

Charles T. Wolfe, The ‘Physiology of the Understanding’ and the ‘Mechanics of the Soul’: Reflections on Some Phantom Philosophical Projects

Abstract: In reflecting on the relation between early empiricist conceptions of the mind and more experimentally motivated materialist philosophies of mind in the mid-18th century, I suggest that we take seriously the existence of what I shall call ‘phantom philosophical projects’. A canonical empiricist like Locke goes out of his way to state that their project to investigate and articulate the ‘logic of ideas’ is *not a scientific project*: “I shall not at present meddle with the Physical consideration of the Mind” (*Essay*, I.1.2). An equally prominent thinker, Immanuel Kant, seems to make an elementary mistake, given such a clear statement, when he claims that Locke’s project was a “physiology of the understanding,” in the Preface to the A edition of the first *Critique*. A first question, then, would be: what is this physiology of the understanding, if it was not Locke’s project? Did anyone undertake such a project? If not, what would it have resembled? My second and related case comes out of a remark the Hieronymus Gaub makes in a letter to Charles Bonnet of 1761: criticizing materialist accounts of mind and mind-body relations such as La Mettrie’s, Gaub suggests that what is needed is a thorough study of the “mechanics of the soul”, and that Bonnet could write such a study. What is the mechanics of the soul, especially given that it is presented as a non-materialist project? To what extent does it resemble the purported “physiology of the understanding”? And more generally, what do both of these phantom projects have to do with a process we might describe as a ‘naturalization of the soul’?

Enrico Pasini, *Alles begann mit Tschirnhaus*

Abstract: Did it all begin with Tschirnhaus? This paper discusses the exemplary role that Tschirnhaus could play in the reconstruction of an empirically oriented, scientific, somewhat radical and variously unorthodox current in 18th-century German philosophy, starting from 18th-century characterizations of his intellectual image.

Ursula Goldenbaum, A Materialistic Rationalist? Urban Gottfried Bucher’s Defense of Innate Ideas and Mechanism, Added by his Denial of Free Will

Abstract: Urban Gottfried Bucher is one of the most surprising authors in early German enlightenment and has been rightly celebrated as a materialist and therefore radical thinker. But he did not teach the same kind of materialism as his contemporary Andreas Rüdiger who leaned toward Locke’s empiricism. Bucher is much closer to Hobbes’ mechanical materialism, to Spinoza’s criticism of free will, and to Tschirnhaus’ extending of the mathematical method to natural science. His explanation of the working of the human soul, while materialistic, is rationalistic and mechanical. The difference between the two kinds of materialism becomes crystal-clear in Bucher’s and Rüdiger’s approach to the Copernican system they both embrace. For Rüdiger, the Copernican hypothesis is seen as a *probable* truth we can hold on to as long as we don’t obtain competing empirical *sensiones* and ideas, even if our globe should not *really* move around the sun. For Bucher though, it is a *demonstrated* truth that gains additional support by a *machine* that imitates the working of the world machine.

Matteo Favaretti Camposampiero, Christian Wolff’s Philosophy of Medicine: An Early Functional Analysis of Health and Disease

Abstract: In the late 1720s and early 1730s, Christian Wolff writes a series of short treatises on general medical concepts such as health, disease, cause of disease, symptom, etc. The paper makes the claim that these texts should be considered as a pioneering attempt at developing a systematic philosophy of medicine based on metaphysical and epistemological investigations on medical concepts, doctrines, and practices. The main focus is on Wolff’s analysis of the concepts of health and disease in functional terms and its connection to his teleological characterization of both natural and artificial machines. This also explains Wolff’s use of the normatively loaded concepts of fitness and nature to clarify the distinction between health as good functioning and disease as dysfunction. The conclusion is that Wolff’s mechanist view of living bodies and his realism about biological functions are just one side of the coin; the other is his commitment to a normative view of the human body’s nature and purposes.

Paola Rumore, In Wolff’s Footsteps. The Early German Reception of La Mettrie’s *L’Homme machine*

Abstract: The paper retraces the early reception of La Mettrie’s work *L’Homme machine* in Germany. It focuses in particular on the role played by Wolff and by Manteuffel’s “Society of Alethiophiles” in promoting a scandalous image of La Mettrie’s work by reducing it to the old formula of mechanistic materialism *à la* Hobbes. By defending Wolff’s interpretation, Manteuffel contributed discretely but actively to the capillary dissemination of such an image, which was to become very soon the dominant one. By means of their collaboration Wolff and Manteuffel didn’t only introduce a deep and long-lasting misunderstanding of La Mettrie’s materialism in German philosophy; they additionally even vetoed any possible appreciation of his peculiar idea of active matter.

