NETTOYER L'ÉTUDE DE LA POUSSIÈRE

Debating Cultures and Publication Strategies in the *Conférences* of Théophraste Renaudot

Von
Isabelle Fellner

HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG

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Episteme in Bewegung

Beiträge zu einer transdisziplinären Wissensgeschichte

Herausgegeben von Gyburg Uhlmann
im Auftrag des Sonderforschungsbereichs 980
„Episteme in Bewegung.
Wissenstransfer von der Alten Welt
bis in die Frühe Neuzeit“

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Preface

Andrew James Johnston and Gyburg Uhlmann

Since its inception in July 2012, the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 980 "Episteme in Motion. Transfer of Knowledge from the Ancient World to the Early Modern Period", based at the Freie Universität Berlin, has been engaging with processes of knowledge change in premodern European and non-European cultures.

The project aims at a fundamentally new approach to the historiography of knowledge in premodern cultures. Modern scholars have frequently described premodern knowledge as static and stable, bound by tradition and highly dependent on authority, and this is a view that was often held within premodern cultures themselves.

More often than not, modern approaches to the history of premodern knowledge have been informed by historiographical notions such as 'rupture' or 'revolution', as well as by concepts of periodization explicitly or implicitly linked to a master narrative of progress.

Frequently, only a limited capacity for epistemic change and, what is more, only a limited ability to reflect on shifts in knowledge were attributed to premodern cultures, just as they were denied most forms of historical consciousness, and especially so with respect to knowledge change. In contrast, the CRC 980 seeks to demonstrate that premodern processes of knowledge change were characterised by constant flux, as well as by constant self-reflexion. These epistemic shifts and reflexions were subject to their very own dynamics, and played out in patterns that were much more complex than traditional accounts of knowledge change would have us believe.

In order to describe and conceptualise these processes of epistemic change, the CRC 980 has developed a notion of 'episteme' which encompasses 'knowledge' as well as 'scholarship' and 'science', defining knowledge as the 'knowledge of something', and thus as knowledge which stakes a claim to validity. Such claims to validity are not necessarily expressed in terms of explicit reflexion, however – rather, they constitute themselves, and are reflected, in particular practices, institutions and modes of representation, as well as in specific aesthetic and performative strategies.

In addition to this, the CRC 980 deploys a specially adapted notion of 'transfer' centred on the re-contextualisation of knowledge. Here, transfer is not understood as a mere movement from A to B, but rather in terms of intricately entan-

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gled processes of exchange that stay in motion through iteration even if, at first glance, they appear to remain in a state of stasis. In fact, actions ostensibly geared towards the transmission, fixation, canonisation and codification of a certain level of knowledge prove particularly conducive to constant epistemic change.

In collaboration with the publishing house Harrassowitz the CRC has initiated the series "Episteme in Motion. Contributions to a Transdisciplinary History of Knowledge" with a view to showcase the project's research results and to render them accessible to a wider scholarly audience. The volumes published in this series represent the full scope of collaborating academic disciplines, ranging from ancient oriental studies to medieval studies, and from Korean studies to Arabistics. While some of the volumes are the product of interdisciplinary cooperation, other monographs and discipline-specific edited collections document the findings of individual sub-projects.

What all volumes in the series have in common is the fact that they conceive of the history of premodern knowledge as a research area capable of providing insights that are of fundamental interest to scholars of modernity as well.

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To my sister, Madeleine Fellner

Wir spielen immer, wer es weiß, ist klug.
Schnitzler, Paracelsus

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Many thanks are due to those who have supported me along the way. My first debt is to Anita Traninger, without whom this book would not have been possible – in more ways than one. She not only has always been generous with her time and her scientific advice but also helped me navigate the academic field. It is both exciting and daunting for anyone who is first confronted with it and still holds particular challenges for young women. I thank Ulrike Schneider (also my second reader), Irina Rajewsky, and Miltos Pechlivanos for accepting the invitation to serve on my committee and for their readiness to critically engage with my research.

Martin Urmann, my colleague in our CRC 980 subproject A07, kindly took on a role on the committee as well. Above and beyond that, he was eager to discuss ideas and to provide advice regarding all aspects of academic life. Paolo Brusa and I shared many struggles, which we often confronted together – he read my drafts and always provided a kind word. Daniel Stader, first my office mate and then my friend, proved an irreplaceable companion through the highs and lows of working on a PhD project. We planned to write our theses together in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – but, alas, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from doing so (the kitchen table it was).

