

<CN>Chapter 4

<CT>French

<Insert fig. 4.1 about here>

<TX>The editor of the fifth, 1740 edition of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (first complete edition printed in 1697) sums up a century and a half of polemic over the possibility of any form of German wit and about the respective merits of German and French ingenuity by contrasting their defining features:

<EXT>Ce que les François appellent *de l'Esprit*, est un certain talent pour la bagatelle, ou tout au plus une je ne sais quelle vivacité généralement peu compatible avec la gravité Allemande, & avec le caractère sérieux de cette Nation (. . .). J'en dis autant de la question, *Si un Allemand peut être Bel-Esprit?* On ne dispute pas à la Nation Allemande, le plus pur Bon-Sens, la plus fine sagacité, les plus nobles saillies de l'Esprit; & contente de ce partage, elle ne regarde pas comme une grande prérogative le Bel-Esprit François.

<TRANS>What the French call *wit*, is some talent for trifles, or, at best a liveliness of sorts, which is usually not suited to German gravity and to this nation's serious character. (. . .) I will say the same about the question, *Whether Germans can be Fine Wits, or not?* No one denies to the German nation the purest good sense, the subtlest sagacity, the noblest traits of wit—satisfied with their share, they may not deem French wit such a great prerogative.¹

<TXFL>This editorial remark draws together the threads of meanings associated with the French cognates of the Latin *ingenium* and *genius*. Its concision assumes a deeply rooted, multifaceted, and distinctive culture of ingenuity in early modern France, mostly centered on the notion of *esprit* in the seventeenth century and shifting toward *génie* by the middle of the eighteenth. In the

editor's remark, *esprit* first denotes the temperament at the heart of national identity or character, then a special ability or talent, and finally a set of intellectual traits, be they quick thinking in invention (*vivacité* and *sagacité*), or ponderous, solid judgment (*bon sens*). These definitions emerged progressively from *longue durée* cultural polemics, themselves the echoes of France's military and diplomatic hegemonic attempts on the European stage: *l'esprit* and *le bon sens français* erected naturalness (*le naturel*) as a new, Gallican norm of good taste that openly opposed excessive, virtuosic expressions of ingenuity characterizing the culture of the Habsburg Empire, but also against the supposed lack of polish of German nations.² Yet Bayle's editorial remark is not only a semantic *précis* of ingenuity, it also sketches its history in the French context, hinting at the trajectory that led to the degradation of *esprit* into *bel esprit* or *esprit français*, both of which amounted to little more than a frivolous performance confined to the ephemera of conversation.

<TX>This derogatory outline of French ingenuity contrasted with its sturdier German counterpart in a late edition of Bayle's dictionary is one instance of the Enlightenment critique of the French *Grand Siècle*. Stemming from the seventeenth-century ideological enterprise of national self-definition and eulogy, early modern French ingenuity shaped the linguistic culture of the long seventeenth century: dictionaries, grammars, and the emerging genre of grammatical *Remarques* strove to instil the purest form of the *génie de la langue* as a cultural norm of the *esprit français*, both nationally and internationally.³ The Jesuit Dominique Bouhours epitomizes this entanglement between *esprit français* and *génie de la langue*: the dialogue dedicated to *esprit* in his 1671 *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* sparked the polemic on German wit that Bayle's editor revives almost a century later, while his 1675 *Remarques nouvelles sur la langue* and their 1692 *Suite* turned him into a lexicographical authority for the rest of the century and

beyond. This chapter unravels this entanglement between French ingenuity and lexicography: the keywords of early modern French ingenuity as they feature in period dictionaries reveal the ideological and political underpinnings of this culture, its very specific response to the question of identity, and its role in the emergence of the modern notions of style, author, and critic.⁴

<H1>Keywords

<TX>These keywords are *engin*, *esprit*, *naturel*, and *génie*: they all translate the Latin terms *ingenium* and *genius* in the first landmark of our corpus, Jean Nicot's *Thresor de la langue françoise* (1606), either in the definition proper, or in the selection of examples.

The word history of *engin* remains a remarkably stable, antiquarian one that interprets machines as the reification of one's wit. Meanwhile *naturel*, like *esprit* and *génie*, can be used to denote a distinctively individual set of dispositions increasingly defined as a specific natural aptitude or talent, as the site of good education, and as the norm of good (self-) representation. The presentational meanings of ingenuity also prove central to the word history of *esprit*, the main keyword of French ingenuity. While *esprit* originally denotes individual identity grounded in both temperament and intellectual faculties, it progressively stands for the social and artistic representation and performance of such identity (the performative, or presentational meaning of the term), which then becomes the object of interpretation and assessment by its audience: the lexicographical fortune of the pair *esprit/bel esprit* is particularly representative of this historical trajectory. Corollary to *esprit*'s eventual loss of cultural capital (as described by Bayle's 1740 editor) is the rise of *génie*. Against the Neoplatonic story that identifies genius with the *furor* or divine inspiration, the word history of *génie* runs parallel to the one of *genius* in the Latin and polyglot dictionaries of our corpus, and suggests first a potentially libertine account of genius naturalized by classicizing dictionaries, then the antiquarian attempt to counter this

naturalization.⁵ In contrast with *esprit*, however, the silences in the lexicography of *génie* point to the limits of our corpus: nothing in the dictionaries foreshadows the *Encyclopédie*'s sophisticated, pre-Romantic account of genius as the sublime, law-breaking expression of one's outstanding and sympathetic sensibility.

<H1>Lexicographical Landscape

<TX>Three lexicographical traits recur in the ten dictionaries of our corpus in varying degrees. First, some dictionaries have retained the word-for-word translation of bilingual and polyglot dictionaries. This is the case in the first dictionary of the corpus, Jean Nicot's *Thrézor de la langue françoise* (1606), which marks the endpoint of the Renaissance bilingual tradition of the *Grand dictionnaire françois-latin* and the beginning of French lexicography.⁶ In Nicot 1606, the French word entry leads into short, sometimes tautological definitions in French, concluded by the Latin word equivalent, then followed by examples in classical Latin translated into French. At the other end of the corpus, the 1740 Nancy edition of the *Dictionnaire Français-Latin* known as the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* is an encyclopaedic dictionary mostly written in vernacular French, which records antiquarian meanings and good usage and quotes extensively from seventeenth-century French authors and critics, but also provides Latin equivalents after headwords or quotations within brackets, and uses Latin to differentiate the various meanings of the same French word.

Second, Latin words feature as etymons rather than translations in antiquarian and technical dictionaries. The derivation of *engin* from *ingenium* is thus glossed in Gilles Ménage's *Les origines de la langue françoise* (1650) and its much expanded 1750 edition, the *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue françoise*. The same etymological gloss on *engin* and comment on its obsolescence features in the three "technical" dictionaries of the corpus. These are Antoine

Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1690), a monolingual dictionary claiming to focus on the technical vocabularies of specific arts, sciences, and trades rather than on common usage; Thomas Corneille's *Dictionnaire des arts et des sciences* (1694), straightforwardly plagiarized from Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel*; and Savary Des Bruslons's *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* (1726), a monolingual dictionary of the technical vocabularies of various trades. Etymologies also pepper Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697), an erudite, antiquarian encyclopaedia of names: we have focused on its fourth (1730) and fifth (1740) editions.⁷

Third, defining good usage and lexical propriety is a prominent feature of another set of dictionaries. In fact, the main dictionaries of the end of the century (Richelet 1680, Furetière 1690, Académie 1694) all participate in this normative enterprise: good usage, institutionally defined by the state-sponsored *Académie*, thus became the linguistic expression of the rise of political absolutism. Its paradigm is the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, which defines lexicographical purity in common usage in the vernacular.⁸ The academic normative stance had been partly preempted by César-Pierre Richelet, whose monolingual *Dictionnaire des mots et des choses* recorded a wide range of uses while quoting abundantly from the authors of the *Académie*, and partly by Furetière, whose own dictionary included a wider lexical range than the jargons with which he purports to be exclusively concerned. Trévoux 1740 crowns this normative enterprise, while the abbé Girard's *La justesse de la langue française* (1718, reedited in 1736 and 1740), a “distinctionary” of clusters of words wrongly assumed to be synonyms, exemplifies its pedantic excesses.⁹ These dictionaries are the richest for the lexicography of ingenuity, because they display the very entanglement between the

linguistic form of French ingenuity that the *génie de la langue* represents, and its political, artistic, and especially literary expressions.

Finally, at the end of our period, Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des arts et des sciences* went far beyond the lexicographical ambitions of the other texts in our corpus. No fewer than four specialist entries were dedicated to *engin*, three to *génie*, and seven to *esprit*. The general entry for *engin* in mechanics was written by d'Alembert, the other three—on the mechanical arts, architecture, and nail- and pin-making—are by anonymous authors: all feature in the fifth volume (1755). Voltaire wrote the entry for *esprit-as-ingenium* or wit in that same volume. As for *génie*, the Chevalier de Jaucourt supplied the antiquarian account of the ancient tutelary god; Saint Lambert wrote the entry on *génie* in philosophy and literature; Leblond dealt with *génie* in fortifications; and an anonymous writer with its meaning in architecture. All can be found in the seventh volume (1757).

