality. In the former Wolff had exposed what Michael Albrecht called a 'threefold access to virtue', that means the simultaneous foundation of morality in natural law, natural religion and revealed religion, which, as

1147See Winfried Lenders, "Nachwort Philosophia Moralis Sive Ethica," in *Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, II. Abt.*, ed. Jean Ecole et al., vol. 16 (Hildesheim, 1973), XI-XII.

1148Formey, *Principes du droit de la nature et des gens. Extrait du grand ouvrage latin de Mr. de Wolff*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1758).

we have seen, had also been adopted by Formey in his sermons on perfection with a particular focus on the revealed laws.¹¹⁴⁹ Instead, as Albrecht also claimed, Wolff seems to have renounced this threefold foundation of morality over the course of his engagement with moral philosophy, in the sense that he excluded reflections on Christian virtue from his account. In the preface to the second volume of his *Ethica* Wolff then also stated explicitly that he did not want to make claims about theological interpretations of morality since he had an exclusively philosophical approach which included only those truths that were deducible from natural reason and experience as opposed to the truths of Revelation. Instead, he left it to theologians to draw conclusions from these truths.¹¹⁵⁰ This deliberate exclusion of aspects of theology and faith from Wolff's Latin *Ethica* seems to have corresponded to his perception of moral philosophy as a science that relied on experience and followed logical demonstrations, which was new in the *Ethica*¹¹⁵¹ and which, as we will see below, also shaped Formey's view on his *Principes de Morale* beyond the question of the role of religion in morality. Moreover, through the distinction between intellectual and moral virtues which had not yet been present in his German *Ethik*, the role of reason in moral philosophy appeared to be much more dominant as compared to natural and revealed religion's influence on it.

During Wolff's moral philosophical oeuvre, his exclusion of theological considerations together with his endeavour to be scientific evolved and it is in this light that we have to read Formey's above-mentioned relegation of God's role and dogma in the achievement of virtue, that supposedly also fitted very well with Luzac's convictions as the publisher of the *Principes*. The above-mentioned example in which Formey relegated God to the position of the human being's assistant in the endeavour to purify the human soul, is definitely an outstanding example of a close compliance to the standards of Wolff's *Ethica* because Formey diminished the role of religion instead of only excluding it from the discussion. In general, Formey's *Principes de Morale* avoid discussing religion and Christian dogma, just as Wolff had done himself. However, this avoidance implied that natural religion and Revelation also played a role in the genesis of morality outside of its philosophical examination. This is best depicted by one of Formey's claims in the introduction to the *Morale Pratique* where he underlined that the explicitly religious virtue, that was based on the

1149See Albrecht, "Die Tugend und die Chinesen," 242-3. Albrecht analysed the theory of the threefold virtue here in respect to Wolff's *Oratio de Sinarum philosophia practica* of 1721, yet he later claimed that it was also present in Wolff's German *Ethik* (p. 259, n. 32).

1150See Christian Wolff, *Philosophia Moralis sive Ethica, methodo scientifica pertractata. Pars secunda, in qua agitur de Voluntate et Noluntate, una cum appetitu sensitivo et aversatione sensitiva perficienda et emendanda* [1751], ed. Jean École, Joseph Ehrefried Hofmann, Marcel Thomann, and Hans Werner Arndt. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 2, vol. 13 (Hildesheim, 1970), Praefatio (without pagination).

1151See Christian Wolff, *Philosophia Moralis sive Ethica, methodo scientifica pertractata. Pars prima, in qua agitur de Intellectu et Facultatibus ceteris cognoscendi in ministerium ejus perficiendis, atque virtutibus intellectualibus* [1750], ed. Jean École, Joseph Ehrefried Hofmann, Marcel Thomann, and Hans Werner Arndt. Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, section 2, vol. 12 (Hildesheim, 1970), §4.

human being's enlightenment through Revelation was only one step away from the natural virtue that emerged out of the use of our natural reason.¹¹⁵² This statement conveys a conception of order in which Christian virtue came after natural virtue.

Yet, it seems that Formey, in his position as a pastor and Christian philosopher, was not able to accept the concept of a simple sequence of natural morality and Christian morality and the entire exclusion of theological considerations in his moral philosophical treatise as Wolff had stipulated. In his *Principes de Morale*, Formey structured his argument in a similar manner to his sermons on perfection: he used the conclusive chapter to introduce revealed religion into his narrative and to likewise re-conceptualise its relation to natural law. Deviating significantly from Wolff's *Ethica*, Formey introduced God and Revelation into the discussion on the purification of the soul by which he concluded his treatise. Unlike Wolff, Formey linked the necessity of purifying one's soul to the purpose of determining one's place in the afterlife.¹¹⁵³ He it made clear that the human being was to be rewarded or punished according to his actions both in natural law and by God; yet the problem was, as Formey put it, that in nature the human being could ignore punishments for his immoral actions. Instead, the divine judge did not ignore anything His creatures did.¹¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Formey underlined that the prospect of the afterlife and the task of purifying one's soul for it had a positive effect on the present life, in the sense that it created the same, or even stronger, pleasant feelings as immoral pleasures caused.¹¹⁵⁵ These considerations made him conclude that actually, it was religion which was supposed to incite people to virtuous behaviour. However, apparently not wanting to reverse everything he had said about naturally inspired morality throughout his whole treatise, Formey immediately added that it was the teachings of (natural) morality that prompted the human being to follow revealed teachings, just as much as revealed religion provided the most efficient motives to pursue morality.¹¹⁵⁶ Formey's ambition in the conclusive chapter of his *Principes de Morale* was thus an attempt to maintain Wolff's largely secular claims while giving them an entirely religious framework.

Yet there is one point in this conclusive chapter where Formey, animated by the aim to safeguard traditional dogma, seems to have intervened in Wolff's demonstration and rectified an argument. In the last chapter of the original, Wolff had claimed that a virtuous action that resulted from the human being's obedience to any kind of positive law – the fear of pain or the hope of a gain – did not lead to the purity of the soul, and hence could not be considered as really virtuous.¹¹⁵⁷

1152See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XXII.

1153See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 339.

1154See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 346.

1155See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 355.

1156See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 356.

1157See Wolff, *Ethica, Pars secunda*, §611-§612.

Wolff himself did not develop this further, and particularly not in respect to religion because of his abstention of theological discussions in his work. Yet, the logical consequence of this statement would have also been that the divine laws – positive laws after all – did not lead to the purity of the soul. On the contrary, if one believed in what the Scriptures said, namely that one should work for one's salvation with fear and shivering, it was difficult to then believe that moral behaviour was only real if it resulted from a natural innate impetus. Formey seems to have tried to circumvent this problem by pointing out the difference between human positive law and divine positive law: the first assumed that the human being would do everything that the law prohibited if it did not exist, whereas the latter assumed that the human being would obey God's laws even if there were no consequences for his disobedience, because he was convinced of the beauty of virtue and had the desire to please God.¹¹⁵⁸ Besides this, Formey claimed that although the fear of divine punishment was not the determining motive for a moral action, it was still a good additional means to guide the Christian soul to salvation. This was however not comparable with a non-Christian 'mercenary' who followed the precepts of his superior.¹¹⁵⁹ The introduction of theological concerns in Wolff's explicitly non-theological moral philosophy – with all the disruptive effects to the coherency of Formey's arguments that it caused – is indicative of Formey's conception of moral philosophical writings: compared to Wolff, these writings more strictly pursued the goal to fight the tendencies in society to neglect or even contradict the power of Christianity as a guiding principle of human behaviour. Hence, we might say that Formey expressed the apologetic aims, which always were implicit in moral philosophical treatises of the time, much more explicitly than Wolff had done.

In comparison to Wolff's and to Luzac's standpoints, Formey's more conservative stand on the actual presence of theological considerations and reference to dogma in writings with implicit apologetic purposes can already be observed prior to the *Principes de Morale*, more precisely in the way that he reacted to a similar work by his Genevan correspondent and disciple of Jean-Alphonse Turretini, Jacob Vernet, who was generally considered as representing a theological position in opposition to Calvinist orthodoxy. Formey encountered the incomprehension of his Genevan counterpart since he claimed the necessity of maintaining the explanation of dogma, even in predominantly non-theological, popular writings. Vernet's astonishment concerning Formey's position went as far as to question his role as a Christian philosopher. In 1754 Vernet had published an *Instruction chrétienne* in five volumes, which was a kind of catechism that exposed in its first part natural theological and Christian teachings on God, religion and certain doctrines, and in its second part became an instruction into morals. Formey had reviewed it in 1756 in his *Nouvelle*

1158See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 360.

1159See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 361.

Bibliothèque Germanique, claiming that it had the defect of over-simplifying or omitting Christian dogma for the sake of popular accessibility. Formey raised the concern that this neglect of religious content would support all those who were against religion for a long time.¹¹⁶⁰ He particularly stressed the danger that emanated from the habit of declaring (secular) morality as the most essential aspect of a religious life while relegating dogma to a place outside of the human being's reach:

'Les Dogmes ont été proposés comme des objets supérieurs à nos connoissances, qui faisoient une partie isolée de la Religion, rélatiue à Dieu plutôt qu'à l'Homme: & l'on a réservé le nom *d'essentiel* pour la Morale & les Devoirs, comme si le Chrétien pouvoit *vivre sobrement, justement, & religieusement*, sans avoir continuellement devant les yeux cette grace salutaire qui lui est clairement apparue.'¹¹⁶¹

This critical remark is completely in line with what Formey did a few years later when he added a theological framework to Wolff's 'secular' discussion on the purity of the soul. As he stressed in his review on Vernet, the reason why he insisted on the need to maintain dogma in the presentation of religious content (religious morality included) was that he was scared that religion could otherwise become an empty concept unable to provide salvation to human souls.¹¹⁶²

Vernet considered these statements by Formey as an accusation of heterodoxy against which he defended himself strongly. First of all, he stressed that his work was not a theological treatise but a book of instruction and edification for the use of families, and hence could do without all the complex aspects and scholastic interpretations of religion. On the contrary, in Vernet's view, his work did religion a favour, as for a long time it had been 'disfigured' by the subtleties and scholastic language that were spread by certain theologians.¹¹⁶³ He maintained the opposite position to Formey concerning the apologetic function of his book, and stressed that it was rather the additions to Christianity made throughout the centuries by theologians that did harm to Christianity's original simplicity, and provided a point of attack to all unbelievers and critics of religion. This was why, according to him, these logically unsustainable and thus harmful dogmas – he cited original sin and the Trinity – had to be removed from Christian doctrine; yet not in a loud or offensive way but softly, without anybody notice their removal, in order to not create the image of a quarrelling Church which would be as harmful to religion as the superfluous dogmas themselves.¹¹⁶⁴ Vernet's reaction to Formey conveys the certain surprise that he felt when faced with his correspondent's

1160See [Formey], "Article IX. Instruction Chrétienne [...]," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* 18 (Janvier, Février, Mars 1756), 154.