Many colleagues from the CRC 980 inspired me during the interdisciplinary debates that took place there. Special thanks are due to Kristiane Hasselmann, the centre's managing director, who was always ready to help and to advise. Christina Schaefer is a role model and a friend. During my time at the CRC, I was lucky to be able to conduct many research visits to libraries holding Early Modern materials, which was crucial for the advancement of the present work. I am especially grateful to Owen McKnight of Jesus College Oxford, who sat with me for hours while I combed through various volumes in the college library.

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Sophia Althammer, Constance Greenfield, Eleanor Harrisson, and Colleen Troise each proofread parts of my thesis. My sister, Madeleine, is a researcher in a very different discipline, but her understanding and her willingness to engage with other fields are remarkable. My parents and my grandparents consistently supported me, both mentally and financially. Finally, my partner, Patrick Jordan, encouraged me to continue and to persist – which was not always an easy task.

Isabelle Fellner Basel, April 2023

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Introduction: Nettoyer l'étude de la poussière

> *Feu mon pere, homme pour n'estre aydé que de l'experience et du naturel, d'un jugement bien net m'a dict autrefois, qu'il avoit desiré mettre en train, qu'il y eust ès villes certain lieu designé, auquel ceux qui auroient besoin de quelque chose, se peussent rendre, et faire enregistrer leur affaire à un officier estably pour cet effect: comme, je cherche à vendre des perles: je cherche des perles à vendre, tel veut compagnie pour aller à Paris; tel s'enquiert d'un serviteur de telle qualité, tel d'un maistre; tel demande un ouvrier: qui cecy, qui cela, chacun selon son besoing. Et semble que ce moyen de nous entr'advertir, apporteroit non leger commodité au commerce publique: Car à tous coups, il y a des conditions, qui s'entrecherchent, et pour ne s'entr'entendre, laissent les hommes en extreme necessité.*[1]

In a century in which many people have little computers in their pockets, able to immediately find answers to any questions their owners might have, we cannot imagine how great the need for a place dedicated to the exchange of information was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the above passage, the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, in what can be described as the "primal scene" of the Bureaux d'Adresse,[2] imagines a venue where people would be able to notify each other about what they were looking for and what services or goods they could offer – in short, a place where they could get the information they urgently needed in their everyday life.

As was often the case, Montaigne's ideas fell on fecund ground and many were inspired by his *lieu designé*.[3] Yet it was the physician and journalist Théophraste Renaudot, who – explicitly referring to Montaigne[4] – would first open a Bureau d'Adresse in Paris in 1630,[5] fifty years after Montaigne first published his *Essais* (1580). Renaudot's bureau was, in what historian Anton Tantner calls a "controlled anachronism", one of the first "search engines" of the Early Modern period.[6] Sam-

1 Montaigne 2007, I, 34, "D'un défaut de nos polices", pp. 229–230, p. 229.
2 Tantner 2015, p. 17.
3 See ibid., p. 20 and chapter 1 of the present work.
4 Renaudot, *Inventaire* 1630, p. 11.
5 Renaudot, *Mercure Francois*, tome XXII, 1637, p. 61.
6 Tantner 2015, p. 133. Following Nicole Loraux, Tantner uses the concept of 'controlled anachronism' to gain knowledge through the frictions that result from "der Unzeitgemäßheit eines Begriffs – der Suchmaschine – in einer bestimmten Epoche – in diesem Fall der Frühen Neuzeit".

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uel Hartlib, another 'expert' in information and Renaudot's English "homologue",[7] showed great interest in Renaudot's venture and urged his European contacts to gather as much information as possible about its purpose, exact functioning, and founder.[8] Hartlib planned his own Office of Address and presented the plans to the English Parliament[9] – like Renaudot, explicitly referencing Montaigne[10] – but this office never saw the light of day.[11] Others in the German-speaking countries were equally interested and soon founded their own Adressbüros.[12] This illustrates that, like Montaigne, many were convinced that finding new ways of communicating knowledge was imperative for the advancement of society. The (scientific) correspondence networks, which grew ever more important in the seventeenth century, as well as the creation of scientific journals in its latter half can be seen as two other manifestations of this conviction.[13] As Montaigne puts it: not having any place for knowledge exchange left people in every part of society in extreme need.