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<TX>The question of French linguistic identity remains ideologically loaded to this day. Echoing the preface to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* and Bouhours's *Entretiens*, Marc Fumaroli states that the King's eloquence defines the linguistic norm—that of the *naturel* as inborn linguistic mastery equated with an innate politeness or sense of decorum—and celebrates the lexicographical and literary promotion of the *génie de la langue* as the cultural program of an absolute monarchy that effectively disciplines (polices and polishes) the nation into a purist monolingualism.¹⁰ This position has been increasingly contested. For Hélène Merlin-Kajman, the national, political identity that lexicographical purism promoted was one of politeness as civility; the cool, more dispassionate, and rational language of the *âge classique* thus consciously broke loose with the vociferous eloquence of the Wars of Religion and its dangerous political

consequences.¹¹ In Merlin-Kajman's narrative, the *génie de la langue* as *esprit français* is no longer merely the polished *naturel* of the king; it identifies as "polite" a vernacular salon culture of courtiers in contradistinction to the caste of erudite, Latinate *robins* whose deliberative eloquence had fueled the civil wars of the previous century. Thus Furetière noted the absence of legal and technical jargon in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, whose aim was to polish the "beau style" (the language of the court) rather than the "style de palais" (the language of the Parlement).¹² Some argued that ultimately linguistic purism (the *génie de la langue*) could well be an illusion, which might in fact impoverish literature by establishing a rarefied paradigm—the *ouvrages de l'esprit* defined by Bouhours and quoted by most normative dictionaries. Linguists from Dauzat onward have pointed at the hybridity of classical French and nuanced the depiction of enforced monolingualism, thus highlighting the inherent tensions and *bigarrures* in the *génie de la langue*.¹³ Following Marie de Gournay's warning in her 1641 *Advis* that linguistic purism could amount to poetic poverty, contemporary specialists in linguistics and poetics have argued that literature—the expression of one's *naturel* as an irreducible singularity—stemmed on the contrary from a linguistic resistance to purism.¹⁴

The scholarly battle still rages regarding the political and cultural stakes of the lexicographical expression of French ingenuity—be they the ordering and disciplining of individual specificities and emerging social categories, or the forceful definition of the unity of a nation. In the *âge classique* itself, the French translations of the Latin *ingenium*—in particular *esprit*—were incessantly contested and debated terms in the political and cultural arenas. Even more than in Latin and polyglot dictionaries, the lexical effort at defining French monolingual propriety outlined a clear social and cultural order predicated on the identification and assessment of the variety of human *esprits* and *génies* according to their temperaments and

cognitive idiosyncrasies, tempered by an increasingly normative recourse to the notion of *naturel*. *Engin* strikes a discordant, antiquarian note in this story.

<H1>Engin

<TX>The word history of *engin* involves three main meanings:

<KW>*Engin*, n.

<NLST>1. Cognitive power of invention:

a. Legal cunning and trickery.

Nicot 1606.

b. Intellectual resourcefulness.

Nicot 1606 > Académie 1694 (as “Industrie”) > Trévoux 1740 (as “subtilité”).

2. Machines:

Nicot 1606 > Richelet 1680 (devices for lifting weights) > Furetière 1690: specified as military siege devices > Trévoux 1740 (as legal instruments, the sugarmill) > Anonymous 1755A and B (as lifting weights in architecture, a wire-pulling bench for nail- and pin-making) > d’Alembert 1755 (as complex machines with several parts).

3. Penis:

Richelet 1680 >.

<TXFL>The word history of *engin* is either a suppressed or an antiquarian one in the corpus—the word is an obscene hapax in Richelet 1680—or repeatedly described as an archaism.¹⁵

<TX>Nicot retrieves the medieval Latin meanings of *ingenium*, that of the hidden (criminal) intention or motive to be assessed in court, and that of the machine (usually used in sieges). Most of his successors, from Ménage 1650 onward, note that the term is obsolete,

especially in its cognitive sense: Richelet 1680, Furetière 1690, and Corneille 1694 use the spelling *engien* to denote its semantic obsolescence, thus distinguishing it from the mechanical meaning of *engin*—although the mechanical *engin* itself becomes obsolete in the *Encyclopédie*.

To trace the first, cognitive meaning of *engin* in the corpus is to attend the birth of a proverb: its form is set, its author dissolves into anonymity, its original meaning becomes increasingly diffuse. While Nicot 1606 is the first one to note that *mal engin* translates *dolus malus*, Ménage 1650 first features the expression “engin vaut mieux que force,” and ascribes it to Rabelais.¹⁶ It then appears in Académie 1694 and Trévoux 1740 as an anonymous proverb. The meaning of *engin* as cunning in this proverb is progressively lost: thus the *Académie* equates *engin* with industry,¹⁷ while Trévoux translates *engin* quite loosely as craftiness and polite, amicable manners before quoting Voiture’s modern recycling of the pairing “wit and strength”: Rabelais has become anonymous, proverbial, and obsolete, and must be replaced by the more elegant and up-to-date Voiture.¹⁸

Ménage 1650 is the first to connect etymologically the intellectual and mechanical meanings of *engin*, left disjointed in Nicot 1606: machines are wit objectified, hence their labeling as *engin*. Furetière 1690, Corneille 1694, and Trévoux 1740 all repeat this explanation of the semantic derivation from wit to machines. Mechanical *engins* are primarily designed to lift heavy weights. The detailed description of their constitutive parts fills the pages of technical dictionaries such as Furetière 1690, Corneille 1694, and Des Bruslons 1726. In the *Encyclopédie* especially, the referential illusion they intend to summon soon turns into a self-referential maze of jargon: without the *planches* of supplementary volumes, the reader does not “see” the machine, but is confronted with yet more technical words in need of definitions. Trévoux’s sugarmill—like the *ingenio del azucar* of the Spanish Empire—is a notable example.¹⁹ As for the

three different entries dedicated to various types of mechanical *engins* in the *Encyclopédie*—in general, in architecture, and in nail- and pin-making—they highlight hair-splitting semantic differentiation in the lexicography of the already obsolete mechanical *engin*, while reflecting the growing cultural importance of engineering and the humbler mechanical arts.²⁰ These technical definitions make very little sense to the lay reader on their own, and demand the supplement of technical drawings: entries on *engin* in architecture and pin-making thus ultimately send their readers back to the relevant *planches*:

<Insert fig. 4.2 about here>

<TX>Richelet 1680 stands out in reminding the reader that the generative etymon of *ingenium* (*gigno*) is alive and well in *engin* as penis, yet the word operates in the satirical and burlesque registers repudiated by other dictionaries for being either unworthy of elegant conversational French or irrelevant to specialist, technical jargons.²¹ Richelet is a healthy reminder of the censorship involved in the normative lexicographical disciplining of the *génie de la langue*. Already *passé* in the seventeenth century, the medieval *engin* has thus been replaced either by *machine* or, as Nicot notes, by *esprit*.

<H1>Esprit

<TX>The term *esprit* single-handedly translates several Latin terms: *spiritus*, *mens*, *anima*, as well as *ingenium*. In the corpus, *esprit* generates five semantic clusters; four of these will *not* be our main focus since they do not relate to ingenuity (they do not translate either *ingenium* or *genius* in Nicot 1606).²²

Esprit-as-ingenium or *genius* can be summarized thus:

<KW>*Esprit*, n.

<NLST>1. Cognitive faculties of the soul.

Nicot 1606 (“l’entendement que l’homme a de nature”) > Richelet 1680

(“Substance qui pense. Partie de l’ame qui juge, comprend, raisonne, & invente ce qu’on peut s’imaginer.”) > Académie 1694 (“les facultez de l’ame raisonnable”) > Voltaire 1755 (“raison ingénieuse”).

2. Particular disposition or ability to succeed in a specific activity.

Académie 1694 >.

3. Metonymic: person. (Calls for a qualifier)

Richelet 1680 >.

a. (*Bel*) *esprit*.

Richelet 1680 > Académie 1694 (“On appelle, *Beaux esprits*, Ceux qui se distinguent du commun par la politesse de leurs discours & de leurs ouvrages.”) >

Trévoux 1740 (from Bouhours 1671; positive and negative assessment of the person) >.

4. Meaning, character of a thing or person.

Richelet 1680 (“Caractere qui fait voir l’ame, le coeur, & la conduite d’une personne”) > Académie 1694 (adds “le caractère, le style d’un auteur”) >.

5. Design, intention.

Richelet 1680 >.

<TX>The history of *esprit-as-ingenium* is characterized by growing analytical precision in the definitions, and by the emergence of two related semantic traits in the presentational meaning of ingenuity. First, broadly construed, *esprit* is the faculty or tendency that drives specific, productive performances of identity. Second, its counterpart is a critical exercise intent on deciphering such a performance. *Esprit* implies a social and ultimately literary performance of identity and singularity subjected to the critical and “tasteful” reading of a community of

honnêtes gens. The very exercise of such critical wit that drives the choice of dictionary examples, as well as the lexicographical vicissitudes of the *bel esprit*, illustrates this last point.

Indeed the definitions of *esprit* demonstrate increasing analytical rigor. Nicot 1606 provides a single, tautological, and yet confusing definition of *esprit*; it alludes to one Latin morphological etymology (*spiritus*) before concluding the definition with another Latin semantic equivalent (*ingenium*).²³ While the definition itself emphasizes the cognitive meaning of *esprit* (understanding), the translated Latin examples also allude to its temperamental meaning, and suggest yet other Latin semantic equivalences with *mens* and *anima*. By contrast, Trévoux 1740 neatly delineates the cognitive meaning of *esprit* as *ingenium*, before dedicating lengthy sub-entries to specific instances of such *esprit*: for example *bel esprit*, *esprit fort*, and *esprit particulier*.

This quest for analytical precision regarding *esprit* as *ingenium* starts to emerge in Richelet 1680 (four sub-entries); it becomes more pronounced in Académie 1694; and culminates in Voltaire 1755. Voltaire explicitly makes wit his focus and discards other meanings in its introduction:²⁴

<EXT>Quand on dit qu'un homme a un esprit judicieux, on entend moins qu'il a ce qu'on appelle de l'esprit, qu'une raison épurée. Un esprit ferme, mâle, courageux, grand, petit, foible, léger, doux, emporté, &c. signifie le caractere & la trempe de l'ame, & n'a point de rapport à ce qu'on entend dans la société par cette expression, avoir de l'esprit. L'esprit, dans l'acception ordinaire de ce mot, tient beaucoup du bel-esprit.

<TRANS>When a man is said to have a judicious mind, it does not so much mean that he is what we call a wit than that his reason is neat. A firm, virile, courageous, great, small, feeble, light, sweet, quick-tempered mind means the character and make of one's soul; it

is not related to what is meant by wittiness in good society. Being witty, according to its usual meaning, is very much like being a wit.

<TXFL>This exclusion testifies to the progressive emergence of highly specific meanings of *esprit*.