1161[Formey], "Article IX. Instruction Chrétienne[...]," 154-5.

1162See [Formey], "Article IX. Instruction Chrétienne[...]," 155.

1163See Vernet to Formey, 13.3.1757, *Lettres de Genève*, 456.

1164See Vernet to Formey, 2.6.1757, *Lettres de Genève*, 463-4. Compare to Vernet to Formey, 3.5.1758, *Lettres de Genève*, 477.

criticism: it seems that Formey was the last person from whom he had expected the accusation of not being orthodox enough, in the sense that this accusation did not correspond to the image he had of Formey as – and he literally claimed it – a Christian philosopher.¹¹⁶⁵ Vernet's reaction not only tells us something about his perception of the Christian philosopher, who he apparently regarded as an apologetist of religion who was ready to discard the obscurities of orthodoxy (see chapter 5), but it also gives an impression of the conflicts inside the European community of eighteenth-century liberal Calvinists, concerning the question of how to best safeguard religion without giving up its essence.¹¹⁶⁶ It is clear that Formey and Vernet, at least from the mid-1750s, had different answers to this question. Although Formey publicly withdrew his accusation of heterodoxy against Vernet, he kept and underlined his position in respect to apologetics in general and the relation between moral philosophy and Christian dogma in particular. He rejected the removal of any dogma from moral philosophy since, according to him, this would cause morals to degenerate to a mere 'spéculation philosophique' that was not strong enough to oppose the increasing depravity of society.¹¹⁶⁷ Having singled out the position that Formey defended in the late 1750s, the particular situation of his *Principes de Morale* in the beginning of the 1760s becomes clearer: referring to divine salvation as the highest motive of human morality was necessary for Formey in order to safeguard both morality itself and faith. Still, I have tried to show that this necessity clashed in some points with the Wolffian template of a rationalist moral science, which Formey had chosen for his moral philosophy.

The Principes de Morale between Scientific Treatise and Popular Instruction

This clash between a Wolffian kind of rationalist and 'secular' moral philosophy, and Formey's rather orthodox ideas on the function of revealed religion for morality was not the only one that characterised his *Principes de Morale*. Another line of tension can be found in the concept of the book as a scientific treatise on the one hand, and as popular instruction on the other. Formey perceived that his *Principes de Morale* had a particular 'scientific' character which he opposed to less 'scientific' popular moral instructions. This was emphasised by the fact that he dedicated the first part of the *Principes*, his *Morale intellectuelle*, to the presidents, directors and members of all the academies and learned societies to which he was affiliated, stressing the difference between his present work and his previous ones: according to him, his previous works were less 'philosophical',

¹¹⁶⁵See Vernet to Formey, 13.3.1757, *Lettres de Genève*, 456.

¹¹⁶⁶A position similar to Vernet's was defended by the Genevan pastor Jean Peschier, see Peschier to Formey, 7.3.1757, *Lettres de Genève*, 454.

¹¹⁶⁷See [Formey], "Article VII. Oratio dicta à Jacobo Verneti....," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* 21 (Juillet, Août, Septembre 1757), 99.

but rather only 'des applications de la Logique à la Morale & à la vie commune'. Instead, he claimed that the present work that he dedicated to the academicians was of a higher level.¹¹⁶⁸ A few pages later, in the introduction to the *Morale intellectuelle*, Formey revealed what he meant by a moral philosophy 'on a high level': it was a solid and real science instead of a pile of confusing and vague notions and popular opinions.¹¹⁶⁹ He underlined this claim by outlining the system of different interdependent philosophical disciplines that formed the basis of moral notions: ontology, psychology, natural theology, cosmology, universal practical philosophy and natural law.¹¹⁷⁰ Formey adopted this claim for moral philosophy's systematic foundation from Wolff who had apparently already at the very beginning of his academic career discovered the need for a more elaborate approach to moral philosophy and had subsequently developed his entire philosophical system with the purpose of providing such a moral philosophy.¹¹⁷¹ In his *Principes de Morale*, Formey referred to this Wolffian-inspired systematic, 'philosophical' character of moral science in order to discredit the 'less philosophical' subordinate authors who, in his view, either treated morality too generally or only focused on very particular aspects of it.¹¹⁷² Moreover, although he did not refer to one of his own previous writings specifically, it seems that Formey meant his popular writings when he was referring to his own 'lower', less 'scientific' writings in the dedication of his *Principes de Morale*, that means his sermons and his moral discourses, predominantly his *Philosophe Chrétien*.

Besides this distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical moral philosophy based on the contrast between systematicity and confusion, Formey also seems to have conceived of a division in respect to moral philosophy's directiveness. The conception of natural law's superiority prevailed in the *Principes de Morale* and entailed a concept of the human being's personal responsibility for his behaviour, which in turn was reflected in the book's presentation as a manual for self-instruction: as Formey claimed, the notion of the connection between an adequate use of our intellectual faculties and our virtue – a notion taught in his book – served as a touchstone with the help of which the individual was able to judge his own degree of morality.¹¹⁷³ With this emphasis on instruction as self-instruction Formey marked an opposition to directive (and usually at the same time popular) moral philosophies. This opposition seems to have been the drive of Formey's endeavour since he denounced all means that curtailed an individual's personal responsibility for his

1168 See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, V-VI.

1169 See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XXIII.

1170 See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XIX-XXI.

1171 See Lenders, "Nachwort," II-III; Klara Joesten, *Christian Wolffs Grundlegung der praktischen Philosophie*. (Leipzig: Meiner, 1931), IV-V; Clemens Schwaiger, *Das Problem des Glücks im Denken Christian Wolffs: eine quellen-, begriffs- und entwicklungsgeschichtliche Studie zu Schlüsselbegriffen seiner Ethik* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995), 24. Compare also to Wolff, *Ethica, Pars prima*, §4.

1172 See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XXI.

1173 See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XVII.

own morality, like for example the entire commitment to the guidance of others.

With this denunciation of directive moral philosophy and his emphasis of (autonomous) natural morality, Formey aimed to criticise an apparently rather big and diversified group of authors: in the previously quoted section he complained about the 'mondains' and 'faux Philosophes' who denied the human being's natural obligation to morality (see above, p. 307). He ascribed such a term to authors, freethinkers and *philosophes* who promoted immoral behaviour and perhaps even irreligion because they recognised no obligation to act morally at all – Formey's usual target of criticism. However, he also criticised the more orthodox authors in a similarly fierce way, although the criticism he addressed to them had a different origin: while he criticised *philosophes* and freethinkers for denying natural obligation, he criticised the more orthodox people for simply ignoring it. This was the reason why in more orthodox discourses positive laws of behaviour were promoted:

'Où sont ceux qui savent en quoi consiste la rectitude de ces actions? Où sont ceux même qui se soucient de le savoir? Ou plutôt ne craint on pas un trop grand degré de lumière, de peur qu'il ne gêne, & n'empêche de suivre librement ses penchans desordonnés, ses habitudes vicieuses! Les Moralistes dans leurs Ecrits les plus recherchés, les Prédicateurs dans leurs sermons les plus courus, ne sont après tout que *la voix de celui qui crie au desert*, puisqu'on les lit, on les écoute, sans devenir meilleur.'¹¹⁷⁴

This was a rather severe criticism against more orthodox discourses of morality and religion which were often paired with a rejection of science. Moreover, Formey's criticism of these orthodox moral discourses deserves our attention for his use of the biblical quote John, 1:23: in the Bible, the voice of the one who cries in the wilderness is the voice of John the Baptist who announces the arrival of the Messiah. By associating preachers and moralists with John the Baptist, Formey hence seems not have wanted to doubt the righteousness and goodness of the content and purpose of their moral instructions, yet instead he criticised the form in which they were transmitted to the people, which in his view impeded the positive effect that these moral laws could have on the believers. The missing effect of moral instruction, no matter of the sort, was also reflected in Formey's general criticism of the recipients of moral instruction, i.e. those who out of laziness ignored their natural duty or entirely entrusted their personal morality and happiness to others: Formey did not preclude that these people could be happy due to the ease of such a practice, but he made it clear that the morality that they attained by this was only illusionary¹¹⁷⁵ or that they, in the case of blindly following others, performed misguided duties.¹¹⁷⁶

1174Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 347.

1175See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 351.

1176See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 352.

However, Formey's emphasis on the scientific character of his *Principes de Morale* and the criticism of less systematic and more directive moral philosophical writings, had a significant flip side that he was not able to ignore, given his self-perception as a useful contributor to the good of society at large: it excluded a majority of people, namely those who had a lower degree of education and/or cognitive faculties, like the members of his congregation, ordinary provincial ministers, and women. It was with this part of the reading public that he had had so much success with previously in his *Philosophe Chrétien* and his sermons. This might be why Formey after all seems to not have been able to entirely ignore this part of his audience, although he had stressed in his dedication to the *Morale intellectuelle* the difference between his new work and his other more popular ones. Therefore he still tried in the introduction to his *Morale intellectuelle*, to create a bridge between the scientific moral philosophy as a form of self-instruction, and the simple moral rules that were accessible to everybody. First and foremost, Formey underlined the naturally complicated character of moral philosophy, which was due to its foundation in the other sciences and claimed that it required some effort and dedication from the one who wanted to acquire it.¹¹⁷⁷ In his view – and in this he followed Wolff's example – it did not suffice to have good intentions in morality, for this would lead to effects that were contrary to the human destiny, and hence only to an apparent instead of real virtue.¹¹⁷⁸ In contrast, Formey also admitted that not everybody was capable of this effort, i.e. to self-instruct himself in morality, and that this was also not necessary because God had created human beings who possessed superior intellectual faculties and who, for this reason, were obliged to not only make use of these faculties for themselves and to become a role model of conduct for others, but also to instruct others as much as possible in a reasonable morality via public discourses and writings.¹¹⁷⁹ In reference to the simple but in his eyes, wrong and scandalous moral teachings of the Casuists, Formey claimed that there was indeed a need for a 'Morale du peuple', but not at all costs.¹¹⁸⁰ From all this, it emerges that Formey most likely perceived of his *Principes de Morale* as a theoretical basis or even manual for a popular moral instruction, instead of as a work that was directly directed to the people. This is underlined by the fact that he praised his moral philosophy for providing general directions necessary for particular moral duties,¹¹⁸¹ and that he directed it to all those who were supposed to 'watch over the morals of the people', i.e. pastors, fathers, professors, judges.¹¹⁸² Formey hence tried to achieve a compromise between his 'scientific' work of theoretical

1177See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XXIII-XXIV. Compare also to *Morale pratique*, vol. 2, 351, 352 and 354.