The Parisian Bureau d'Adresse was not Renaudot's only interesting pursuit that shows him to be a full-blown European "intelligencer".[14] His *Gazette*, one of the earliest European periodical newspapers, was another means for the sharing of information. The lesser-known *conférences* – his 'academy' – which stand at the centre of the present work, were equally aimed at the spreading of knowledge. While the Bureau d'Adresse was the lynchpin for practical information, the *Gazette* dealt in political news; the *conférences*, for their part, were supposed to 'vulgarise'

In his analysis of Hartlib's Office of Address, Rob Iliffe argues in a similar fashion that it can be seen as a "distant, material ancestor of many modern online enterprises" (Iliffe 2012, p. 105).

7 Mark Greengrass, in Haffemayer 2018, p. 9.

8 See Stagl 2002, p. 179. In his analysis of the Hartlib Papers, Turnbull cites (and partially prints) an interesting letter sent from Arnold Boate to Hartlib on 26 July 1648. In it, Boate answers thirteen queries about Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse. See Turnbull 1947, pp. 123–124. The letter can also be found in the *Hartlib Papers* (online; hereafter HP) under the reference 58/3A-4B.

9 For an overview over Hartlib's plans concerning the Office of Address, see Haffemayer 2018, pp. 319–338. Turnbull proposes an in-depth discussion of the statements members of Hartlib's circle voiced concerning the office. See Turnbull 1947, pp. 77–88.

10 See ibid., p. 81.

11 See Stagl 2002, p. 180.

12 See Tantner 2015, pp. 67–82.

13 Regarding Early Modern correspondence networks, see, for example, Harris 2006 (p. 361): "In combination, long-distance corporations and the consortium of overlapping correspondence networks functioned as two powerful and interlinked engines: the former binding together scholars and experts from various countries and disciplines, the latter drawing an ever widening horizon of engagement into that domestic network of exchange." Concerning scientific journals, see, for an overview, Jeanne Peiffer and Jean-Pierre Vittu's "Les journaux savants, forms de la communication et agents de la construction des savoirs (17e–18e siècles)" (2008).

14 For a discussion of the term in the English context, see Haffemayer 2018, p. 121: "L'activité d'*Intelligencer* est par définition ambivalente: la première acception qu'en donne l'*Oxford English Dictionary* est celle de l'espion en quête ou convoyeur de renseignements. À partir des années 1630, un autre sens apparaît, celui de messager, médiateur d'information politique, qualifié plus tard de nouvelliste; l'évolution est symptomatique d'un glissement vers la publicisation croissante de l'information politique grâce à l'amplification de la circulation des nouvelles."

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knowledge for as large an audience as possible. The latter's explicit goal was nothing less than to brush off the dust learning had allegedly accumulated under the guardianship of Scholastic universities:[15] *nettoyer l'étude de la poussière*.[16]

This – Renaudot's 'communications empire' – was not an insignificant force in the Paris of the 1630s. The authorities wanted to use it to their advantage, while the city's traditional corporations eyed it with distrust. In the middle of all this stood a man who seemingly had a real penchant for the sharing of knowledge, but who also used his privileged situation to his own advantage.

The undisputed centre of Renaudot's various activities was the Maison du Grand-Coq, on the rue de la Calandre on the Île de la Cité. Here stood Renaudot's printing presses as well as the Bureau d'Adresse, and the house's *grande salle* served as a meeting place for the *conférenciers*.

There, they practised the negotiation of knowledge in the form of questions. A great variety of topics, selected by the participants themselves, were open for discussion.[17] This arrangement apparently attracted large crowds,[18] as up to one hundred *conférenciers* assembled every week from circa 1632 to 1642.[19] They discussed questions such as "De la Conference, & si c'est la plus instructive sorte d'enseigner",[20] "Si la conversation des femmes est utile aux hommes",[21] "De l'iris ou arc-en-ciel",[22] and "De l'epilepsie ou haut mal"[23] The *conférenciers* succeeded

15 Regarding the use of the term "Scholasticism" in the present work, I can only quote one of Peter Dear's notes on terminology: "my use of the words 'scholastic' and 'scholasticism' in this book should not be taken as endorsing a picture of a monolithic, entrenched body of dogma surviving from the Middle Ages by ding of blind enforcement. […] 'scholasticism' here refers to a mode of scholarship – usually employing the genre of commentary and quaestio – inherited from the techniques developed in the thirteenth century to cope with the task of assimilating ancient, especially Aristotelian, writings, and structuring the pedagogical techniques of medieval and Renaissance universities and colleges. The 'learning of the schools', furthermore, refers not simply to 'scholastic Aristotelianism' but also to the results of the pedagogical innovations associated with humanism. The schools of the early seventeenth century, including the Jesuit colleges, had incorporated both" (Dear 1988, pp. 7–8).