<TX>The evolution of the cognitive meaning of *esprit*, from the “natural understanding” of Nicot 1606 to the detailed faculty psychology of Académie 1694, reflects the natural philosophical debates of the period on the nature of the soul.²⁵ The Cartesian definition of the self in Meditation 2 echoes in the initial “thinking substance” of Richelet 1680: “Substance qui pense. Partie de l’ame qui juge, comprend, raisonne, & invente ce qu’on peut s’imaginer” (Thinking substance. Part of the soul which judges, understands, reasons, and invents what can be imagined). The reference to imaginative invention as one of the “parts” of the rational soul might also relate to the precise definition of the *ingenium* in Descartes’s *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*.²⁶ In Richelet 1680, Académie 1694, and Trévoux 1740, concept formation, imaginative invention, and judgment are consistently ascribed to *esprit* as *ingenium*, to which Trévoux adds memory.²⁷ As in Latin, *esprit* lends itself to cognitive and moral qualifiers: one’s *esprit* can be fast or slow, thick or thin, great or small, etc.—a point noted by Voltaire.²⁸ In this qualified configuration, *esprit* is particularly prone to metonymic use and denotes the individual as a whole (see 3, 000). This use is recorded in Richelet 1680 and Académie 1694. *Bel esprit* and *esprit fort* are particularly significant instances of such metonymic use. By granting these terms discreet sub-entries in Académie 1694 and Trévoux 1740, French lexicography records the emergence of increasingly prominent and contested social types in the period.

The metonymic use of *esprit* to designate a person makes the term well suited to denoting identity. The remaining two strands in the word history of *esprit* as *ingenium* provide a

complementary semantic perspective on *esprit* as an identity marker. The presentational, performative meaning of *esprit* denotes the social and cultural construction and performance of identity, the display of one's abilities and one's nature, whether in economic terms (see 2, p. 000) or in artistic ones (see 3.a, 000). *Esprit* can also denote the collective interpretation and assessment of these performances of identity: this is its critical meaning (see 5, p. 000), which captures the social reception and normalization of its performative counterpart. In the dictionaries, both the performative and critical meanings disclose a recurring anxiety with sophistication as a distorted performance of identity, be it social duplicity or cultural affectation. Both also outline the reaction against such risks by promoting the social norms of politeness and *honnêteté*, and by defining the *naturel* as a cultural ideal. This anxiety can be traced in the shift from things to signs in the definitions of *esprit*: its ontological meanings—one's abilities, one's nature and temperament are increasingly taken on by the rival translations of *ingenium* in the period, namely *génie* and *nature/naturel* respectively. *Esprit* proper becomes confined to the performance of these and to the social and cultural assessment of such performance. One's nature is not readily accessible to others; it is displayed as a semiotic system in need of "reading" by others. The code of that social *semiosis* is fixed by the community of *honnêtes gens*, or *gens d'esprit*—Voltaire's "good society" (*en société*). The rise of the notion of character over the period denotes the omnipresence of this semiotic account of identity: the term *caractère* already features in Richelet 1680, eight years before the first edition of La Bruyère's *Caractères*, and in Académie 1694, where it denotes authorial intention and manner, or style:²⁹ "Esprit: Caractère qui fait voir l'ame, le coeur, & la conduite d'une personne" (Character which discloses the soul, heart, and moral compass of a person).³⁰ "Le Caractère d'un auteur, sa manière de concevoir et

d'annoncer les choses" (The character of an author, his manner of conceiving things and putting them into words).³¹

According to the performative meaning of *esprit*, what one does (see 2, p. 000), the ways in which one behaves (see 4, p. 000), and what one writes (see 3.a, p. 000) all disclose one's *esprit*, that is, an identity performed in terms of practical abilities, social attitudes and, ultimately, style. Thus *esprit* denotes the specific ability to carry out a particular task or business: "Il a l'esprit des affaires, du procès" (the flair for business, or legal matters),³² or behavioral stances in social interactions: "Un esprit commode, un esprit fascheux" (an easygoing character, an intractable character); "Les petits esprits ont l'air de parler beaucoup et de ne rien dire" (petty wits seem to speak much and say little).³³ *Esprit* as social and cultural performance of identity thus suggests in the dictionary examples the delineation—à la Huarte de San Juan, yet in a stridently critical fashion—of a social or national economy of wits in which individuals can be ordered, and sociocultural and national groups defined in exclusive and normative terms. Thus the libertine or *esprit fort* as an increasingly defined and confined sociocultural type deserves its own sub-entry in Académie 1694 and Trévoux 1740; its implicit negative assessment as an arrogant and antisocial stance in Académie 1694 is made explicit in Trévoux 1740: "Esprits forts. . . . Ceux qui se mettent au dessus des opinions & des maximes communes. . . . *il fait l'esprit fort, il ne croit rien, il ne tombe d'accord de rien*" (Strong wits. . . . Those who deem themselves above commonly received opinions. . . . He plays the part of the strong wit, he believes in nothing, he never agrees with anything).³⁴ "Esprit fort. . . . est une espèce d'injure qu'on dit à ces libertins & ces incrédules qui se mettent au dessus de la créance et des opinions les plus reçues. La plupart des beaux esprits sont des esprits forts" (Strong wit. . . . is a type of insult addressed to those libertines and faithless people who deem themselves above the most

commonly accepted beliefs and opinions. Most people deemed to be wits are strong wits).³⁵ In a similar fashion, Trévoux 1740 often denies wit to women, the elderly, and Germans, while in Richelet 1680 the unattributed reference to Pascal's *Provinciales* suggests the satirical use of *esprit* to deride the sophistication of the jesuitical style by playing on the ambiguous meaning of "l'esprit de la société": the spirit of the Society of Jesus *and* the mundane wit of *bel esprit*, Richelet seems to suggest, are not that different from each other.³⁶

That same *bel esprit* was one of the most contested terms of the period.³⁷ The expression telescoped both the cognitive meaning of *esprit* and its metonymic use, and became the very site where the reaction against sophistication—of specific cultural stances, social types, and literary styles—was voiced more and more forcefully in terms of opposition between *bel esprit* and *esprit* "tout court" or *naturel*. Thus *bel esprit* features as a sub-entry in Académie 1694; Trévoux 1740 dedicates to it an intricate patchwork of lengthy quotations from Dominique Bouhours's dialogue on this topic; finally, it is the main focus to the exclusion of all others in Voltaire 1755. From the Académie to Voltaire, the lexicographical account of this term is increasingly ambivalent: the polite elite that the wits ("Messieurs les beaux esprits") stand for in the *Académie* has become a clique and almost a profession—the salon wit evolving into the professional writer—which can prompt envy but also, and for Voltaire it seems mostly, mockery:

<EXT>L'esprit, dans l'acception ordinaire de ce mot, tient beaucoup du bel-esprit, & cependant ne signifie pas précisément la même chose: car jamais ce terme homme d'esprit ne peut être pris en mauvaise part, & bel-esprit est quelquefois prononcé ironiquement. D'où vient cette différence? c'est qu'homme d'esprit ne signifie pas esprit supérieur, talent marqué, & que bel-esprit le signifie. Ce mot homme d'esprit n'annonce

point de prétention, & le bel-esprit est une affiche; c'est un art qui demande de la culture, c'est une espece de profession, & qui par-là expose à l'envie & au ridicule.

<TRANS>Wittiness, in common parlance, is very akin to wit, yet does not mean precisely the same; for the expression “a witty man” can not be construed negatively, whereas “a wit” can be uttered ironically. Whence such a difference? Well, “a witty man” does not mean a superior mind and marked talent, whereas “a wit” does. This expression “a witty man” is devoid of any claim, whereas “a wit” blatantly displays some: it is an art which requires cultivation, a sort of profession which, for this very reason, is exposed to both envy and ridicule.

<TXFL>This ambivalence is perfectly captured by Trévoux's selection from Bouhours. *Bel esprit* can be construed both positively and negatively. Bouhours summarizes the positive account of *bel esprit* as “the shine of good sense” (*le bon sens qui brille*), that is, the social display and play that the good mind of a generally well-tempered individual can put on—a mind characterized by quick yet solid invention and good judgment.³⁸ The performance of such *bel esprit* can be reified into ingenious works (*ouvrages d'esprit*) that Trévoux, following Andry de Boisregard, distinguishes from the products of the human mind (*ouvrages de l'esprit*).³⁹ Such ingenious thoughts feed lively conversation; their paradigm is literature understood as the written display of wit by men of letters.⁴⁰ However, Trévoux's entry on *bel esprit* also includes the negative account of the flashiness that is the trademark of the false *bel esprit* (*faux brillants*): a conceited wit, full of affectation (*un esprit de pointes, plein d'afféterie*). While the true *bel esprit* explores the nature of things—the *res* or referent of language—the false *bel esprit* remains trapped in mere wordplay.⁴¹ The positive account of *bel esprit* in Trévoux 1740 asserts the paradigm of a good social and cultural performance of wit: the true *bel esprit* is the polite display

of one's *naturel* encapsulated in conversation.⁴² Trévoux 1740 summarized over a century of debates on the role of conversational genres that had risen to prominence over the seventeenth century.⁴³