1178See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XV-XVI. Compare also to Wolff, *Ethica, Pars prima*, §2.

1179See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XXV-XXVI.

1180See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XXVII-XXVIII.

1181See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XXVIII.

1182See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 1, XXX.

moral principles and popular works of moral duties by introducing the role of an intermediary that was able to mediate the theoretical content to ordinary people. However, his book was still presented in a rather ambiguous nature to his targeted audience, as it was difficult to appeal to a more educated and a popular public at the same time.

It seems that this difficulty was also reflected in the public reception of Formey's *Principes de Morale* which seemed to betray the rather mediocre success of the book. As Formey's reflections in the introduction of the *Morale pratique* – which appeared three years later – suggest, his moral philosophy had received criticism from both sides, the (specialised) philosophers and the ordinary reader. In this introduction, he first reported that his *Morale intellectuelle* had received criticism for not being accessible to all kinds of readers, to which he replied with the argument of philosophy's systematic character, in which one sub-discipline relied on the other. This required the reader to have a certain previous knowledge of moral philosophy, otherwise the moral treatise would be stuffed with numerous definitions and explications of the notions on which it relied.¹¹⁸³ Moreover, in respect to the confusing wording of the text, for which Formey had presumably been criticised, he simply stated that his work was not directed to 'superficial' or 'incapable' readers.¹¹⁸⁴ In his view, thanks to the human being's natural reasonableness, his work was comprehensible to the attentive reader who had the intention to morally improve.¹¹⁸⁵

Besides these remarks concerning the partial inadequateness of Formey's moral science for an ordinary audience, the introduction of the *Morale pratique* also – and even more abundantly – provides evidence of the opposite criticism, i.e. that Formey's *Morale intellectuelle* was not theoretical/ 'scientific' enough. This criticism was voiced as a lack of an analytical and thoroughly logical procedure which the denomination 'Principes' would have required.¹¹⁸⁶ Formey had received this complaint from at least two of his correspondents: the Genevan natural philosopher Charles Bonnet, and his publisher Elie Luzac. The first bemoaned in April 1763 that Formey's work contained many digressions from a logical demonstration. According to Bonnet, this work did not entirely deserve to be called 'Principes' since it was not entirely 'une suite de propositions enchaînées les une aux autres ou qui dérivent les unes des autres comme par une generation naturelle.'¹¹⁸⁷ Luzac's criticism, although mainly based on the manuscript of the *Morale pratique*, went in the same direction, in the sense that he believed that the work was not theoretical enough: he claimed to have found too many examples in Formey's work, and too few principles from which

1183See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XII-XIII.

1184See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XV.

1185See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XVIII.

1186See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XIX.

1187Bonnet to Formey, 19.4.1763, *Lettres de Genève*, 597.

these examples should preferably be deduced.¹¹⁸⁸ Luzac's criticism was joined with concrete suggestions for improvement in order to enhance the work's coherence, which Formey seems to have adapted: several of the principles to be found in the *Morale pratique* had been formulated and put in place by Luzac.¹¹⁸⁹ To Bonnet's criticism in private Formey answered with resignation, agreeing that his *Morale intellectuelle* was an accumulation of thoughts, rather than an analysis, and he announced that his *Morale pratique* would be even worse in this respect,¹¹⁹⁰ whereas by the time he wrote his introduction to the *Morale Pratique* he argued in his own defence. There he argued that through a too theoretical approach he would have lost the readers that he wanted to predominantly reach and instead, he would have reached only the few philosophers who were able to make such a criticism.¹¹⁹¹ In contrast to the definition of principles communicated to him by Bonnet, Formey declared in his introduction that he himself used so-called 'principes raisonnés', which were purposefully made for moral science as they persuaded and touched the reader, while at the same time enlightening and convincing him. For this reason, these principles should not only explain certain ideas but also convey the necessary motives for adopting these ideas; this is why they sometimes diverged from the line of a thorough deduction.¹¹⁹² Publicly, Formey hence definitely made an effort to maintain the balancing act in which he had engaged by claiming a scientific character for his moral philosophy while at the same time trying to live up to his role as a popular instructor. In private, however, he seems to have been aware of the tensions that this entailed for the structure and content of his work. Here again, as for the apparent incoherence of Formey's work in respect to the role of religion in moral philosophy, the cause of this tension seems to have resided in the adoption of Wolff's strictly systematic and almost secular philosophy. Although Wolff conceived of his as an applied philosophy it was directed at an academic context, and thus was extremely theoretical and as such could hardly serve Formey's purpose of providing a popular instruction.

The Principes de Morale as a Reply to the Challenge of Scientific Progress

Besides Formey's creative reception of Wolff's *Ethica*, the hybrid position of the *Principes de Morale*, which bridged the gap between religion and philosophy as well as between a scientific treatise and a popular instruction, was also due to the particular biographical and cultural situation of the mid-Eighteenth Century. First, the *Principes de Morale* have to be seen as an expression of

1188See Luzac to Formey, 18.10.1763, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 357.

1189See for example the suggestions made by Luzac to Formey, 18.10.1763, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 358 and 361.

Compare to Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, 6.

1190See Formey to Bonnet, 20.6.1763, *Lettres de Genève*, 611.

1191See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XIX.

1192See Formey, *Morale pratique*, vol. 1, XX-XXI.

Formey's self-perception at a particular stage of his career, when he decided to publish such a comprehensive treatise. In the 1760s he seems to have considered that he had arrived in a position of scientific authority, which emerged from his success as an author (due to which he was constantly involved in the European learned debates), and from his function as the Academy's secretary (which entailed the significant increase of his European correspondence). Formey seems to have felt the need to materialise this self-perception as a 'man of science' and professional philosopher by publishing substantial 'scientific' as opposed to popular works. This is at least what the structure and presentation of some of his publications of this time suggest. A good example for this was Formey's two-volume *Mélanges philosophiques* in 1754, in which he re-issued about 20 of his philosophical treatises, on subjects ranging from ontology, natural theology, psychology and morals, which to a large extent he had originally presented at the Academy (such as, the two treatises on the existence of God, the *Réflexions sur la liberté* and his thoughts on dreams and sleep). In its preface Formey embedded his collection in a purely scientific context: Formey drew the picture of the chaos of the sciences and claimed – as he did so often in his academic treatises – the need to trace all knowledge back to the fundamental science of metaphysics, or more precisely ontology, in order to remedy this chaos. Unlike his popular, moral philosophical writings, which primarily referred to the apology of religion and morals, Formey's purpose with the *Mélanges philosophiques* was to conserve a stable and systematic science that was modelled on Wolff's philosophy.¹¹⁹³ These different purposes were also reflected in the potential audience at which books like the *Mélanges Philosophiques* were directed as opposed to Formey's various popular moral writings. As Luzac, who published both the *Philosophe Chrétien* and the *Mélanges philosophiques*, noticed, the former was read by a much larger group of people, 'personnes lettrées et non lettrées', whereas the second was probably read by fewer people, namely those who liked 'ouvrages d'un ordre plus approfondi'.¹¹⁹⁴

Similar observations in respect to the immediate purpose and targeted audience can be made for Formey's *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie*, which he published in 1760 and hence not long before his *Principes de Morale*. This was a short history of philosophy from the Creation to the present day, which was based on the monumental Latin history of philosophy by Johann Jakob Brucker, a Protestant theologian and historian from Augsburg.¹¹⁹⁵ This book was also not directed to the common reader but instead addressed a public of professional academics and experts, in

1193 See Formey, *Mélanges Philosophiques*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1754), III-V.

1194 See Luzac to Formey, 8.9.1753, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 234.

1195 Formey, *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie*. Johann Jakob Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae a mundi incunabulis ad nostram usque aetatem deducta*, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1742-44). It is very likely that Formey's abbreviation was based on the abbreviation that Brucker himself had published of his work in 1747, the *Institutiones historiae philosophicae*.

universities and learned societies which Formey expressed by dedicating it to the directors of the four classes of the Berlin Academy. Actually, the different perceptions that Formey had of such writings as the *Philosophe Chrétien* on the one hand and the *Mélanges Philosophiques*, the *Histoire abrégée* and the *Principes de Morale* (which, as we have seen, were also dedicated to learned societies) on the other, cannot be more evident than in his dedications: the former were very often dedicated to (noble) women whom he praised for their function as role models of good conduct, whereas the latter addressed men who stood out for their quality as savant and excellent philosophers.¹¹⁹⁶ In accordance with the audience it targeted, the *Histoire abrégée* was, as I have already explained in chapter one, embedded into a eulogy of philosophy as a science, more precisely the unique science which provided a 'solid and intelligible explication of everything that is and that can be'.¹¹⁹⁷ The ultimate purpose of practising this science (and of being instructed in its good and bad practice in the past), however, was not that much different than that of Formey's more popular moral philosophical writings: the scientific practice of philosophy was intended to help the human being to discover his natural moral duties and eventually lead to his happiness.¹¹⁹⁸ More precisely, in the introduction to his philosophical history, Formey portrayed philosophy as the faculty of human understanding cast into a scientific discipline. Basically, in his account of philosophy that was the basis of his *Histoire abrégée de la Philosophie*, he already outlined the same concept of the correlation of the perfection of knowledge and the perfection of morality as underlay his *Principes de Morale*. Consequently it is not surprising that Formey portrayed his *Principes de Morale* as a 'scientific' moral philosophy, as we have seen, and by this indirectly referred back to the *Histoire abrégée* and the *Mélanges philosophiques*, which represented not only the concept of a 'scientific', i.e. thorough and theoretical, philosophy, but also the self-perception of Formey as a practitioner of such a science. This self-perception resonated in most of Formey's academic treatises that we have analysed so far, yet his conscious reassembling of these writings and the establishment of comprehensive, manual-like publications in (moral) philosophy during the 1750s and 1760s suggest that he felt this part of his role particularly strongly, which as I argue was due to the progress of his career.