16 As Renaudot claims in the *Preface* to the first volume of *Conférences*: "[…] cette estude, nettoyée de la poussiere, qui toute inseparable qu'elle est de sa production, toutefois lors qu'elle est separée, accroist son prix & la rend de meilleure debit" (Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 2).

17 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.

18 Regarding the number of participants, see Wellman 2003, p. 5.

19 The printed *Conférences* range from 1633 to 1642. However, Renaudot mentions that they were printed not from the beginning of the discussion meetings but rather only approximately one year after they first began: "[…] apres avoir durés pres d'un an sans rien publier de ce qu'on y traittoit […]", the *conférenciers* decided to publish "[…] l'année suivante ce qui s'y est passé de plus remarquable" (Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 2). It is possible, according to Gilles Feyel, that they continued for some time after 1642. See Feyel 2000, p. 88.

20 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 833–840.

21 Vol. 5, *Conférence* 307, pp. 89–97.

22 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 113.I, pp. 193–209.

23 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 80.I, pp. 481–489.

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in combining moral-philosophical topics, problems of the early natural sciences, medical questions, and many other debates.

Unlike other early seventeenth-century academies, which often resembled closed circles of friends or acquaintances who met for discussion in relative secrecy,[24] the *conférenciers* aimed for their debates to reach the largest possible audience. The meetings themselves were relatively public and their *comptes rendus* were immediately published as brochures every week. These were later assembled into annual anthologies.[25]

What is even more remarkable about these anthologies is the neutral mode in which the most divergent opinions were placed next to one another. In contrast to the prize questions of later academies and the disputations taking place at universities, the *conférences* were not ultimately about determining an argument's winner. Their explicit aim was to propose a multiplicity of conflicting opinions. It was for the public to judge the *conférenciers*' interventions, as the printed *Conférences* propose no conclusion to the questions they ask: "[…] la Conference fait voir combien elle défere au jugement de son Lecteur, puis qu'elle a meilleure opinion de lui que d'elle-mesme."[26] The truth, Renaudot proclaims in his introduction to the first volume of *Conférences*, must be found by each reader themselves in the polyphony of proposed statements.

Far from being only a diverting pastime, the *conférences* aimed at revolutionising learning. At the Scholastic universities, Renaudot believed, young men learned that overcoming their adversary was a goal to be pursued at all cost. This perspective defied the gallantry and politeness essential to life at court and in society,[27] which gained an ever greater importance in the course of the seventeenth century.[28] According to Renaudot, the exaggerated combativeness of the schools limited the search for knowledge to a battle whose debris buried truth under that

24 One example for such closed circles would be the Académie française before it was formalised by Richelieu. See Pellisson 1729, pp. 5–7. See also the discussion of the Accademia del Cimento and the Royal Society of London in Serjeantson 2006, p. 172. I examine this point in more detail in chapter 5.

25 Regarding the participants of the *conférences*, see chapter 2. For a more detailed analysis of Renaudot's publishing strategies, see chapters 1 and 5.

26 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

27 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p. Or, as Montaigne already put it: "Nous n'apprenons à disputer que pour contredire: et chascun contredisant et estant contredict, il en advient que le fruit du disputet, c'est perdre et aneantir la verité" (Montaigne 2007, III, 8, "De l'art de conferer", pp. 965–989, p. 970).