<TX>The negative account of *bel esprit* in the dictionaries captures a poor or subversive social and cultural performance, one contrived by dissimulation or sophistication.⁴⁴ Such sophistication involves an overly pronounced concern with words, that is, with style understood as pure rhetorical ornament, which has the false *bel esprit* excel in the mundane forms of epigrams, madrigals, impromptu rhymes, and other improvisations: salon games, but also minor and lapidary literary genres. Thus the academician Jean Ogier de Gombauld (1576–1666), regularly quoted from Richelet onward, makes the lowly genre of the epigram a symptom of cultural decadence: “Nos mœurs, nos actions infames/ m’ont réduit à des Epigrammes.”⁴⁵ The account of the false *bel esprit* in Trévoux is also, in this respect, a critical genealogy of the modern notion of writer (*auteur*) born from salon culture: “un auteur,” and not “un homme” as Pascal would have it: the distinction in Trévoux carries the same pejorative baggage.⁴⁶ Indeed Trévoux notes that the term *bel esprit* has been usurped by mediocre, mundane writers to such an extent that true literary talents consider it an insult: “Vous êtes un bel esprit, disoit un Provincial à M. Racine: Bel esprit vous même, répondit brusquement M. Racine; comme si on lui eût dit une injure” (A provincial told M. Racine: “You are a wit.” As if insulted, M. Racine snapped back: “wit yourself”). Fifteen years later, Voltaire’s entry for *esprit* confirms the trajectory identified in Trévoux 1740: Voltaire re-labels the true *bel esprit* as *esprit tout court*, and contrasts it with *faux esprit*. The symptom of *faux esprit* for Voltaire is a *sophisticated* false thought instantiated in a conceit that violates verisimilitude: he gives the example of one such violation in a translation of Homer’s *Iliad* in French: “[il] crut embellir ce poëte dont la simplicité fait le

caractere, en lui prêtant des ornemens. Il dit au sujet de la réconciliation d'Achille: "Tout le camp s'écria dans une joie extrême, Que ne vaincra-t-il point? Il s'est vaincu lui-même." . . . toute une armée peut-elle s'accorder par une inspiration soudaine à dire une *pointe*?" (He thought he was beautifying Homer, whose *character* resides in his simplicity, by adorning him. Thus he said, about Achilles's reconciliation: "The whole camp shouted in an outburst of extreme joy: what will he not conquer? He conquered himself." . . . A whole army would agree, in a sudden fit of inspiration, to utter a *conceit* all at once? [Emphases ours]). Unlike Trévoux, however, Voltaire situates the whole discussion of *esprit* within the remits of style; by the time of the *Encyclopédie*, the conceptual inventiveness and sturdiness that still defined the true *bel esprit* in Trévoux 1740 have become the prerogative of *génie*: for the *encyclopédistes*, philosophers have or lack genius, writers have or lack wit. Voltaire reads and assesses the semiosis of *esprit* in oratorical and literary performances only: aptly enough, he quotes mostly madrigals. The debates surrounding the performative definition and disciplining of *esprit* as *ingenium* have become exclusively enmeshed with the polemic surrounding the notion of literature by the middle of the seventeenth century.

The critical meaning of *esprit* (*Esprit* .5) is the expected counterpart to the performative one we have just outlined. As a social and cultural performance of signs of one's identity—characters and styles—*esprit* demands the interpretation of a community of critical "readers." Thus, the *honnêtes gens* define the semiosis of ingenuity, assess the propriety of its performance against the paradigmatic touchstone of *esprit-tout-court* as polite *naturel*, and label accordingly the performer as a "bel esprit" (a wit), "esprit fort" (a libertine), "esprit (trop) fin" (a conceited wit), or "esprit pesant et ennuyeux" (a sluggish and boring wit). In some entries, this critical meaning of *esprit* sits alongside the medieval, legal meaning of *ingenium* as the motives or

intentions of a person to be assessed by a judge in trial, but also as the spirit—by opposition to the letter—of a legal text.⁴⁷ Seventeenth-century dictionaries progressively widen this purely legal context to encompass the interpretation and assessment of intentions, whether of texts or of people, in the same entries. This medieval meaning is, as expected, missing from the classicizing French of Nicot 1606; it features explicitly in Richelet 1680, which in the same sub-entry conflates two types of legal interpretation: the motive driven by one's character with the spirit of a legal text.⁴⁸ The legal context has disappeared in Académie 1694, which juxtaposes in two continuous sub-entries the interpretation of one's motives in action reliant on character, and the interpretation of *authorial* intentions in texts. This latter instance echoes the emergence of the critic as one who interprets and evaluates such authorial *esprit*. Trévoux 1740 provides the most interesting account of this critical meaning by embedding the definition of *esprit* as “meaning, character, understanding of thing, intention, motive, design, sentiments which drive one's action” within legal, diplomatic, and finally literary and social contexts. As in Richelet 1680, Trévoux mentions the spirit of a contract; this legal context also underpins the reference to the assessment of intention in a trial for homicide, where it prefigures the distinction between manslaughter and premeditated murder: “Quand on fait le procès à un homicide, on regarde s'il l'a fait innocemment, ou par un esprit de vengeance” (When trying someone accused of homicide, attention should be paid to whether or not one did it innocently, or in a revengeful spirit).

<TX>*Esprit* then denotes the rationale of Spanish foreign policy, driven by a spirit of universal dominion (*un esprit de domination universelle*). Finally, it refers to the intended meaning, authorial intention, and character one should capture in a good translation, put on a par with the ability to sense the sort of polite wit that implicitly defines good society: “Il faut, en traduisant, prendre bien l'esprit de son Auteur, son sens, son caractère. Il règne toujours un esprit

de politesse dans la société des honnêtes gens” (In translating, one should absorb well the spirit of the author, his meaning and character. Good society is always suffused with a sort of polite wit). Even more than the invention of the modern author defined by a singular style, the word history of *esprit* testifies to the rise of the modern critic as the referee of social and literary style, whose acumen and judgment increasingly become displays of wit in their own right. Thus, while satirical puns and conceits are absent from Nicot 1606 and explicitly banned from Académie 1694 (which only records the calcified form of wit that proverbs stand for), they already feature in the examples of Richelet 1680, and are omnipresent in Trévoux’s mesh of quotations.⁴⁹ As for Voltaire 1755, the whole entry functions as a display of critical wit in its own right. The social and cultural disciplining at stake in this critical exercise of wit also proves increasingly violent. Praise of great wits grows rarer in the examples. By contrast, the epigrammatic or conceited attack castigates a misfit through the sort of “scapegoating laughter” whose anthropological mechanism underpins the effectiveness of *comédie de caractère*, and assumes shared social and cultural norms with the laughing audience. In this case, critical wit fosters the exclusive social logic of cliques, coteries, and classes through the merciless skewering of identities.⁵⁰ This social disciplining upholds the *naturel* as a new ideal: ease of manners, unaffected style, and effortless display of one’s singularity. Paradoxically, this new social norm was an artfully constructed nature requiring education, polish, and control.⁵¹ The *naturel* is therefore central to the early modern French culture of ingenuity, and is one of its keywords.

<H1>Naturel

<TX>Like *esprit*, the words *naturel* but also *nature*, which both translate *ingenium* in Nicot 1606, also stand for a whole raft of other Latin terms, which can be ordered in seven

semantic clusters.⁵² The semantic evolution of *naturel*-as-*ingenium* can be summarized as follows:

<KW>*Naturel* (*nature*), n.

<NLST>1. Innate characters and properties that define the nature of a specific being.

Nicot 1606 >.

2. Innate dispositions from birth defining one's temperament, mode of actions, abilities.

Nicot 1606 >.

<TXFL>Unlike *esprit*, some overlaps between these semantic clusters are significant for the word histories of *nature* and *le naturel*, in particular the one between the mimetic, or paradigmatic, meaning of *nature* as the model of all arts (**meaning F**) and *le naturel*.

<TX>The humoural meaning of *nature/naturel* related to temperament remains stable in all dictionaries: *ingenium* as *nature* and *naturel* denotes the native and bodily determinations of identity. Human singularity is only one instance of this form of corporeal specification described in terms of humours or temperaments: the dictionary examples mention the varying natures of the soil (Nicot 1606, Trévoux 1740), or the determinations of temperaments in animal species alongside individuals: lions are savage and cruel just like Nero in Furetière 1690 and in Trévoux 1740.⁵³ This definition of *nature/naturel* as temperament progressively leads to the definition of one's abilities: one's *naturel* also shapes what one does, one's mode of action—what one enjoys doing, and especially what one is particularly good at. This semantic trajectory from temperament to aptitudes is also that of *génie*.⁵⁴ It is encapsulated in the expression *avoir du naturel pour* (to be naturally gifted for).⁵⁵

As embodied principle of identity and source of one's abilities, one's *nature* and *naturel* proves a favored site of social, pedagogical, and artistic disciplining but also corruption. Ongoing debates about nature versus culture and its shaping of individual identities reverberate in dictionary examples. Furetière 1690 warns that a young gentleman's good nature will be spoiled by the commerce of bad company: "Les mauvaises compagnies ont gasté tout le bon naturel de ce jeune homme" (Bad company has spoiled this young man's good nature).⁵⁶ Copious excerpts also suggest an embryonic disputation on what is more important, a good education or a good nature, in Furetière 1690, taken up by Trévoux 1740:

<EXT>"Il faut cultiver le naturel quand on l'a beau" (one must cultivate one's nature when it is a beautiful one).⁵⁷

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<EXT>"Une éducation excellente, avec un naturel médiocre, est préférable au plus riche naturel du monde, avec l'éducation ordinaire" (the excellent education of a mediocre nature is preferable to the richest nature in the world left to ordinary education).⁵⁸

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<EXT>"Bien des gens s'éloignent de leur naturel, et se défigurent pour plaire" (many stray away from their own nature, and disfigure themselves in order to please).⁵⁹

<TXFL>The artistic expression and disciplining of this *nature* and *naturel* is particularly worthy of attention, as its lexicographical history in the contrasting pair *naturel/artifice* matches that of *esprit/bel esprit*. This history nuances the extremely rational views on mimesis supposedly emphasized during the *âge classique*—the "age of reason" promoted art as a ruled practice that required industry and labour, *à la* Boileau.⁶⁰ Since Richelet, the products of one's wit are *par excellence* the place where one's *nature* and *naturel*-as-abilities are not only displayed, but

assessed. Seventeenth-century lexicographers take for granted that one should polish one's *naturel*: Theophile de Viau, who neglected his natural talent for poetry, is paradigmatic of the artistic failure stemming from an unpolished *naturel*.⁶¹ While, paradoxically, the *naturel* is meant to be the expression of irreducible singularity ("what is not general in man," Furetière reminds us), it increasingly becomes a norm of good social and artistic performance.⁶² This is apparent in the meanings of the adjective *naturel*: truthfulness (*genuinus*), sincerity, and polite ease of manners (*ingenuus*), also present in the definitions of *nature* and *le naturel* in some dictionaries, where these qualities are always contrasted with artifice and contrived affectation:

<KW>*Naturel*, adj.