The 'external' reason for this strong self-perception as a promoter of scientific philosophy and the direct stimulus of Formey's *Principes de Morale* seems to have been the debate on the relation between scientific progress and the state of morality in eighteenth-century society, which had been sparked by Rousseau's *Premier Discours*. Rousseau's answer to the 1749 prize question of the Academy of Dijon, which asked, whether or not the development of the sciences had

1196 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, VI.

1197 Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 9-10.

1198 See Formey, *Histoire abrégée*, 13.

contributed to the purification of morals, rendered the Genevan philosopher, *encyclopédiste* and friend of Diderot instantly famous. Rousseau's treatise was the first effective and largely discussed challenge to the positivist view on the scientific progress that had determined seventeenth- and eighteenth-century culture. Rousseau's essential assumption, which he also exposed in all his subsequent works, was that man was only morally good in his natural state and that his increasing depravity in society corresponded with the progress of the sciences and the arts. As a consequence Rousseau defended the argument that the progress of the sciences had caused a moral decline, an argument that the majority of his contemporaries in France and Germany – Formey included – conceived of as paradoxical, in the sense that it was contrary to the common opinion of the utility of scientific progress and the excitement of a steady human enlightenment.¹¹⁹⁹ The public debate that this sparked was so immense that in 1753 a German publisher issued a two-volume *Récueil de toutes les pieces qui ont été publiées à l'occasion du discours de M. J.J. Rousseau* which contained some of the more famous objections to Rousseau like those by the Polish King Stanislaus Leszczyński and Friedrich Melchior Baron von Grimm as well as Rousseau's replies to them.¹²⁰⁰ Moreover Rousseau's *Premier Discours* contained likewise a harsh criticism of all the – as he called them – depraved men of letters and philosophers who had destroyed the foundations of faith and virtue for the sake of personal fame,¹²⁰¹ which could have easily been read as an accusation against Voltaire, Diderot and others by writers like Formey, who campaigned against the immorality of the *philosophes*.¹²⁰²

Formey, as learned journalist also ranged among the immediate reviewers of Rousseau's *Premier Discours* who condemned Rousseau's attack on the sciences and the arts, while however acknowledging at the same time the depravity of the philosophers that Rousseau cited, who – as we have seen already – appeared frequently in Formey's writings as examples of 'dangerous authors'. Formey's first reaction in the *Bibliothèque Impartiale* was then to doubt the seriousness of

1199 See Michèle Crogiez, "Paradoxe," in *Dictionnaire de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. Raymond Trousson and Frédéric Eigeldinger (Paris, 1996), 683. For the history of the reception see Raymond Trousson, *Jean Jacques Rousseau jugé par ses contemporains. Du "Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts" aux "Confessions"* (Paris, 2000); Jacques Mounier, "La réception de J. J. Rousseau en Allemagne au XVIIIe siècle," in *Aufklärungen. Frankreich und Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gerhard Sauder and Jürgen Schlobach, vol. 1 (Heidelberg, 1985), 167–79 and Ludwig Tente, *Die Polemik um den Ersten Discours von Rousseau in Frankreich und Deutschland*, 3 vols. (Kiel, 1974).

1200 *Récueil de toutes les pieces qui ont été publiées à l'occasion du discours de M. J.J. Rousseau. Sur cette question proposée par L'Académie de Dijon pour le Prix de L'année 1750. Si le Rétablissement des Sciences & des Arts a contribué à épurer les Mœurs*, 2 vols. (Gotha, 1753). Formey reviewed this anthology in "Article XV. Recueil de toutes les Pièces [...]," *Nouvelle Bibliothèque Germanique* 13 (Juillet-Septembre 1753), 213–20.

1201 See Tom Furniss, "Rousseau: Enlightened Critic of the Enlightenment?," in *The Enlightenment World*, ed. Martin Fitzpatrick et al. (New York, 2004), 600.

1202 Rousseau's actual split from the circle of Parisian *philosophes* only happened in 1758 (see Robert Wokler, *Rousseau* (Oxford, 1995), 10) yet they already did not share his opinion on the destructive affect of the sciences in 1750.

Rousseau's argument, even though he likewise endorsed Rousseau's criticism of the behaviour of contemporary learned men.¹²⁰³ However, he quickly claimed that the relatively widespread immorality of the learned men was not due to the sciences themselves but to those individuals' abuse of them.¹²⁰⁴ Formey carried on this opinion and elaborated it in his second, much more extensive, engagement with the problem raised by Rousseau's *Premier Discours*. In his *Examen philosophique de la liaison réelle qu'il y a entre les sciences et les moeurs*, which he presented at the Academy's public assembly in June 1754, Formey sought to solve the conundrum that Rousseau's *Premier Discours* had posed: how to reconcile the obvious depravity among a large group of people – particularly of learned men – and the assumption of an intrinsic link between truth and virtue.¹²⁰⁵ At first sight, Formey's answer to this problem essentially consisted in simply cutting through this causal relation between sciences and morals: he claimed that the sciences had neither a good nor a bad effect on moral behaviour, or at least their influence was so little that it was not worth talking about it.¹²⁰⁶ In his view, every human being was born with the seeds of his particular moral behaviour and knowledge and sciences were neither able to incite nor to change these seeds; instead, the sciences could only help the natural dispositions to manifest themselves in behaviour.¹²⁰⁷ This is why the degree of knowledge did not change anything in whether the individual was virtuous or depraved.¹²⁰⁸

The origin of Formey's argument in the *Examen philosophique* seems at first glance unclear for it apparently did not fit with his moral philosophical premises, yet a closer look reveals that the *Examen philosophique* was as much inspired by Wolffian philosophy as the *Principes de Morale* and that these two writings complemented each other in their engagement with Rousseau's criticism of civilisation. In his *Examen philosophique*, Formey himself underlined the peculiarity of his argument as compared to the answers that Rousseau's *Premier Discours* had encountered so far from its critics, which almost all relied on the assumption of a mutual influence between morals and sciences.¹²⁰⁹ Instead, as Alexander Schmidt noticed, Formey's argument was of a rather sceptical nature and for this reason, it not only seemed peculiar for Rousseau's critics, but it also seemed rather alien in respect to the largely anti-sceptic and Christian position on morality, which scholars

1203See [Formey], "Article VI. Discours, qui a remporté le prix de l'Académie de Dijon [...]" *Bibliothèque Impartiale* 3, no. 1 (Janvier et Février 1751), 250-1; compare to 253 where Formey suggests that Rousseau had established his argument only to attract the attention of the Academy.

1204See [Formey], "Article VI," 251.

1205See [Formey], "Article VI," 251.

1206See Formey, "Examen philosophique de la liaison réelle qu'il y a entre les sciences et les moeurs," *Histoire de l'Académie* 1753 (Berlin, 1755), 398.

1207See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 402; compare to 411 where he expressed this through a metaphor.

1208See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 403.

1209See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 397-8.

usually assume for Formey.¹²¹⁰ In fact, Formey's argument seems to have been at odds with the general concept of a rationalist moral philosophy of Wolffian tradition after which he had fashioned his *Principes de Morale*. As I have shown, this concept consisted of a strong link between understanding and virtue according to which an increase in understanding automatically produced an increase in virtue and was even indispensable in order to reverse and limit man's post-lapsarian depravity. However, as we shall see, the *Principes de Morale*, despite their different degree of normativity, also put forward the same argument as the *Examen philosophique*. This argument had its origin in Wolff's decision in the first volume of his *Ethica* to condition the close causal link between knowledge and morality, which he had assumed in his theory of the innateness of morality. In §159 Wolff had introduced a crucial clause to his theory: The more we cultivate our intellectual virtues, the more we enhance our moral virtue, provided that we do it for the purpose of enhancing our morality.¹²¹¹ Wolff's reason for conditioning the natural law according to which the perfection of understanding was identical to the perfection of morality, seems to have been the observation of the often immoral behaviour that was characteristic of contemporary learned discussion.¹²¹² This was similar to what Rousseau had noticed and what Formey also did not deny in his engagement with Rousseau.

Formey's adoption of Wolff's argument in his *Examen philosophique* and in the second volume of his *Morale Intellectuelle* differed in the way that he used it: in the first he used it without restriction in order to oppose Rousseau, while in the second he hedged the argument in order to make it fit into the instructive purpose of his moral philosophical treatise that wanted to teach people moral autonomy through self-education. As I have mentioned above, in his *Examen philosophique*, Formey had denied that the sciences genuinely possessed the function to determine morality, which was basically what Wolff's argument in §159 of his *Ethica* said, in the sense that it posited the cultivation of knowledge and science under the tutelage of morality. In the *Morale intellectuelle* Formey argued in a first step very similarly to this by claiming that everyone without exception was able and obliged to acquire moral virtues while intellectual virtues were dispensable. Actually, he also argued that the possession of knowledge made genuinely immoral people even more dangerous.¹²¹³ According to him this was visible in the depravity of some learned men (did he predominantly mean the *philosophes*?) and which in turn made him understand the origin of the

1210See Alexander Schmidt, "Scholarship, Morals and Government: Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey's and Johann Gottfried Herder's responses to Rousseau's First Discourse," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 2 (August 2012), 254-5.

1211See Wolff, *Ethica, Pars prima*, §159, p. 252.

1212See Wolff, *Ethica, Pars prima*, §157, p. 251.