28 For an introduction to the topic, see Maurice Magendie's *La politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté, en France, au XVII^e siècle, de 1600 à 1660* (1926). Magendie also mentions the *conférences*: "elles ont répandu dans le monde des connaissances, des notions, qui peuvent nous sembler superficielles et banales, mais qui étaient alors nouvelles pour bien des gens; elles ont joué un rôle de vulgarisation" (p. 140). As Magendie points out, the *conférenciers* discussed "questions qui intéressaient les gens du monde" (ibid.). In "Un ideal de la culture française entre humanisme et classicisme: 'civiliser' la doctrine'" (2006), Emmanuel Bury examines the idea that "la doctrine pouvait nuire à la vraie honnêteté", which was widespread in seventeenth-century France (p. 119).

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thick layer of dust that the *gazetier* so despised – a dust the *conférences* and Renaudot now needed to dispose of.

Readers might have noticed by now that I sometimes refer to the *conférences* with a lowercase 'c' and sometimes with a capital 'C'. This is no accident but rather helps to differentiate between the discussion meetings that took place at the Bureau d'Adresse (*conférences*) and the printed records of these meetings (*Conférences*), upon which this study is based. These are heuristic categories, and it is not always evident which notion – *conférences* or *Conférences* – should be used. Everything I can say about the debate meetings I know from the printed *Conférences*. They are the medium through which we can get a glimpse of what happened at the Maison du Grand-Coq in the seventeenth century. However, to make evident when I'm speaking of the *conférences* as historical occurrences, I will use the lowercase to differentiate from specific references to the printed *Conférences*, thus devising a system that hitherto has not been established in studies concerned with Renaudot's academy.[29]

The comparison of the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse with the practices of other academies raises the question of whether the *conférences* can be properly qualified as an academy. If one closely adheres to the criteria elaborated by certain historians of academies, they surely cannot. James E. McClellan, for example, defines academies (of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) in the following manner: they observe written rules in their proceedings, they hold regular meetings, they have functionaries, and they consist of a restricted number of members.[30] While the *conférences* had written rules and followed regular meetings, the knock-out criterion disqualifying them is that they did not have a fixed membership. They, rather, were public debate meetings.[31] For Renaudot's contemporaries, this set of criteria was of no concern. They clearly considered the *conférences* to be an academy, evidenced, for instance, in the example of the chaplain Mathieu de Morgues, who confused them with the early Académie française.[32] In his discussion of this episode, the writer and academician Paul Pellisson, in the *Histoire de l'Académie françoise* (1729 [1653]), again qualifies the *conférences* as "cette autre Académie" without questioning their status.[33] For our purposes here, it is useful to accept this qualification of Renaudot's contemporaries, as it enables interesting comparisons and opens up new perspectives on Early Modern sociability. I do not wish to claim, however, that the *conférences* are an academy in the sense of McClellan and other current-day historians of academies.

A goal the *conférenciers* shared with many other academicians was their attempt to dissociate themselves from the universities – true to the motto of *nettoyer l'étude*

29 This differentiation plays an important part in chapter 5.
30 See McClellan 1985, p. 1.
31 I discuss this in more detail in chapter 2.
32 Morgues 1635, pp. 6–7. This anecdote also plays a role in chapter 5.
33 Pellisson 1729, p. 53.

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de la poussière.[34] A decided hostility towards Scholasticism manifests itself in the introductions Renaudot wrote to the first two *Centuries* of *Conférences*, and it also appears in a variety of statements in the discussions themselves. For example, Renaudot and the *conférenciers* explicitly rejected syllogistic reasoning.[35] In contrast to the universities, where discussions frequently ended in "riotes & injures pedantesques"[36] – at least according to Renaudot – the *conférences*, in his portrayal, were a civilised place: "[l]e jeune s'y façonne, le vieil y rafraischit sa memoire, le docte s'y fait admirer, les autres y apprennent, & tous y rencontrent un divertissement honneste."[37] Renaudot's qualification of the universities' methods as dusty, pedantic, and outdated corresponds to certain critics' belief that Early Modern universities frustrated scientific progress. Well-established institutions like the universities are often portrayed as conservative and inflexible,[38] while change is ascribed to new players in the field of knowledge negotiation like the academies.[39]

What naturally follows is the question of whether the *conférenciers* genuinely broke with the universities' rhetorical and dialectical traditions – a question which forms the backbone of the present study. My hypothesis is that in their quest to make knowledge accessible, the *Conférences* employ a novel medial form, which embodies fundamental trends of the contemporary Republic of Letters. Key concepts in my analysis are anonymity, publicness, impartiality, and the possibility to take part in debates without being physically present. Yet the novelty of their form should not belie the long-term transfers that occurred between the *Conférences* and other Early Modern forms of knowledge negotiation. Therefore, in one sense, the *Conférences* were not suitable for fully achieving the goal of brushing off the dust of past generations. Yet with regard to the aforementioned concepts, they can indeed be counted successful and must be seen as a transitional phenomenon between earlier forms of knowledge negotiation and later developments in the Republic of Letters.