<EXT>Richelet 1680: "Ce mot se dit des vers et de la prose" (This word qualifies verse and prose).

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<EXT>Furetière 1690: "... ce qui est libre, qui ne parait point forcé. Cet Orateur a l'action belle, le geste *naturel*; il a un stile fort naturel, fort coulant qui n'est point enflé ni affecté" (what is free, does not come across as contrived. This Orator's acting is beautiful, he has a natural sense of gesture; his style is most natural, it flows nicely, and displays neither affectation nor excess).

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<EXT>Académie 1694: "Facile, sans contrainte. *Il a un air aisé & naturel*. Il se dit aussi en ce dernier sens, des ouvrages d'esprit & de l'esprit mesme. *Les vers qu'il fait sont naturels. son style n'est pas naturel. il a l'esprit naturel*" (Easygoing, unconstrained. He looks natural and at ease. Used in this latter sense about the products of one's wit, and

about wit itself. His verses are natural, his style is not natural. He has an unaffected manner).⁶³

<TXFL>Like *esprit*, *naturel* epitomizes a new cultural and artistic paradigm of polite artlessness against *artifice* and *bel esprit*. Trévoux makes this final leap from cultural norms of self-discipline and representation to artistic norms of mimetic representation by conflating *nature* as the paradigm of all arts (meaning F) with the *naturel-as-ingenuity* in a single entry: “se dit des mœurs, du génie, des manières particulières à chaque personne: ou de l’ordre & de la conduite de la nature dans la production et dans l’arrangement des choses (*indoles*)” (The morals, genius, and behaviors specific to every person: or about the order and discipline of [one’s] nature in the production and disposition of things).⁶⁴ His examples amalgamate *nature* as the objective order that the artist attempts to capture mimetically (*natura*) and *nature* as the subjective ability and dynamism the artist needs to discipline in order to achieve good mimesis (*ingenuity*, by opposition to *ars*, inherited from the rhetorical account of invention).⁶⁵ Trévoux’s entry thus puts the *naturel-as-ingenuity* squarely at the center of the mimetic poetics of French classicism; the faculty or rather the ability at stake in good artistic representation is not so much the universal reason that supposedly typified the age, but one’s singular *naturel* as equated by both Nicot and Trévoux with one’s *génie*:

<EXT>Nature: La nature et manière de faire que l’homme a de nature (*ingenuity*) . . . ne defraudare genium: ne contenter pas nature . . . suapte ingenio: de son naturel (Nature: the nature and manner of action man gets from nature . . . defraudare genium: to rob one’s nature of its due . . . suapte ingenio: out of one’s own nature).

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<EXT>Génie: Est le naturel et inclination de chacun (One’s nature and inclination).⁶⁶

<H1>Génie

<TX>The interplay between the naturalist and antiquarian meanings of *génie* in French—respectively, one’s natural bent and wit and one’s tutelary spirit(s)—echoes the Latinate word history of *genius*. It highlights the ways in which the temperament and moral meanings of ingenuity as markers of identity were embedded within the early modern handling of the “problem of paganism” in particular, and the question of religion in general. As in Latin, lexicographical omissions and silences about *génie* point to the limits of word histories in the investigation of early modern French ingenuity. The semantic range of *génie* in the corpus is as follows:

<KW>*Génie*, n.

<NLST>1. Moral character and temperament.

a. Natural inclination or dispositions (including passions and virtues).

Nicot 1606 >.

b. Natural talent.

Nicot 1606 >.

2. Wit.

Richelet 1680 >.

3. Pagan tutelary spirit(s), good and bad angel.

Richelet 1680 >.

4. Metonymic uses: people, person.

Trévoux 1740.

5. Chorography: nature, natural property.

Trévoux 1740.

6. Military engineering.

Trevoux 1740 >.

7. Architecture: winged allegories of passions and virtues.

Furetière 1690 >.

<TXFL>Like *esprit*, the definition of *génie* expands significantly between Nicot 1606 and Jaucourt, Saint Lambert, and Leblond 1757. As for *esprit*, lexicographers handle this expansion analytically. *Génie* is a single entry in Nicot 1606, whereas Trévoux 1740 dedicates seven separate entries to all six senses listed above and distinguishes between various senses of *génie*: as natural talent, disposition, humour, taste, and manners (see 1, p. 000); as wit (see 2, p. 000); and as the various instances of the tutelary spirit that include the God of Nature in fables, the spirit providing moral guidance in poetry, the Christian good and bad angels (see 3, p. 000).⁶⁷ Finally, the *Encyclopédie* deals with *génie* / *genie* / *génies* in the lengthy, separate entries for *génie* (see 1–3, 6, and 7, p. 000).

<TX>Yet the dictionaries barely echo a booming “culture of genius.” Definitions are overall stable and examples scarce. While Richelet 1680 and Trévoux 1740 indicate the semantic overlap between *esprit* and *génie*, there is nothing among the lexicographical predecessors of Saint Lambert 1757 that foretells his sophisticated, pre-Romantic account of the man of genius.⁶⁸ Dictionaries are mute as to the cultural importance of the concept of *génie* that Saint Lambert 1757 reveals: its history lies beyond the lexicographical threshold of this book.

Three main definitions dominate the lexicographical history of *génie*: the identification of *génie* as one’s natural tendency (see 1, p. 000) and natural wit (see 2, p. 000), and its antiquarian definition as tutelary spirit (see 3, p. 000). Their problematic relationship mediates the question of identity through contemporary debates on the anthropology of religion. This suggests another,

antiquarian rather than Neoplatonic route into the divine quality of one's *génie*; yet it also deflates this divine quality by naturalizing *génie*—no longer a tutelary god, but one's embodied soul.

Génie as tutelary spirit is missing in Nicot 1606. It appears in Richelet 1680, is the dominant meaning in Furetière 1690 and becomes increasingly autonomous from Académie 1694 onward. Richelet and the Académie list this antiquarian meaning first, and it has its own separate entry in Trévoux 1740 and in the *Encyclopédie* (Jaucourt 1757). These entries provide elaborate historical excavations of the religious culture of paganism. Jaucourt 1757 echoes its naturalization and anthropological handling, and locates *génie* within a historical anatomy of religion as superstition, in line with the agenda of the *Encyclopédie*. By contrast, Trévoux 1740 marks an antiquarian reaction to these libertine uses of pagan *génies*.

Indeed, in line with classicizing Latin dictionaries, seventeenth-century dictionaries tend to explain away the antiquarian meaning of tutelary being by appealing to humoral (temperaments), moral, or cognitive ones: the ancient tutelary god is one's nature allegorized. Furetière 1690 is paradigmatic in this respect: “Sorte de divinité chez les Anciens, laquelle il faisoit **p**resider à toutes choses. . . . Ce mot n'**e**stait plus employé parmy les Chrestiens, que pour signifier un certain esprit naturel qui nous donne de la pente à une chose, on **r**epresente les **G**énies dans les ornements d'Architecture, sous la figure d'enfans ailez, à qui on donne des attributs qui marquent les vertus & les passions” (Type of god among the Ancients, which they had preside over all things. . . . This word being only used among Christians to mean a certain natural bent that inclines us toward a given thing, *genii* are represented in architectural ornaments as winged children, who are given attributes that denote virtues and passions). First a tutelary being, then *génie* is internalized and “Christianized” as one's natural bent; a final move

interprets architectural *génies* as personifications of one's dispositions, that is, passions and virtues. Jaucourt 1757 takes the same antiquarian interpretation further: the meaning of *génie* as tutelary spirit discloses the superstitious hypostasis or deification of one's nature. Thus Jaucourt inscribes the cult of the tutelary *génie*, alongside the elf and the fairy, into a long genealogy of human superstitions.⁶⁹ His final, translated quotation from Apuleius suggests that such superstition amounts to a deification of the human soul itself: Apuleius notes that the ancient genius was progressively identified with the Manes, the soul of the deceased, and concludes: "Ce fut une plaisante imagination des philosophes, d'avoir fait de leur *génie* un dieu qu'il falloit honorer" (it was a pleasing fancy of the philosophers to turn their genius into a god that had to be honored).⁷⁰ The last occurrence of the term *génie* in this sentence refers to one's nature rather than to one's tutelary spirit. Jaucourt thus accounts for the divine nature of *génie* as one's identity from within a larger, naturalist discourse on the anthropological origins of religion as superstition: one's *genius* as tutelary spirit is made up from oneself, as are any other gods. The subversive potential of that argument already lingered in the antiquarian containment and anthropological explanation of paganism from which it originates.⁷¹ Trévoux 1740 thus forcefully denies that *génie* as a tutelary spirit ever denotes the soul of man; in doing so, the entry discloses an uneasy awareness of the possible extremes that the naturalization of the pagan *génie* could lead to in the hands of free thinkers.⁷² However, the range of allegorical meanings identified by Trévoux in poetry—from *génie* as bountiful Nature to *génie* as the allegory of one's moral compass in fiction—also belongs within this explanatory dynamic that binds together the naturalistic and antiquarian meanings of *génie*.