1213See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 22-3.

paradoxical view that the sciences harmed morality.¹²¹⁴ However, following this, Formey immediately invalidated this argument on the essential disconnection of science and morals by claiming that the depravity of the knowledgeable resulted from an abusive practice of science and that instead 'solid knowledge' would make those who possessed it recognise that virtue was the most precious outcome of this knowledge. Even more, he declared the invariable necessity to acquire intellectual virtues since they were the basis of moral virtues: 'L'obligation de cultiver les vertus intellectuelles matérielles, entant qu'elles sont nécessaires pour la culture des vertus morales, est donc une obligation générale & indispensable, à laquelle on ne peut soustraire aucun genre de vie, puisqu'il n'y en a aucun où l'on ne soit obligé d'être vertueux.'¹²¹⁵

The argument for the abusive practice of science, with which Formey justified the ideal link between science and virtue, had already been briefly raised in his very first review of the *Premier Discours* as we have seen above. Yet, he elaborated on it in much more detail in his *Examen philosophique* where he claimed that Rousseau, as well as his critics and supporters, had based their opinion on an incorrect definition of science or, to be more precise, on a definition of science that relied on its abusive practice.¹²¹⁶ For Formey sciences were 'les théories qui contiennent des principes, développés jusqu'à un certain point, desquels on tire une suite non interrompue de conséquences, qui conduisent à un dernier but, ou terme, qui n'est pas *le non plus ultra* de la théorie, mais qui est le dernier effort auquel est actuellement parvenu l'esprit humain à son égard.'¹²¹⁷ However, in his view, this definition of science had never been attained in the past, or the present: no matter if it were the Greek philosophers, the scholastics or the more recent Cartesians, they had all disguised and perverted the truth instead of revealing it purely as 'real' men of science were supposed to do. Hence, as Formey concluded from this, as long as science was done in this abusive way, one could not speak of a relation between science and morality.¹²¹⁸ In his *Examen philosophique* he did not draw the reverse conclusion from this result, i.e. that 'real science' could actually influence morality. Formey included such an answer instead in his *Morale intellectuelle* in which, as we have seen, Formey claimed that 'solid knowledge' positively influenced morals because it made the human being discover the precepts of morality. This also means that the *Examen philosophique* did not genuinely preclude the possibility of science having an influence on morals; on the contrary, Formey somehow used it to indicate what he was going to say in the

1214See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 24. At this point Formey referred to Rousseau's argument without mentioning his name yet.

1215See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, vol. 2, 25. Compare to 5 and to 8-9 where he also stated that without the intellectual virtues moral virtues could not exist.

1216See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 406.

1217Formey, "Examen philosophique," 406.

1218See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 407.

Principes de Morale, yet, without reaching its ultimate conclusion.

The same process can be observed for another claim in Formey's *Examen philosophique*, which seems to have partially restricted his initial argument against Rousseau, and which seems to have complied rather with Wolff's initial natural-law-based ideal of morality. Formey had claimed in the *Examen philosophique* that every science actually contained a moral aspect that could have a positive effect on society, and this moral side was rooted in religion: as Formey argued, every scientific endeavour allowed the individual who undertook it to recognise the perfections of the creator God; this recognition was the source of what eventually motivated our behaviour.¹²¹⁹ However, as Formey went on in his *Examen philosophique*, this possibility to achieve virtue, that was universally inherent in the sciences, was not brought into practice by his contemporaries because their purpose in extending their knowledge was rarely to enhance their own virtuosity. If anybody became more virtuous through the practice of science it was because he was already virtuous, to begin with.¹²²⁰

While Formey used this observation on the immoral purposes of the most people in his *Examen philosophique* to eventually re-confirm his general argument of the non-existing influence of science on morals, he used it in his *Morale intellectuelle* to hedge the idealist argument that the sciences positively influenced our morality. He particularly stressed that without this hedging his argument would have been as paradoxical (i.e. against the received opinion/ truth) as Rousseau's opposite argument because in history there were so many examples of either virtuous uncivilised people or depraved educated people.¹²²¹ Nevertheless, unlike in his *Examen philosophique* Formey developed his observation in the *Morale intellectuelle*. In it, he deduced a rule of how the cultivation of understanding/knowledge should affect morals:

'Il faut bien prendre garde que nous n'affirmons pas simplement que le degré des vertus morales répond toujours au degré des vertus intellectuelles; mais nous ajoutons pour condition, entant qu'on rapporte la culture des vertus intellectuelles à la culture des vertus morales. Cela fait une différence capitale. Le plus grand nombre de ceux qui étudient, ne pensent qu'à acquérir de la réputation, à parvenir aux Emplois, ou à remplir d'autres vûës humaines; il ne leur vient pas dans l'esprit que le premier but de toutes les études est de devenir meilleur [...].'¹²²²

This can be considered as a key statement by which Formey not only retrospectively complexified his initial counter-argument to Rousseau but also added an important aspect to his moral theory that was essentially based, as we have seen, on a complete confidence in reason and understanding. With

¹²¹⁹See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 412.

¹²²⁰See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 413.

¹²²¹See Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, 27.

¹²²²Formey, *Morale intellectuelle*, 28-9. Compare again to Wolff, *Ethica, Pars prima*, §159, p. 253.

this statement, Formey basically denied that human understanding and the cultivation of sciences that relied on it, automatically and universally led to morality, yet he likewise introduced the idea of the possibility and duty for the human being to consciously enable this link. As I have mentioned above, the complexity of this argument which included a limitation in the capacity of human understanding (and hence of the progress of science) and the concrete hope to overcome this limitation, was already inherent in Wolff's *Ethica* and thus Formey's answers to Rousseau, the *Examen philosophique* and the later *Principes de Morale*, have to be considered as inspired by Wolff's work and are hence closely linked to each other.

The difference between Formey's *Examen philosophique* in 1754 and his *Morale Intellectuelle*, written in 1760,¹²²³ was that the first was more concerned with 'reality', whereas the second outlined the ideal. The *Examen philosophique* drew a picture of the contemporary situation of the sciences and morals that Formey, like most of the contemporary apologists of religion and morals, generally esteemed mainly just as pessimistically as Rousseau himself as far as it targeted the so-called *philosophes*. The *Principes de Morale*, instead portrayed how things should be, in Formey's view, and thus constituted an instructive treatise with the aim to enhance the practice of both reason and morality. Therefore the *Examen philosophique* can be considered as the preliminary survey of the situation on the basis of which Formey established his *Principes de Morale*.

This impression finds support in the fact that the *Examen philosophique* also contained, in the end, a criticism of the insufficient state of moral science, which as we have seen, served Formey repeatedly as an argument that legitimised his work as a moral philosopher. In his picture of the general ineffectiveness of the sciences on morals, Formey singled out one science in particular that had an outstanding significance for the question at stake: the science of morals for it had the function to establish which behaviour was virtuous and which not, and hence had indeed a direct link with morality.¹²²⁴ Formey, however, claimed that in the past until his time this science of morals was in decline: it did not help to establish proper motives of human conduct for it relied on vague principles and instead was only able to provide positive laws for crime prevention.¹²²⁵ In his eyes, even the birth of Christianity, which, after the complete ineffectiveness of the moral science of the ancients, eventually had provided this science with the means to have an actual impact on conduct, was not able to unfold its assumed positive effect on the science of morality.¹²²⁶ Formey bemoaned the lack of a clear and applicable moral theory that made use of the insights provided by

1223In January 1760 Formey must have informed Luzac that he had started writing the first part of his *Principes de Morale* (see Luzac to Formey, 16.1.1760, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 333) and one year later Luzac confirmed the reception of the manuscript (see Luzac to Formey, 10.1.1761, *Lettres d'Élie Luzac*, 342).

1224See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 413.

1225See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 414.

1226See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 415.

Christianity, and very precisely the lack of effective manuals to instruct the common people in this science.¹²²⁷ Hence the anchor of Formey's hybrid perception on moral philosophy which was considered to be a science among others but at the same time needed to be communicated to a more popular public can already be noticed in his *Examen philosophique*.¹²²⁸ Likewise, the idea of the support of 'secular' moral science through the moral teachings of Revelation that we have noted in the last chapter of Formey's *Morale pratique*, seems to have had its roots in Formey's reply to Rousseau.

Having unveiled the conceptual and concrete connections between Formey's *Examen philosophique* and his *Principes de Morale* it seems correct to say that Wolff's *Ethica* appeared just at the right moment – it was published between 1750 and 1753 – to provide Formey with the answers to the problem that Rousseau's *Premier Discours* had stirred up. Although Formey's answer to Rousseau seemed to differ from his earlier, more positivist accounts of the power of reason in questions on human life (which actually had relied on previous and to a certain extent different writings by Wolff) it should neither be considered as a surprise nor as an expression of his scepticism. The choice of his answer corresponded to his usual practice to make use of what Wolff had said and this was, although partially critical of the contemporary state of morality in science, still genuinely positive for it propagated the obligation to pursue science for the sake of morality. Formey could have simply put forward the common argument against Rousseau and claimed the positive influence of science on morality; yet this would not have been entirely identical to Wolff's *Ethica*, or to how he perceived reality. More importantly, following Wolff's more complex argument provided Formey with the possibility to introduce other factors into the relationship between science and morals, like religion. As we have seen, he actually made use of this possibility towards the end of his *Principes de Morale* and filled the 'free spaces' that Wolff's moral science had left (partially because of his decision to ignore theological questions in them) with teachings of revealed religion. Taken all together, Formey's reply to Rousseau's criticism of sciences and morals was hence a revaluation of the role of natural and revealed religion in the realm of moral philosophy under the premise of a natural, reason-driven human pursuit of morality.

The contextualisation of Formey's *Principes de Morale* within his public engagement with Rousseau's criticism of reason and science explains not only why Formey had chosen to introduce religion into his moral science, but also his endeavour to combine its mainly scientific style with the possibility of achieving popular outreach. Viktor Gourevitch, for example, has emphasised that Rousseau's writings conflated theoretical and practical approaches to philosophy and were

¹²²⁷See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 416.

¹²²⁸See Formey, "Examen philosophique," 409 where he criticised the sciences in general for being too abstract to be able to fulfil the need of moral instruction for the common people.

presented in a dramatic form that directly engaged with the lives of his readers.¹²²⁹ Moreover, as mentioned above (chapter 4), Rousseau's books, particularly his later novels *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, had a large readership because of his particular writing style, a style that presumably was for his readers already perceivable in his *Discours*. This means, that if Formey wanted to disagree with Rousseau's view on the sciences and morality he had to appeal to a likewise larger audience, and therefore could not rely solely on the theoretical and abstract level of Wolff's ontologically-based moral philosophy. This attempt to compete with Rousseau for the instruction of the 'popular masses' became particularly obvious in his *Morale pratique* in which he increasingly presented practical precepts for the education of young children, often also with a direct negative reference to Rousseau's famous educational treatise *Émile ou De l'éducation*. Nevertheless, it has to be said that Formey's critical reception of Rousseau's moral and educational ideas cannot be considered as straightforward, in the sense that he was not able to refute Rousseau's ideas unconditionally and without exception. As we have seen, Formey joined the majority of his contemporaries in the rejection of Rousseau's criticism of scientific progress, while he agreed with his depiction of the bad moral behaviour that was endemic within the learned community, which – as I suggest – Formey attributed mainly to his usual targets of criticism, i.e. freethinkers, atheists, materialists and the like. This complex reception of Rousseau might explain Formey's choice to adopt and emphasise Wolff's argument that science had to be practised for the sake of morality.