Gideon Stiening, Zwischen System und Experiment. Johann Gottlob Krügers *Versuch einer Experimental-Seelenlehre*

Abstract: Johann Gottlob Krüger’s *Experimental psychology* (1756) is commonly considered as one of the first empirical anthropologies in the German-speaking space. On closer examination, however, the foundations of his psychology appear to be both Wolffian rationalism and an epistemological empiricism of Lockean origins. His methodical conception of experimentalism, thus, expands Wolffian empirical psychology. On this basis, Krüger also supplies a quite precarious defence of materialism, and a view of experiments on humans that conflicts radically with present standards.

Falk Wunderlich, The “Subtle” Materialism of August Wilhelm Hupel

Abstract: The paper deals with the first book-length materialist treatise published in Germany in the 1770s, August Wilhelm Hupel’s *Anmerkungen und Zweifel über die gewöhnlichen Lehrsätze vom Wesen der menschlichen und der thierischen Seele*. Based on a “great

chain of being” conception, he maintains that his materialist doctrine provides stronger grounds for belief in the immortality of the soul than those substance dualism has offered. He seeks to defend that the soul is a composite being, *i.e.* that it is material, but at the same time he argues that the soul is not identical with the body or parts of it, but rather that it exists independently and composed of “subtle”, ether-like matter. Hupel also argues that the soul is immortal. This claim is particularly uncommon since most materialists, not only in Germany, subscribe to some version of mortalism, *i.e.* the doctrine that the mind either ceases to exist altogether with the death of the body, or that it remains in a death-like state until the resurrection.

Paolo Pecere, *Monadology, Materialism and Newtonian Forces: The Turn in Kant’s Theory of Matter*

Abstract: Kant elaborated his dynamical theory of matter in two quite different systematic accounts, the first in the *Monadologia physica* (1756), the second in the *Dynamics* chapter of the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (1786). In this paper I investigate the transition from the monadological to the “continuum” dynamical theory of matter, whose exact timing and motives are not explicitly clarified in Kant’s writings. I locate Kant’s turn around the middle 1760s, presenting Kant’s abandonment of his own physical monadology as a way out of controversies about monads and materialism which characterized the German intellectual world of his time. Among the results of this crucial modification in matter theory stands out the new interpretation of Newtonian forces in the critical writings, which is not only relevant for Kant’s account of physics, but also plays a major exemplary role for his critical theory of knowledge.

Maud Pouradier, *Les deux totalités. Naissance et éclipse d’un concept dans le Commentaire des Sentences d’Albert le Grand*

Abstract: The first occurrence of the Latin word ‘totalitas’ can be dated back to the 12th century. ‘Totalitas’ is not quite synonymous with the Aristotelian signification of whole’s quiddity. In fact, in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert the Great hesitates between a pseudo-Augustinian definition of *totalitas* and a Peripatetic one. According to the first definition, *totalitas* is beyond the classical relationship between a whole and its parts; on the contrary, it refers to the capacity of the soul to be present to itself without being a whole that is composed of parts. By contrast, according to the second definition, *totalitas* is to be identified with *universitas*. Although this second signification became the standard one in 13th century, Albert the Great attempts to juxtaposing the pseudo-Augustinian and the Peripatetic significations by means of the notion of *totum potestativum*. This notion allows the identity between ‘whole’ and ‘perfect’. While the first meaning of *totalitas* was not consequential on later Scholasticism, it still plays an important role in Albert’s *Commentary on the Sentences*. It is in fact helpful for settling some difficulties in the Albertinian arguments concerning the soul’s structure.

Pasquale Porro, *La totalité peut-elle être un attribut divin ? Les questions De totalitate Dei d’Henri de Gand*

Abstract: Rather unusually, Henry of Ghent includes ‘totality’ (*totalitas*) in the list of divine attributes discussed in his *Summa quaestionum ordinarium*. Availing himself of the different philosophical definitions of totality given by Boethius and Avicenna, Henry concludes that God cannot be considered a *totum universale*, a *totum numerale* and a *totum virtuale* or *potestativum* (at least in the strictest sense), but concedes that He may be considered a totality insofar as His being comprehends the exemplary perfections of all created beings.

Giambattista Formica, *Realism Behind the Reduction in Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*

Abstract: The paper deals with the controversial issue of realism in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. Most of the problems are grounded in the logical-linguistic foundation of important ontological notions given within the text (such as object, state of affairs, fact, etc.). This has led some scholars to think that there is no conception of the world in the *Tractatus* that is independent of language and that in his work Wittgenstein is simply engaged in a logical investigation of what it is essential for any language to represent reality. Therefore, no conclusions about a transcendent world can be drawn from it. Here we argue that it is true that the author of the *Tractatus* is engaged in a logical investigation, conducted a priori and internal to language, on the conditions that are (or have to be) satisfied by any significant language. However, what such an investigation reveals, given one of these languages, is the necessity to presuppose a world made in a certain way and transcendent to the language that pretends to describe it. Two issues are considered to clarify the sense of the realism of the *Tractatus* – that of the existence of simple objects, and that of the truth of propositions – and a new interpretative schema for the text is advanced.