The naturalist account of the divine quality of *génie*-as-identity also amounts to its deflation within an anthropological explanation of religious belief devoid of any (Neoplatonic)

transcendence. Yet the definition of a singular, exceptional, and praiseworthy inventiveness slowly emerges in the lexicographical trajectory of the temperamental and cognitive meanings of *génie*. Corollary to it is a greater emphasis on the cognitive meaning of *génie* as one's wit. In Nicot 1606, the one and only meaning of *génie* is one's *naturel*, without any example. This meaning also features in Richelet 1680, Furetière 1690, Académie 1694, and Trévoux 1740. The Richelet 1680 entry is the first one to note that, when qualified, *génie* can mean the same as *esprit* and be used metonymically to denote and assess—mostly negatively in the examples selected—a human type,⁷³ whereas the Académie 1694 entry is the first one to associate *génie* with one's natural talent—*génie* as inclination thus merges one's ingrained desires with one's inborn abilities. All the dictionaries mention the set phrase “travailler de génie,” which denotes an easy and natural creative process, implicitly contrasted with a contrived and industrious one smacking of effort, along the dividing lines between *ingenium* and *industria* or *ars*. Trévoux 1740 dedicates a separate entry to both the temperament and cognitive accounts of *génie*. Thus he equates *génie* as natural talent or disposition toward a specific activity with the Latin *indoles* and *natura*, which leads to yet another entry about the metonymic use of *génie* to denote the whole person.⁷⁴ The lengthy entry dedicated to *génie* as *esprit* in Trévoux 1740 notes that it is the most common use of the term, and equates it with *ingenium*. Its examples would instantiate just as well the poetic and critical meanings of *esprit* and, in particular, *bel esprit*: they all provide critical assessments of others' wits and normative statements about the role of *génie* in literature. Like *esprit*, *génie* is necessary for good writing and good interpretation, whether such interpretation takes the form of translation or criticism: Saint Évremond and Bouhours, omnipresent in the *esprit* entries, take center stage again here: “Il faut un génie vif et brillant pour la Poësie. Marot avait un génie facile, aisé, plein de délicatesse et de naïveté” (Poetry

requires a bright and lively genius. Marot's genius was fluent, easy, full of delicate ingenuousness). "Il faut pénétrer le génie qui anime les Ouvrages des Anciens" (One must grasp the spirit that animates the works of the Ancients).⁷⁵ Trévoux's entries themselves are witty displays of conceits in their own right: his critique of the bad critic, lifted from the abbé de Bellegarde, thus reads: "Vous avez détrompé le public, qui vous regardait comme un génie de premier ordre" (You have disabused the public, who held you to be a first-rate genius).⁷⁶ Trévoux's entry on *génie* as *ingenium* equates it with *esprit* and testifies to the emergence of a more cognitive meaning of the term.

In striking contrast, *génie* in Saint Lambert 1757 is the very opposite of *esprit*. Saint Lambert first defines *génie* as the creative imagination stemming from a particularly developed, sympathetic sensibility, before examining such genius at work in the arts (epic poetry and tragedy, bucolic poetry and comedy), the sciences (experimental philosophy), and practical knowledge (state governance and military leadership). In each of these, Saint Lambert opposes the manifestations of *génie* to those of *esprit*—his psychology reworks commonplace attributes of the *ingenium* accordingly. Thus, Saint Lambert redefines one of the cognitive abilities of the good *ingenium*, namely reminiscence: it is no longer equated with the analytical ability to reconstruct a chain of inferences in a process of discovery, but with the ability to "relive" or experience a past (or imaginary) event to the fullest of its sensible potentialities. In the arts, good taste is the manifestation of *esprit* and defines a poetics that meets the demands of *decorum*, that is, a social definition of norms. In epic and bucolic poetry and in tragedies, the work of *esprit* is a fine, elegant, and polished one; in comedy, it contributes to enforcing those social norms. By contrast, genius manifests itself in the sublime and defines a poetics of irregularity, which breaks all rules—the rhetorical or poetic rules of a given genre or those of linguistic propriety—and

prompts astonishment. Thus Virgil and Racine are elegant wits, and Milton and Homer are geniuses. In comedies, the sublime consists in pinpointing deviation not so much from the social norm as from a cosmic, natural, and universal order.

In the sciences, Saint Lambert notes that experimental philosophy, by its very nature, requires more *esprit* than *génie*, because it involves method, that is, careful analytical progress in abstract reasoning, and *slow*, systematic confrontation of observations in order to identify similarities and differences. The good philosopher, concerned with truth, is therefore driven by a curious intellect, whereas the philosophical genius is driven by a fiery imagination—his thinking is decidedly unmethodical and lateral; driven by circumstances and his passions, he quickly jumps to conclusions in sweeping moves; he is prone to building systems whose beauty he mistakes for truth. Locke is a good philosopher in that he coldly observed and deduced a number of truths; Shaftesbury is a philosophical genius whose fantastical systems, often built without foundations, contain many errors and occasional sublime truths: “Il y bien peu d’erreurs dans Locke & trop peu de vérités dans milord Shafsterbury [*sic*]: le premier cependant n’est qu’un esprit étendu, pénétrant, & juste; & le second est un génie du premier ordre. . . . nous devons à Locke de grandes vérités froidement apperçûes, méthodiquement suivies, séchement annoncées; & à Shafsterbury des systèmes brillans souvent peu fondés, pleins pourtant de vérités sublimes” (There are very few errors in Locke and too few truths in milord Shaftesbury: yet the former was only a wide-reaching, sharp, and accurate mind whereas the latter was a genius of the first order. . . . We owe Locke great truths that were coldly perceived, methodically tracked, dryly expressed; we owe Shaftesbury brilliant systems, usually devoid of solid foundations, yet full of sublime truths).⁷⁷ While too much imagination would in principle hinder good philosophical practice, Saint Lambert also acknowledges that the quick leaps and bounds of the philosophical

genius have contributed more to the advancement of learning than the systematic findings of the pedestrian, methodical philosopher—*pace* Descartes, who remains listed among the philosophical geniuses who sparked the progress of the discipline alongside Bacon, Malebranche, and Leibniz. As for practical knowledge—statesmanship, counsel, and military leadership—the man of genius might well be able to find out the rules of good government; yet his heated, passionate temperament and his love of fanciful, grand systems mean that he risks lacking the cold blood, steadiness, discretion and realism required of a good prince, counselor, or minister. For the same reason, the man of genius is a great tactician but not a great strategist in war; his ability to take in, assess, and react to occasion is a marked advantage in the heat of battle, but he neglects the rational reality checks needed to plan properly a whole military campaign.

Saint Lambert 1757 assumes a rich and continuous intellectual history of the notion of ingenuity and its expressions—rhetorical invention, reminiscence, or quick thinking—at the crossroads of *esprit* and *génie* in early modern France: nothing in the entries dedicated to *génie* of his predecessors suggests such a history. Saint Lambert's definition and assessment of *génie* assumes that, while it is a universal capacity, it is better suited to the arts than to any other intellectual pursuits. The whole entry, however, is suffused with its author's partiality for the pre-Romantic anthropological ideal of "l'homme de génie," a hot-blooded character governed by his imagination and his sensibility, who heralds the demise of "l'homme d'esprit," the fine, elegant, and polished wit of the preceding century.

<H1>Conclusion

<TX>Opening with the redefinition of *esprit* against Habsburg *ingenio*, and ending with new meanings of *génie* that owe much to the promotion of sensibility in both the German and

English contexts, the early modern French lexicographical history of ingenuity echoes from within the pages of dictionaries the role played by European cultural debates, diplomatic alliances, and military conflicts in the articulation of French national identity.⁷⁸ By highlighting the peculiarities of early modern French ingenuity and its importance in the fabric of the *âge classique*, the word histories of *esprit*, *génie*, and *naturel* confirm yet also nuance two Foucauldian intuitions. First, French classicism was the age of representation—understood, however, not as the transparent, inner reflection of a rational consciousness, but as the presentational, social, and ultimately artistic performance of one’s individual cognitive idiosyncrasies and temperament. These were tempered by the expectations of propriety and taste of the audience, those cultural expressions of social order that disciplined the *naturel* and made it a norm.⁷⁹ Second, the modern subject emerging from this age of representation was indeed a site for ideological, political, and cultural policing; paradoxically, however, such policing promoted singularity and was instrumental in the emergence of the modern notions of author, style, and critic. Envisaged from the perspective of ingenuity, the emergence of the modern subject fulfils a disciplinary function in the *âge classique*, yet also promotes the very means for its contestation, especially in upholding the *naturel* as the new norm of good social and artistic performance. The eighteenth-century lexicographical account of *génie* in the *Encyclopédie* thus redefines the *naturel* in terms of sensibility and as the higher-order dismissal of the social rules of taste. At the end of the lexicographical trajectory of the keywords of French ingenuity, the pre-Romantic *génie* of Saint Lambert has become the polar opposite of the discriminating social and artistic intelligence so cherished by Voltaire in his entry on *esprit*.

<NTX>¹ Bayle 1740 [1697], 2:609, for the Critical Remark α under the entry “Gretserus.”

² The French critique, on linguistic and stylistic grounds, of other national expressions of ingenuity features in the *Entretiens d’Ariste et d’Eugène* (1671) written by the Jesuit Dominique Bouhours. In the *entretien* ‘La langue françoise,’ Bouhours mocks Spanish for its verbose obscurity, and Italian for its mannerist lack of seriousness: Bouhours 1671, 40–46.

³ On the genius of the French language as a period category, see Introduction; see also Aisy 1685; Gilles Siouffi, *Le génie de la langue française: études sur les structures imaginaires de la description linguistique à l’âge classique* (Paris: H. Champion, 2010); Wendy Ayres-Bennett and Magali Seijido. *Remarques et observations sur La langue française: histoire et évolution d’un genre* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011); Marc Fumaroli, *Quand l’Europe parlait français* (Paris: Fallois, 2001); Jean-Alexandre Perras, “Ce que les Latins *appelleroient* genius,” in *L’exception exemplaire: inventions et usages du génie (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Garnier, 2016).

⁴ The question of identity is constructed alongside both the moral semantic axis of ingenuity, and the presentational one described in the introduction: style, author, and critic envisages identity through modes of display, that is, from a presentational perspective.

⁵ See chapter 1.

⁶ On the *Grand dictionnaire françois-latin*, see chapter 1.

⁷ According to the ARTFL project, these late editions represent the best state of Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*. See <https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaire-de-bayle>. None of the keywords feature as headwords in their own rights in Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*.

⁸ *Dictionnaire de l’Académie françoise* (Paris: Vve Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1694).

⁹ See Girard 1718, 85–7, under the entry “RAISON BON-SENS ESPRIT GÉNIE
CONCEPTION INTELLIGENCE ENTENDEMENT JUGEMENT.”