Consequently, it can be said that the *Principes de Morale* reflected Formey's attempt to execute a complex and difficult apologetic strategy: firstly, they were a defence of science and increasing rationality that was meant to somehow integrate the criticism of the practitioners of this science. At the same time, the *Principes de Morale* were a defence of a morality that not only corresponded to the presumed natural purpose of the human being but also, and more importantly, to the message of Revelation and religious dogma. As we have seen, the question of how far dogma can be safeguarded without explicitly referring to it, was one that potentially caused conflict between Formey and other members of the reformed creed like the Huguenot publisher Luzac, or the Genevan Calvinist theologian Vernet. In discussion with them, Formey's stand seemed to have been rather conservative, in the sense that he did not accept to simply substitute theological moral theories with 'secular' philosophical ones. It seems that he wanted to safeguard a religious morality by giving it a secular root but not at the cost of denying dogma. The complexity of this double apologetic situation – of science and of morality – offers another crucial insight into the multi-faceted conception of the Christian philosopher, for whom it did not suffice to just provide moral

¹²²⁹See Victor Gourevitch, "Introduction," in *Rousseau. The Discourses and other Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge; New York, 1997), X.

instruction for the masses with transformed sermons (*Philosophe Chrétien*), but who also needed to link his moral philosophy to scientific authority and participate in the European learned debate.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the life and writings of Jean Henri Samuel Formey presented in this thesis started from the assumption that Formey reconciled faith and reason. However, this 'reconciliation of faith and reason' appears to have been slightly more complicated than the idea of uniting two separate entities. On the one hand it seems that to speak of a reconciliation of faith and reason in Formey's days and context is inaccurate, as he was part of a philosophical as well as theological tradition in which reason and faith were considered as two equally legitimate sources of knowledge that accounted for the same things and were compatible with each other. The idea of a co-existence of science and religion had pertained to Western philosophy since Antiquity; yet, this idea also was especially underlined in the Leibnizian and Wolffian conception of philosophy that had a guiding function for Formey, and it was also contained in Calvinist theological scholarship of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, due to its particular conception of original sin. On the other hand, we have seen that in Formey's perception there was a separation between philosophy and religion, which served as the basis of his rhetoric as a Christian philosopher. He defined this perception to a large extent through the practice of others, from whom he wanted to distinguish himself, i.e. the *philosophes* who argued for the independence of reason and natural law in order to deny revealed religion. However, Formey's own practice can to a certain extent also be considered as a way of separating the two epistemic categories reason and Revelation, although he assumed that they were compatible. As we have seen, depending on the context, he placed a different emphasis on the two different sources of knowledge, natural and revealed knowledge: although his academic treatises almost always contained allusions to apologetic purposes, revealed knowledge was usually not considered in this context, whereas in his moral philosophical and even religious writings both sources of knowledge, natural and revealed knowledge, were usually presented as complementary, and revealed knowledge was in most cases portrayed as the culmination of natural knowledge.

Given the complicated conceptual situation of an assumed reconciliation of faith and reason in Formey's philosophy, my aim was to understand how this reconciliation functioned 'in practice', i.e. how it was reflected in arguments concerning particular subjects that lay at the crossroads between religion (theology) and reason (philosophy). The first subject, the existence of God, is, of course, central to the Christian faith but at the same time, it is also a subject that animated the endeavour to understand the world via reason. The second subject, the relation between contingency

and necessity or freedom and determination, is a problem of similar kind for it reflects on the relation between God and His creatures particularly with regard to the doctrines of sin and salvation as well as to God's omnipotence and goodness. At the same time, contingency and necessity were omnipresent elements in the cosmological and natural philosophical understanding of the world, as they pertained to such questions as, how did different substances – material and immaterial – interact? And how did the world come into being? Besides analysing the practice of reconciling faith and reason in Formey's arguments on these large religious and philosophical questions, I also tried to show how the concept of such a reconciliation was reflected in the construction of a complex persona who acted in different contexts and spoke to different audiences that provided him with expectations and exigencies. Through the lens of this complex persona of the Christian philosopher, I, in turn, observed which positions Formey took in the different controversies that revolved around the thematic questions of God's existence, and the relation between freedom and determination.

The Christian Philosopher's Cultures of Controversy

Formey's engagement in these thematic questions was carried out within a multifaceted culture of controversy, in which past debates overlapped with or incited Formey's attempts to take a position on the public and personal controversies of his day. Moreover, the diverse genres of writing (and speaking) through which these controversies took shape seem to have imposed particular forms of rhetoric on Formey, which however could also to a certain extent be transported from one genre to another. The most multifaceted episode of this culture of controversy that we have observed in this thesis was certainly Formey's engagement with the criticism of fatalism in his *Belle Wolfienne*. In the second volume of this philosophical novel, which was meant to contribute to the popularisation of Wolff's philosophy, Formey plotted out a controversy between the book's two opposing protagonists, which led to a personal conflict between Formey and the *Aléthophiles* when they questioned his fidelity to their cause to defend Wolff against his critics. For the content of this fictional controversy Formey had drawn on sources from two completely different formal and intellectual backgrounds: first, his own learned correspondence with the Calvinist philosopher Jean-Pierre de Crousaz, whose arguments revolved around the negative religious and moral consequences of Leibniz's pre-established harmony, and were presented in a less abstract and partially polemic way; and second, Formey had also based his fictive controversy on a complex scholarly treatise by Wolff in which he had tried to logically disprove the theological criticism of his

Pietist critics. The manner in which Formey reproduced these two sources of criticism and integrated them into the plot of his *Belle Wolfienne* allows us to draw conclusions concerning his personal appropriation of the problem of the fatalistic implications of pre-established harmony: it became clear that he refrained from Crousaz's oversimplifying arguments and personal attacks, yet was also not entirely convinced by the arguments that Wolff had used to defend his theory in 1724. This ambivalent position separated him from Wolff and the *Société des Aléthophiles* who, on Manteuffel's initiative, took a position against Formey's doubts by integrating their metaphysical arguments into the plot of Formey's *Belle Wolfienne*. The rhetoric of the fiction created a public controversy on highly complex and apparently political issues that seems to have substituted for the missed opportunity to privately discuss Formey's doubts concerning pre-established harmony via letters. At the same time it was probably important for the Wolffians to counter Formey's arguments on the same rhetorical level as he had presented them since it was not only Formey's 'incorrect opinion' that they wanted to 'correct', but also that of the readers of the *Belle Wolfienne* who potentially had concurred with Formey's opinion.

The importance of speaking to each other via the same genre of writing can also be observed in Formey's controversy with Bayle on the comprehensibility and provability of God. This debate was not only similar to the one between the protagonists of the *Belle Wolfienne* due to its artificiality – Formey did not 'really' discuss his perspective with Bayle, but he commented on the latter's arguments in retrospect – but also because of its retention of the rhetorical frame that was introduced by one's adversary. While Manteuffel maintained the *Belle Wolfienne's* plot structure in order to criticise Formey, Formey himself retained the form of Bayle's *Dictionnaire critique et historique* in order to destroy Bayle's sceptical attitude towards the provability of God. The alternation between 'fact' and 'comment' typical of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* was, according to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers, considered to be a means for subverting established religious and moral doctrines. Such a format allowed Formey to stage a controversy with Bayle in which the latter's arguments became the 'facts' that Formey was able to disprove. In the first part of this fictive controversy in his article DIEU, Formey adopted a Cartesian position that at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century had been presented against Bayle by the Calvinist and Arminian theologians Jaquelot, Bernard and Le Clerc; and in the second part he also brought the 'direct voices' of other scholars into the discussion by quoting extracts from the works of Clarke, Jaquelot and Fontenelle. The idea behind this genre of presenting philosophical knowledge via multiple voices, which had already been the point of departure for Bayle, was to construct a 'negative' encyclopedia which corrected the arguments and contents of previous ones. While Bayle had corrected the historical encyclopedia by Louis Moreri, Formey wanted to correct Bayle's.

Moreover, Formey seems to have also appropriated this idea of a negative encyclopedia for his future encyclopedia projects; he continued to apply it throughout his career, most famously in his project to reform the famous but controversial *Encyclopédie*. This particular interpretation of the genre of encyclopedia caused that, in the article DIEU, the instructive purpose of an encyclopedia of philosophy was overlaid with the rhetoric of a philosophical controversy. Therefore the article DIEU was not so different from the genre of academic treatise which in most of the cases revolved around the discussions of another scholar's standpoints.

The formal similarities between the article DIEU and Formey's metaphysical treatises on the existence of God were rather substantial: also these treatises consisted of a critical engagement with positions on the proofs of God; more precisely with Descartes' ontological proof, the Newtonian physico-theological proof and Maupertuis' metaphysical proof. Formey replied to all these different aspects from the Wolffian perspective. However, compared to Formey's fictive controversy with Bayle, the controversy in which he engaged at the Academy, particularly via the second treatise in 1747, was a real one, i.e. it was incited by contemporary events and in his immediate context: as we have seen Formey fashioned his second discourse as a reply to Maupertuis' academic treatise that had been presented the previous year, which presented the mathematico-mechanical principle of least action as the basis for the metaphysical proof of God. By this Maupertuis had automatically discredited the function of metaphysics as a mother of all sciences and potentially already undermined the difficult institutional position of the discipline of metaphysics at the Academy, which Formey in his own treatise attempted to defend. Interestingly Formey significantly downplayed the differences that separated his argument from those posed by the Academy's President, which to some extent might have been due to the ambivalent presentation of Maupertuis' understanding of metaphysics, in the sense that he endorsed the understanding of metaphysics as a universal science but undermined it from within by making it dependent on physical methods. The points of open philosophical contradiction between Maupertuis' Newtonian and Formey's Wolffian standpoint were hence probably not as numerous and were not as visibly striking to their contemporaries as has usually been depicted by the scholarship. Besides this, it is likely that the perceptions of scholarly conduct shaped the rhetoric of controversies among the colleagues at the Academy; and lastly, Formey's particular career situation, i.e. his aspiration to become the Academy's secretary, probably also required his answer to formally align with the philosophical standpoint of the institution's President.

The learned discourse maintained via academic treatises was thus less controversy-like than the discourse outside of the Academy, particularly if it concerned colleagues at the Academy. This we also observed in another of Formey's contributions to the Academy, his *Réflexions sur la liberté*,

which he presented as an answer to his colleague's, Antoine Achard's failed attempt to prove with certainty the freedom of human will. Formey's reference to Achard in his academic treatise was short and far from critical but, as the scarce epistolary exchange between Formey and Achard suggests, the disagreement between the two men was significant: Achard doubted the possibility to surely account for the freedom of will and the processes that went on in the soul in general (and continued to do so even after having read Formey's treatise), whereas Formey made a clear claim for the convincing nature of the empirical proof of it through self-consciousness. With the question of whether free will was empirically provable or not, Formey not only contributed to discussions that were present at the Academy at the time, and perhaps required a rather careful and friendly rhetoric, i.e. a rhetoric that emphasised collaboration in the sense of the ideal of the scientific community at the Academy. Moreover, since academic treatises were not just read behind closed doors at the Academy but were also published and thus reached the heterogeneous public of the large Republic of Letters, Formey's *Réflexions sur la liberté* (like his treatises on the existence of God) were a reply to larger philosophical debates – the British debate on necessity between Collins, Clarke and King – as well as to the public debate in which Formey was personally involved with the Wolffians through his *Belle Wolfienne* and Manteuffel's *Lettres du Jurisconsulte*.

If this example shows how Formey was able to engage via an academic treatise in a controversy that was situated outside of the academic realm, his public involvement in the Academy's prize essay contest shows the opposite, i.e. that through his activities as a writer, translator and publisher he was also able to transport controversies that had evolved inside the Academy to a larger learned public, and to take a position in these controversies 'from outside'. This was the case for his *Recherches sur les éléments de la matière* with which he, animated by the *Aléthophiles*, wanted to campaign for a pro-Leibnizian solution in the prize essay question of 1747 on Leibniz's monadology. While I only alluded to this example in my thesis, I have shown how he used a similar practice in another case, namely when the Academy asked about the nature of moral duties in a provident world during its 1751 prize contest. In this case, Formey not only underlined his support for the argument of the winning essay by the Wolffian Gotthelf Abraham Kästner, but he also defended his own concept of a middle way between Providence and moral responsibility against D'Alembert, Maupertuis and other critics of this concept inside the Academy. This practice of criticising his colleagues at the Academy in his role as a 'private' writer was a delicate undertaking because it could have potentially harmed the Academy's public appearance as a coherent body of scholars. It seems that Maupertuis as the Academy's President tried to prevent public controversy among the members of the Academy or other signs of dissent, particularly when

he was involved himself.¹²³⁰ Formey's choice to translate and publish the essay that contained his own opinion must hence be seen as an astute way of engaging indirectly and almost hiddenly in the controversy between those academicians who had defended the content of the 1751 prize question, and those who had rejected it for being paradoxical. This shows that any kind of written production could serve the function of a (rhetoric) element in a controversy.

The only genre widely used by Formey that seems to have been excluded from this culture of controversy was his sermons and their secular counterparts, i.e. the moral-philosophical discourses. The purpose of these writings was to inculcate stable doctrines and rules of behaviour into the believers, not to present doubt or opposition to other opinions. Also, the potentially conflictual relation between natural and revealed knowledge that Formey presented in most of his sermons and moral philosophical works was most often turned by him into a rhetoric of harmony. Hence, controversy seems to have been a philosophical practice which Formey did not want to use in the realm of preaching. Yet, as we have seen, philosophical practices exercised their influence on preaching via another characteristic, i.e. that of scientific demonstration, which had the potential of causing controversy on a level that preceded the actual communication with the congregation, namely a controversy on the right homiletics. As we have seen Formey was criticised for preaching in overly philosophical sermons; however, since rationalist preaching had already been implemented to a certain extent in Reformed homiletics, this criticism seems not to have sparked a large controversy.

From this it follows that the topics and methods of Formey's religious and moral philosophical writings and his scholarly and academic productions were identical, as was the overall purpose that he pursued with them – the apology of religion – but they did not share a place in the manifold culture of controversy that pertained to Formey's texts. This seems to have also been to a certain extent a conscious choice by him in the sense that he presented his scholarly and learned publications differently than his sermons and moral philosophical essays (see the dedications). In this light Formey's 'scientific' moral theory which we analysed in the last chapter holds a particular position: located between the scholarly world and the popular one, it assembled the rhetoric of controversy and the rhetoric of instruction: through such works, Formey defended the rationalist natural morality against voluntarist approaches and against Rousseau's scepticism on a morality that relied on reason. At the same time, he provided his readership with the theoretical and practical knowledge that was meant to help them to form moral behaviour. Formey's two-fold rhetorical approach, created, as we have shown, a balancing act for his work between the popular and the

¹²³⁰See for example Goldenbaum, "Das Publikum als Garant der Freiheit," for Maupertuis' and the Academy's behaviour in the affair concerning the apparently forged letter of Leibniz presented by Samuel König.

learned.

Beyond Faith and Reason: Three Dichotomies that Affected Formey's Practice as Christian Philosopher

Formey's attempt to establish in his *Principes de Morale* a moral science that was able to speak to a scholarly and a popular public at the same time exemplifies to a high degree a problem that pertained to many of his publications: the apparently irreconcilable dichotomy between popular philosophy and theoretical philosophy. This dichotomy is however only one of several dichotomies which characterised Formey's behaviour as a Christian philosopher, and which created most of the tensions he more or less successfully coped with. I would argue that the dichotomy between popular and theoretical philosophy, just as the dichotomy between empiricism and rationalism in science and that between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in religion were of a much greater importance in Formey's life than the allegedly dichotomous relationship between revealed religion and (natural) philosophy; even though the scholarship usually highlighted it as the central problem in the religious enlightenment. As I have tried to show, Formey and the large group of eighteenth-century philosophers who possessed a similar conception of philosophy's constitution and purpose perceived of revealed and natural knowledge as being similar in kind and as compatible with each other, instead of opposed to each other.

Instead, the reconciliation of a popular public that was interested in instructions on religiosity and practical behaviour and in amateur philosophy on the one hand with an expert public that was able to understand and discuss theoretical philosophy and theology on the other posed a significant challenge to Formey. He seems to have been largely aware of the differences between these two types of public and what this required from the content and rhetoric of his writings. It seems that he therefore rarely attempted to address both of these types of public at the same time, in one writing. On the contrary, apart from the *Principes de Morale*, Formey always defined who he was addressing with his diverse writings: he dedicated his *Philosophe Chrétien* and some of his sermons to noble women who were known for their piety, while he dedicated collections of his metaphysical and theoretical moral philosophical treatises to scholars and ministers of science. Nevertheless, the reception of Formey's works – although I only analysed them in a very rudimentary way – regularly reveals a mismatch between his ideal and his real public. Many of his sermons have been perceived as being too metaphysical in their content and too analytical in their form in order to be comprehensible for the ordinary churchgoer, even though they were liked by the pastors, theologians and amateur philosophers among his correspondents. The same happened in the

reception of the *Belle Wolfienne* that, despite its proclaimed aim to make Wolff's philosophy more widely known to the public (he, however, did not specify this public as being either popular or expert), was perceived as only appropriate for those who already knew Wolff's complex philosophical oeuvre. Wolff instead considered that several parts of Formey's appropriations of his works had oversimplified his arguments. Furthermore, it seems that several of his colleagues at the Academy, and most prominently its patron Frederick II, questioned the appropriateness of his treatises in the realm of professional philosophy due to the apologetic elements in their content and style. Except for this example, the reactions of Formey's readers show that their different opinions on Formey's writings were not connected to the fact that they distinguished between the religious and the scientific realms; instead the readers seem to have distinguished between popular and expert books.

It seems that this mismatch between Formey's intentions and the expectations of his public was first and foremost a result of his position at the edge of different professional fields and kinds of public, as well as his habit of moving back and forth between them. Moreover, it is not that he wanted to appeal to a popular and an expert public at the same time. As we have seen in the case of his reaction to the criticism of his metaphysical proofs of God's existence, which according to some of his readers were too complicated to understand for the common reader, he claimed that metaphysics were not meant to appeal to an ordinary reader. Moreover, as his homiletic considerations of the 1750s and 1760s have shown, he also – although only after having received negative feedback on his philosophical sermons – seems to have been aware that his sermons should dispense with complex metaphysical explanations and should rather incite emotions in the believers. Despite his awareness and efforts to maintain a distinction between different genres of writing, he apparently was unable to prevent a mutual infiltration of one field or genre by the habits and exigencies of the other: it seems natural that his practice as a pastor and writer of popular moral philosophy affected his practice as a professor of philosophy and writer of academic treatises. As a result, many of his writings were neither exclusively appropriate for a popular audience nor for an expert audience, but instead the content and rhetoric of these writings appeared as hybrid as Formey's own persona. It would be interesting to see whether this practice of writing also contributed to the rise or extension of a kind of public that was located like Formey at the edge between popular and expert, yet for this, we would need a further inquiry into the reception history of his works. Nevertheless, the few observations made within Formey's direct environment suggest that there was indeed such a kind of public; a public that read all of his works with the same avidness: it was the public of the amateur philosophers among his correspondents, who were also predominantly Reformed pastors and theologians. It should not come as a surprise that Formey's

work was understood by the Peschier, Bocquet, and de Vattel etc. since he was one of them, and they were Christian philosophers like him. For this reason, it is difficult to say whether it was Formey who created this public of Christian philosophers that appreciated his popular instructions as much as his metaphysical treatises, or if it was this public who 'created' him and shaped his style of writing.