¹⁰ Marc Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence. Rhétorique et res literaria en France de la Renaissance au seuil de l'âge classique* (Paris: Droz, 2002), 694. Bouhours, *Entretiens*, 152–53; Marc Fumaroli, “Le génie de la langue française,” in *Trois institutions littéraires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

¹¹ Hélène Merlin-Kajman, *La Langue est-elle fasciste? Langue, pouvoir, enseignement* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 169–78. For an extreme instance of this debate, see the 2004 Fumaroli/Cavaillé polemic: Marc Fumaroli, “La République des lettres, l'Université et la grammaire,” *Nouvelle revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 2 (2004): 463–74 and Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, “Le paladin de la République des lettres contre l'épouvantail des sciences sociales,” *Les Dossiers du Grihl*, 2 (2007), online 12 april 2007.

¹² Furetière 1690, preface [6r].

¹³ Albert Dauzat, *Le génie de la langue française* (Paris: Payot, 1943). Bernard Cerquiglini has shown that the philological fabrication of a “pure” French language was driven by the political demands of defining national identity: Bernard Cerquiglini, *Une langue orpheline* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2007).

¹⁴ Marie de Gournay, *Les Advis, ou les presens de la demoiselle de Gournay*, 1st edn 1634 (Paris: Bray, 1641), 267, 269, quoted and discussed in Gilles Siouffi, *Le Génie de la langue*, 301–3. Gilles Philippe historicizes this debate in “Un ramage subtil et faible” in *Le français, dernière des langues. Histoire d'un procès littéraire* (Paris: PUF, 2010), 21–59; while Henri Meschonnic tackles the myth of the ‘génie de la langue’ as clarity and distinctness from the perspective of

poetics: Henri Meschonnic, *De la langue française: essai sur une clarté obscure* (Paris: Hachette, 1997).

¹⁵ “Vieux mot” in Richelet 1680, Furetière 1690, Corneille 1694, Académie 1694, Trévoux 1740.

¹⁶ Rabelais 1532, 103: “engin mieulx vault que force” (cunning is worth more than strength).

¹⁷ However, since Estienne 1536, the relationship between *ingenium* and *industria* is complex: industry is therefore not altogether a mistranslation. See Introduction and chapters 1 and 2.

¹⁸ “On dit proverbialement, mieux vaut engin que force; pour dire, que l’adresse & l’esprit, la douceur, la complaisance, font réussir en des choses dont on ne viendroit pas à bout par la violence. M. Voiture les a joint ensemble, *force & engin, en ce cas j’emploirois.*” (One uses the proverb: cunning is worth more than strength in order to mean that craftiness, wit, kindness, and leniency succeed where violence would not. Mr Voiture has joined them together: *strength and cunning in this case I shall use.*)

¹⁹ See chapter 3.

²⁰ Vérin, *La gloire*, 20–31 (on *engin*).

²¹ “un peu trop crûment dans la conversation, ou dans le stile comique, & satirique. C’est la partie qui fait les Empereurs & les Rois . . . la partie naturelle de l’homme.” (A bit crude in conversation, or as a satirical and burlesque term. This is the part that makes Emperors and kings. . . . Man’s natural part.) This—quite stable, if rarely emphasized—generative meaning lingers in other terms in the ingenuity lexical family: thus *nature* can denote reproductive organs and sperm (Nicot 1606, Richelet 1680, Furetière 1690, Académie 1694, Trévoux 1740), and *naturel* can denote the sexual drive (Trévoux 1740). Similar associations can be found in English: see chapter 6.

²² These four semantic clusters are: A. The theological meanings of esprit as *spiritus*: the Holy Ghost, God, angels, demons, the soul inasmuch as it is immaterial and separate from the body; B. The medical meanings of esprit as *spiritus*: the finest, most volatile particles of the human body involved in the generation of motion; C. The chemical/alchemical meanings of *esprits* as *spiritus*: mercury, or any concentrate resulting from distillation; D. The natural-philosophical meanings of esprit as *anima*: the principle of life and motion. The medical and chemical meanings dominate the entries dedicated to *Esprit* in the technical dictionaries: Furetière 1690, Corneille 1694, and Des Bruslons 1726.

²³ Nicot 1606: “Esprit: Il vient du Latin *spiritus*. L’esprit et entendement que l’homme a de nature: *ingenium*.”

²⁴ This analytical tendency reached the excessive level of pedantic hair-splitting in the ‘distinctionary’ of Girard 1718. See note 14 above.

²⁵ Académie 1694: Faculties of the rational soul (imagination and conception, imagination alone, conception alone, judgment)

²⁶ “I am a thing that thinks: that is, a thing that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things, is willing, is unwilling, and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions,” René Descartes, “Third Meditation” in *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Anthony Kenny, Dugald Murdoch and Robert Stoothoff, 3 vols (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1984–91), 2 (1984): 24. “But when it [the spiritual power through which we know things] forms new ideas in the corporeal imagination, or concentrates on those already formed, the proper term for it is

‘native intelligence’ (*ingenium*).” René Descartes, rule 12 in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* in the *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. Cottingham et al., 1 (1985): 42.

²⁷ The relationship between memory—or rather, reminiscence—and *ingenium* features in the scholastic Latin reception of Aristotle’s *De memoria et reminiscentia* (in the *Parva naturalia*), and in Descartes’ technical definition of the *ingenium* in the *Regulae*: see Aristotle, *Parv Nat*, 449b4–453b11, and note above.

²⁸ On thin and thick wits, see Saint Évremond as quoted in Trévoux 1740: “Cet esprit si fin et délicat s’est usé et épuisé en peu de tems” (This wit, such a fine and delicate one, soon wore out and dried out); “Un esprit judicieux est d’ordinaire pesant et ennuyeux” (a judicious mind is usually a heavy and boring one). Voltaire 1755: “C’est un mot générique qui a toujours besoin d’un autre mot qui le détermine” (It is a generic word which always requires another word to qualify it).

²⁹ In Greek and Latin, a character originally denotes a letter or sign before referring to the individual features of a person’s physiognomy and temperament and finally, to the idiosyncrasies of one’s style in rhetoric. The term features in that latter, stylistic sense in Voltaire 1755. See below, xxx.

³⁰ Richelet 1680.

³¹ Académie 1694.

³² Académie 1694.

³³ Académie 1694; Trévoux 1740, quoting Le Chevalier d’Harcourt.

³⁴ Académie 1694.

³⁵ Trévoux 1740.

³⁶ Trévoux 1740: “Il a bien de *l’esprit* pour un Allemand, disoit le Cardinal du Perron du Jésuite Grétser. Cette femme n’a pas assez d’*esprit* pour sçavoir qu’elle n’en a point” (“He’s quite witty for a German,” Cardinal du Perron used to say about the Jesuit Gretser. This woman is not witty enough to be aware that she has no wit.) This was excerpted from Bouhours and Saint Évremond respectively. Richelet 1680: “Il ne sort aucun livre de chez nous qui n’est l’esprit de la société” (we do not issue any book that does not bear the mark of the society’s spirit), a paraphrase of “Il ne sort aucun Ouvrage de chez nous, qui n’ait l’esprit de la Société,” from Blaise Pascal, “Neusviesme lettre” of the *Provinciales*: Pascal 2004, 406.

³⁷ The conflation between the types of the wit and that of the philosophical libertine in Trévoux 1740 is telling in this respect. See Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, *Postures libertines. La culture des esprits forts* (Toulouse, Anacharsis, 2011).

³⁸ Trévoux 1740, quoting Bouhours 1671: “Le bon sens qui brille; . . . un juste tempérament, de la vivacité et du bon sens” (the shine of good sense . . . a well-tempered disposition, liveliness and good sense); “Un esprit qui a beaucoup de faux brillans, mais peu de vrai et de solide; un esprit de pointes qui a de l’afféterie” (A flashy wit, yet nothing true or solid to it; a conceited wit, full of affectation); “Se dit aussi des effets et des inventions que produit cet esprit; des pensées ingénieuses épandües dans un livre, ou dans quelque Ouvrage que ce soit” (Can be said of the effects and inventions generated by such a wit, of ingenious thoughts displayed in a book, or in any other kind of work).

³⁹ See Andry de Boisregard 1689 [1692], 346: “Ouvrages d’esprit. Ouvrages de l’esprit.” Retrieved from the *Corpus numérique des remarques sur la langue française (XVIIe siècle)*, <https://www.classiques-garnier.com/numerique-bases/index>.

⁴⁰ Trévoux 1740: “Esprit. . . . On ne sauroit avoir trop d’esprit dans une conversation enjouée. Le CH. de M. Les compositions ingénieuses des gens de lettres sont des ouvrages d’esprit” (Wit. . . . One cannot have too much wit in a lively conversation. Le Chevalier de Méré. . . . The ingenious compositions of men of letters are works of wit).

⁴¹ Trévoux 1740: “Un vrai bel esprit songe plus aux choses qu’aux mots” (a true wit ponders more about things than words), which contrasts with the quotation from Saint Évremond on the false *bel esprit*: “Un bel esprit, si j’en sçai bien juger? / Est un diseur de bagatelles” (A wit, if I am an able judge? / is a speaker of trifles).

⁴² Trévoux 1740: “Un véritable bel esprit. . . . ses expressions sont polies & *naturelles*. Il n’a rien de faux, ni de vain dans ses discours et dans ses manières” (A true wit . . . his expressions are polite and *natural*. There is nothing either false or vain in his speech and manners). Emphasis ours.

⁴³ An early example is the “Querelle des Lettres,” which pitted Guez de Balzac (1597–1654) and his supporters such as René Descartes against Jesuit polemicists and rhetoricians on the question of good style in the epistolary genre. See Mathilde Bombart, *Guez de Balzac et la querelle des lettres: écriture, polémique et critique dans la France du premier XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2007). Fumaroli locates the origin of good classical French prose in conversation: Marc Fumaroli, *La diplomatie de l’esprit: de Montaigne à La Fontaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002). This view is contested by Meschonnic in *Le génie de la langue*.

⁴⁴ Recent scholarship has identified dis/simulation and its rhetorical expression, irony, not only as a trademark of philosophical free-thinking and political subversion, but also as one of the structures of political control deployed by institutions of the state: see Jean-Pierre Cavaillé,

Dis/simulations: Jules-César Vanini, François La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Louis Machon et Torquato Accetto: religion, morale et politique au XVIIe siècle (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002); Fernand Hallyn, *Descartes: Dissimulation et ironie* (Geneva: Droz, 2006).

⁴⁵ Trévoux 1740, quoting Bouhours: “Ces messieurs les baux [sic] esprits auroient beau faire valoir leurs madrigaux, leurs bouts-rimez et leurs impromptus, &c” (This bunch of wits could try as hard as they could to talk up their madrigals, their rhymed snippets and their improvisations, &c); Ogier de Gombauld 1658, *Aiiiv*. “our infamous mores and actions have brought me down to the epigram.” Meschonnic contests the genealogy of literature out of conversation: Meschonnic, *De la langue française*.

⁴⁶ See Pascal 2004, 1128, fr. 554 ‘Style’ : “Quand on voit le style naturel on est tout étonné et ravi, car on s’attendait de voir un auteur et on trouve un homme” (When we encounters the natural style, we are stunned and ravished, for we expected to encounter an author, and we find a man). On the emergence of the writer as a social category in the seventeenth-century, see Alain Viaila, *Naissance de l’écrivain: sociologie de la littérature à l’âge classique* (Paris: Editions De Minuit, 1985).

⁴⁷ Compare chapter 1, xxx.

⁴⁸ Richelet 1680: “Avoir un esprit de vengeance. Voici quel est l’esprit de notre contrat” (To nurture a revengeful spirit. This is the spirit of our contract). The second example is repeated in Trévoux 1740. See chapter 1.

⁴⁹ The preface of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* justifies the choice not to (self-) quote by appealing to the humility *topos*—some of the greatest orators in the French language have compiled the dictionary. Moreover, the dictionary records “la langue commune, telle qu’elle est

dans le commerce ordinaire des honnestes gens” (the common language, as it is used in the ordinary conversation of honest men), and therefore includes “les phrases les plus receuës” (the most received sentences). Richelet is the first to cite Scarron’s “Il mourra sans rendre l’esprit.” (he will die without giving up the ghost/squeezing any wit out). His quotations assumes a shared literary and mundane culture from his readers for these allusive puns and conceits to work: Pascal’s “esprit de la société” from the anti-Jesuit satire of the *Provinciales*, or the following example for meaning A of *esprit*: “Elle a peur des esprits et ne couche jamais seule” (she is scared of ghosts and never sleeps alone), borrowed from Jean Ogier de Gombauld’s “Marthe,” epigramme 37, book 1. See Gombauld 1658, 18.

⁵⁰ On comedy of characters as a disciplining genre, see Larry F. Norman, *The Public Mirror: Molière and the Social Commerce of Depiction* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁵¹ Here French *politesse* adopts the Italian culture of *sprezzatura*. See chapter 2. On aspects of this paradox relating to the relationship between absolutism and the emergence of the modern notion of literature, see Christian Jouhaud, *Les pouvoirs de La littérature: histoire d’un paradoxe* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

⁵² Six of these clusters do not relate to *nature/ naturel* as *ingenium*: A. Active force which maintains the universal order (*natura naturans, providentia, principia rerum, spiritus universalis*); B. The universe as an orderly collection of beings and creation (*mundi machina, universus, rerum creaturarum collectio*); the orderly nature of those beings (*genera, species*); C. Inner power and organisation in living beings which incline them towards what is necessary for their conservation (*conatus*); D. innate human faculty to distinguish good from evil (*instinctus*,

naturae indoles), E. The natural state of man (theology) (*status naturae integrae et elevatae, status naturae lapsae et per Christum reparaatae, humanitas, fragilitas, infirmitas naturalis*); F. Nature as the model of all arts. See Bernard Tocanne, *L'idée de nature en France dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle: contribution à l'histoire de la pensée classique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1978).

⁵³ “C’est le *naturel* des lions d’estre cruels & farouches,” “Neron estoit [etoit in Trévoux 1740] d’un *naturel* cruel & farouche.”

⁵⁴ Genie features as a synonym of *naturel* in Trévoux 1740.

⁵⁵ Nicolas Perrot d’Ablancourt (1606–1664) academician, quoted in Richelet 1680: “Theophile avoit un beau naturel pour la poesie” (Theophile was naturally gifted in poetry).

⁵⁶ Repeated in Trévoux 1740.

⁵⁷ Ascribed to d’Ablancourt, quoted in Richelet 1680, Furetière 1690, Trévoux 1740.

⁵⁸ from Saint-Réal 1684 [1726], 242: “Premiere journée; de la difficulté d’avancer dans le monde, lors meme qu’on a de l’esprit.” Quoted in Furetière 1690 and Trévoux 1740,

⁵⁹ quoted in Furetière 1690 and Trévoux 1740.

⁶⁰ This view remains widespread: see Paul Duro, “‘The Surest Measure of Perfection’: Approaches to Imitation in Seventeenth-century French Art and Theory,” *Word & Image* 25, 4 (2009): 363–83. See also Christian Michel, “La peinture peut-elle être réduite en art?” in *Réduire en art: la technologie de la Renaissance aux Lumières*, ed. Pascal Dubourg-Glatigny and Hélène Vérin (Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l’homme, 2008); Jean-Gerald Casteix, “Réduire la gravure en art et en principes: lecture et réception du *Traité des manières de graver à l’eau-forte* d’Abraham Bosse,” in Glatigny-Vérin, *Réduire en art*.

⁶¹ Richelet 1680: from D'Ablancourt: "Théophile avoit un beau naturel pour la poésie & c'est dommage qu'il n'ait pas assez châtié ses vers" (Theophile was naturally gifted for poetry; it is a shame that he did not castigate his lines enough).

⁶² Furetière 1690: "se dit aussi en l'homme, de ce qui n'y est point fixe, ni general, mais qui change suivant son temperament, ou son education" (what is neither fixed nor general in man and fluctuates according to his education and talent).

⁶³ On the overlap between moral qualities and social status implied by ingenuousness, see chapters 1 and 6.

⁶⁴ Trévoux 1740.

⁶⁵ Trévoux 1740 (quoting Saint Évremond): "le Poëte doit s'attacher à bien imiter la nature, à bien peindre la nature" (the poet should strive to imitate nature properly, to depict it well). From Longinus translated by Boileau: "On gâte le sublime si on l'abandonne à l'impétuosité d'une nature ignorante et téméraire" (sublimity is spoiled when left in the impetuous hands of a ruthless, ignorant nature). On *ars* and *ingenium*, see Chapters 1 and 2.

⁶⁶ Nicot 1606.

⁶⁷ "Talent naturel . . . la disposition qu'on a à une chose plutôt qu'à une autre. . . . humeur, goûts, façons des gens" (natural talent . . . natural disposition towards one thing rather than another. . . . people's mood, tastes, manners); "Dans le système de la fable . . . , Dieu de la nature, qui a la force & vertu de produire toutes choses" (in the poetic economy of the fable . . . God of nature, who has the strength and power to produce all things); "en Poésie, sur tout d'une intelligence qu'on suppose attachée à une personne pour régler sa conduite, l'aider dans ses entreprises, &c"

(in poetry, is said of an intelligent being supposedly tied to a person in order to regulate their behaviour, help them in their endeavours, etc.).

⁶⁸ Richelet 1680: “avec une bonne ou une méchante épithète veut dire *bon esprit*, ou *petit esprit*” (with a positive or negative qualifier means good wit, or petty wit); Trévoux 1740: “signifie plus ordinairement, l’esprit, ou la faculté de l’ame entant qu’elle pense, ou qu’elle juge” (means more commonly, the mind, or the faculty of the soul inasmuch as it thinks and judges). Saint Lambert 1757: “L’étendue de l’esprit, la force de l’imagination, & l’activité de l’ame, voilà le *génie*” (an expansive mind, a strong imagination, an active soul: that is genius).

⁶⁹ On the relationship between *genius*, *genie* and *djinn*, see chapter 7, English, xxx. The regular translation of the Arabic *djinn* into the French *génie* or the English *genie* drew on pagan and Christian notions of the genius figure, but they are not connected etymologically.

⁷⁰ Apuleius, *De deo Socratis*, 374–377, 15–4.

⁷¹ See chapter 1.

⁷² Trévoux 1740: “Le genie n’était pas l’âme de chaque homme, mais un dieu tutélaire qui lui était donné.” (Genius was not each man’s soul, but a tutelary god granted to each of them).

⁷³ Richelet 1680: “Ce mot avec une bonne ou une méchante épithète veut dire *bon esprit*, ou *petit esprit*. (Ce n’est pas un grand genie que Mr un tel. C’est un petit genie. Pauvre genie.)” (This word with a good or bad epithet means a solid mind, or a small wit. [Mr so and so is not a great mind. He is a small wit, a poor wit.]).

⁷⁴ Trévoux 1740: “Le Cardinal de Richelieu étoit le plus grand génie qui ait paru pour le gouvernement” (Cardinal Richelieu was the greatest genius ever in matters of governance).

⁷⁵ Trévoux 1740, quoting from Bouhours and Saint-Évremond respectively.

⁷⁶ Trévoux 1740 (quoted from Jean-Baptiste Morvan, abbé de Bellegarde 1761, 1:123): “De la discrétion, et de la retenue.” This witticism became a commonplace.

⁷⁷ The presence of Shaftesbury and Locke in this entry reflects the growing importance of English: see chapter 6.

⁷⁸ For an example of the relevance of this context, see e.g. Yves Citton, “Spirits across the Channel. The Staging of Collective Mental Forces in Gabalistic Novels from Margaret Cavendish to Charles Tiphaigne de la Roche,” *Comparatio. Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, 1. 2 (2009): 291–319.

⁷⁹ See Michael Moriarty, *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1988).