This public of Christian philosophers, who apparently overlooked the potential tensions between the popular and the learned elements in Formey's oeuvre – and were hence the ideal public for every kind of Formey's writings – were however not unanimous on Formey's thoughts as a Christian philosopher. Their opinions diverged on how he actually dealt with Protestant doctrine and how he succeeded in safeguarding it as a Christian philosopher; in other words, they had different views on the religious orthodoxy of Formey's texts. Although Formey had never been subject to a trial concerning his orthodoxy within the French consistory, as had happened several times in the *Refuge* during the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries, some of his arguments (potentially) entailed that he was criticised for heterodox tendencies by others. The most vocal of these critics was probably the Swiss philosopher Jean-Pierre Crousaz who saw in Formey's appropriation of the Leibnizian and Wolffian view on Providence an approval of fatalism, which contradicted the doctrines of God's goodness and humanity's self-responsibility for sin. Crousaz's opinion concerning the general divergence of Wolffian philosophy from Calvinist orthodoxy was similar to that of the German Pietists for whom Wolff's natural theology was almost as dangerous as atheism, an accusation with which Formey as a follower of Wolff also had to deal with. However, it was not only the religious critics of Leibniz and Wolff who confronted Formey with the suspicion of heterodoxy, Wolffian philosophers themselves also found at least one occasion to do so. Formey's *Essai sur la Nécessité de la Révélation*, to which I did not refer in this thesis but which has been discussed at length by Bronisch, sparked concerns about a potentially heterodox interpretation of Formey's claims among the *Aléthophiles*. Formey had argued that to follow the Revelation was the best, yet not the unique way to reach salvation; instead non-Christians, via natural religion, also had the chance to be redeemed. The problem with this argument – which was certainly based on the Leibnizian and Wolffian idea of the perfect compatibility of reason and faith – was that it overemphasised reason's and faith's compatibility with the effect that a religion based on natural reason appeared universal, more so than a faith based on Revelation. Wolff himself was concerned that such an argument would confirm and fuel the freethinkers' claims against the Christian religion and hence took a similar position as some Lutheran preachers and theologians among his followers.¹²³¹ The perceived heterodox tendencies in Formey's *Essai sur la Nécessité de la*

¹²³¹See Bronisch, *Mäzen der Aufklärung*, 340-51. For Wolff's judgement on the *Essai* see 346 and for the opinions of

Révélation certainly have to be considered as being rather exceptional when compared to his oeuvre as a whole but this highlights that the concept of the equality of natural and revealed sources of knowledge on which Formey's philosophy relied, was like walking the tightrope: depending on emphasis and the situation it could easily shift in the direction of challenging orthodoxy.

In contrast, the use and interpretation of this concept could of course also provoke the opposite effect and Formey's writings in support of religion were prone to be judged as too orthodox. Formey did not just receive this kind of criticism from people who were generally critical of revealed religion like the *philosophes*. What is more interesting is that he was also accused of orthodoxy by some people who actually shared his view on religion and philosophy, i.e. pastors, theologians and Christian philosophers like him. We have seen this in Formey's debate with the Genevan professor of literature and theology, Jacob Vernet, about the space that was conceded to dogma in popular religious books. Formey found that Vernet's *Instruction chrétienne* secularised morality too much and instead, also defended the necessary presence of dogma in non-theological writings. This position sparked in Vernet the impression that Formey relinquished his self-presentation as a Christian philosopher by supporting an excessive orthodoxy. Here it has to be said that generally, the Genevan Calvinists considered the theological situation in the German *Refuge* to be more orthodox than their own, which for them was exemplified by the retention of the French *Discipline ecclésiastique* of 1666 in Berlin.¹²³² Besides the inner-Calvinist differences in attitudes to dogma, within which Formey's position leaned predominantly towards orthodoxy, Wolff also seems to have considered some of Formey's works as being too orthodox, more precisely when they undermined the role of philosophy in its relationship with religion. This was the case with respect to Formey's claim that philosophy was useless and immoral in his moral-philosophical essay *Sur la Joye*. I have presented Manteuffel's endeavours to try to make Formey change this formulation with Wolff's consent. For the latter Formey's claim was, as he confessed in a letter to Manteuffel, an expression of an Augustinian position which undermined the law of nature in order to increase the impact of grace. According to Wolff, the defence of such a position was a dangerous prejudice and he ascribed the fact that Formey advanced this position to his theological education.¹²³³ In the case of Formey's *Sur la Joye*, Wolff thus considered Formey's position to be rather orthodox, which shows that his opinion differed from his above-mentioned concerns about the heterodoxy of Formey's *Essai sur la Nécessité de la Révélation*. Wolff's ambiguous judgement on Formey's writings shows that Formey's position towards Christian dogma was far from unequivocal and that therefore the perception of his degree of orthodoxy by others could also differ from case to case,

the two Lutheran preachers and *Aléthophiles* Johann Friedrich Jerusalem and Johann Adam Löw see 361-5.
1232See Peschier to Formey, 20.2.1742 and 17.4.1742, *Lettres de Genève*, 18 and 33-4.
1233See Wolff to Manteuffel, 22.8.1748, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 227.

even by one and the same person. Generally we can say that the perceptions of Formey's religious position and his orthodoxy differed among the different commentators: what Wolff considered as orthodoxy, i.e. the Augustinian dogma to which Luther, in particular, had adhered, was most likely seen as heterodox by people like Crousaz who criticised pre-established harmony and *nexus rerum* precisely for its alleged denial of human free will as had been propagated by Augustinus and Luther. For people like Crousaz, such a position constituted a divergence from the orthodoxy of the Eighteenth Century which claimed the existence of a free will in divine Providence – just as Wolff believed to claim as well, yet his work was seen differently by his 'orthodox' critics.

It was not only in terms of revealed religion that Formey had to navigate between different extremes that were not neatly distinguished from each other. In terms of philosophical method, he also had to take a position with respect to two seemingly opposed categories. More precisely, when he referred to truths that could be gained via natural reason, i.e. in his academic treatises, he repeatedly engaged with the opposition between the two main epistemological paradigms rationalism and empiricism. In the philosophical discussion of questions such as the existence of God, free will and Providence, his position as a Christian philosopher was mainly marked by a defence of strict rationalism against empirically gained knowledge. For him, all certain knowledge besides revealed knowledge seems to have been rationalist a-priori knowledge, i.e. knowledge that was gained through deduction from first simple notions, or metaphysical principles. The possibility to establish knowledge in such a way lay in the concept of the rational and spiritual human being who – after Descartes – existed because of and for his capacity of cognition. In the epistemological debate, this concept of the human being was opposed to the sensual and bodily human being who gained knowledge through experience with the physical world around him. This sort of knowledge, i.e. empirical knowledge, often appeared as an adversary in Formey's scientific rhetoric. This became particularly obvious in Formey's discussion on the proofs of God in which he defended rational first notions for their epistemological reliability and universality, and denied the strength of sensory experience and experiment in accounting for the existence of God. This example demonstrates that to prove the existence of God the epistemological choice of eighteenth-century philosophers was not limited to either Revelation or science. On the contrary, science itself offered several different means to obtain truth. As a Christian philosopher Formey seems to have opted predominantly for rationalism and by this occasionally replaced – when he exclusively referred to natural truth – revealed knowledge by rational knowledge.

However, this dichotomy between the rational and the empirical method in philosophy/science was also not as clear-cut as it might appear in eighteenth-century philosophy, and certainly not in Formey's practice as a philosopher. His rejection of the empirically-based physico-theology

in his discussion of the proofs of God was not a rejection of empirical sources *per se*, yet it was rather a demonstration of the inferiority of these sources with respect to rational sources. Formey emphasised that sensory experience, i.e. observation of God's creation, was not an immediate evidence for the existence of God, but that it was through the general rational principles, on which all sensory experience relied, that God was proved. Hence, in Formey's depiction the empirical and rationalist methods were not opposed to each other, quite the contrary they depended on each other, but he still attributed the superior – because general and universal – role to rational a-priori knowledge. Besides this, Formey also distinguished between different degrees of certainty within the realm of empirical knowledge. In his psychological considerations on the soul, Formey referred to self-consciousness or introspection as an empirical source of knowledge to which he attributed the same epistemic value as he had attributed to the first notions in his treatises on God's existence. He distinguished this type of empirical knowledge from another type of empirical knowledge that was gained through sensory experience, which he despised for its inaccuracy and uncertainty. However, the empirical nature of methods of introspection and self-consciousness was also, in Formey's view, worthless without restriction: especially in the case of the human soul, which was the object of and subject to psychological research at the same time, as such this method could not be applied in all circumstances. For example, when Formey analysed the process of dreaming, i.e. a state of unconsciousness, he had to rely on rational knowledge that he gained via analogies of experiences that were garnered from observations during conscious states of the mind. The kind of epistemological source to choose when one wanted to philosophically explain a certain phenomenon seems hence have depended on the subject of inquiry. The overall aim, which pertained to Formey's philosophical rhetoric was hence not rationality but certainty. It is likely that this emphasis on certainty, which made him constantly compare rational and empirical methods (and most often opt for rationalism), was affected by his epistemological understanding of Revelation, which, because it came from God, was considered as the ultimate truth.

These considerations on the different types of dichotomies that Formey faced in his work – popular versus expert genres of writing, orthodox versus heterodox claims concerning religion, rationalist versus empirical methods of philosophy – show that the Christian philosopher cannot only be defined through his relation to religion and science and his efforts to harmonise them. Instead, Formey's practices as a Christian philosopher embraced far more pairs of categories which in his perception seem to have created much stronger tensions than the binary relation between religion and science. Moreover, it shows that the very two categories of religion and philosophy, the reconciliation of which is said to have constituted the Christian philosopher, were not stable and coherent, but contained several tensions in themselves. Formey's tendency to oscillate between

heterodoxy and orthodoxy in the eyes of other Protestant philosophers suggests that what we have called religion was not a universal set of beliefs and practices and that the concept of the compatibility of natural and revealed truths, in particular, lay at the edge between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Similarly, the dichotomy between rationalism and empiricism has shown that philosophy/ science fought its very own fights about scientific legitimacy that had nothing to do with religion itself.

As a result of all this, Formey as a Christian philosopher could simply not act in a way that would appear coherent to us. The eighteenth-century confessional and scientific situation, the nature of the questions which were important to him, and the requirements of the reading public made him oscillate between many different, in our view often even opposite, concepts and contexts. We can, of course, discern tendencies in his writings and practices, such as the 'creation' of a genre of writing in which popular and expert types of knowledge merged, as well as his preference for eighteenth-century Calvinist orthodoxy, and his significant trust in rational methods. Yet Formey's 'standpoint' between religion and science has to be described anew in every single context. This is what I hope to have illustrated by analysing each of Formey's writings, that were discussed in this thesis, distinctly, and asking not only how reason and science interacted, but also how this relationship was influenced by the diverse scientific, religious and literary discourses in which it was embedded. The picture that emerged from this will hopefully serve as a point of reference and comparison for all those who, like me will go in search for an eighteenth-century Christian philosopher – Formey was only one among many.

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