34 Regarding the antagonism between universities and scientific societies and the reasons for this, see Feingold 1991. In this context, it is also interesting to read Feingold's analysis of the English virtuosi's rhetoric concerning 'speculative' and their own 'new' philosophy. See Feingold 2016. For an in-depth study of Early Modern universities in all their peculiarities, see *A History of the University in Europe, vol. II, Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* (1996), edited by Hilde de Ridder-Symoens.

35 Concerning the widespread critique of syllogism by natural philosophers in the seventeenth century, see Serjeantson 2006, pp. 151–152. Serjeantson also refers to the *Conférences*. See ibid., p. 152.

36 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

37 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 3–4.

38 As Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum and Anita Traninger have pointed out: "Mit Blick auf den Wissenswandel werden Institutionen geradezu als dessen Antagonisten konturiert, als konservative, starre, traditionsverhaftete Instanzen" (Cancik-Kirschbaum and Traninger 2015, p. 2).

39 In her examination of seventeenth-century scientific societies, Martha Ornstein comes to the conclusion that the universities did not contribute much to the advancement of science, whereas the academies were incubators of progress. See Ornstein 1928, pp. 213–256. For a critical discussion of this view, which many contemporary studies have adopted, see Lux 1991.

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In terms of methodological approach, my study can be situated as follows. With my background in literary studies, I aim at a transdisciplinary history of knowledge that combines various methods. On the one hand, I am concerned with the history of rhetoric and the history of science and institutions, but, on the other, I am also interested in gender studies and the history of medicine. This transdisciplinary approach is reflected in the study's structure.

In the first part (chapters 1–3), I explore the setting in which the *conférences* took place and show how they functioned. The first chapter is concerned with Renaudot's various activities, all revolving around the Bureau d'Adresse as their centre. Not only was Renaudot the founder of one of the earliest French newspapers, the *Gazette*, but he also held the *consultations charitables* for the medical treatment of the poor and he installed chemical laboratories at his house. He also imported the idea for the *monts-de-piété* from Italy and established one of these Early Modern pawnshops in the Maison du Grand-Coq.[40]

The second chapter considers what kind of people took part in the *conférences*. As the speakers' names were anonymised in the printed *Conférences*, we can only make assumptions about their identities. The way the speakers argued at the debate meetings affirms that they belonged to the educated classes and most certainly had received university training.[41] Most likely, it is exactly for this reason that they were eager to distance themselves not only from the 'vulgar' but also from the 'dusty' Schoolmen while trying to position themselves as urbane *honnêtes hommes*.

Chapter three examines how exactly the debate meetings worked and details the rules the participants had to follow. I argue that the printed *Conférences* must be seen as an amalgamation of novelty and tradition, as they combine original principles and media with older forms of knowledge negotiation. It is especially revealing to analyse the sources the *conférenciers* use in their contributions as well as the way they construct their arguments. All self-proclamations of disengagement with the universities' methods set aside, the debates clearly show that important transfers of knowledge took place between the *conférences* and the schools.[42] In the *conférenciers*' discussions, dialectical and rhetorical modes of arguing clearly persist. The speakers place great importance on the opinions of authorities, even though one of the *conférences*' rules is that speakers should not excessively refer to authorities.[43]

40 Regarding Renaudot's voyage to Italy, see Tourette 1892, p. 4.

41 Concerning the participants' social status, see Mazauric 1997, p. 95. Feyel 2000, pp. 109–116, also discusses this point.

42 The focus on knowledge transfers (even if they are negated) is the programmatic idea behind the CRC 980 "Episteme in Motion. Transfer of Knowledge from the Ancient World to the Early Modern Period", in which I conducted the research project leading to the present study. As Cancik-Kirschbaum and Traninger explain: "Jede Form des Umgangs mit *Episteme* – Fixierung, Tradierung, Kodifizierung, didaktische Aufbereitung, Selektion oder auch Ablehnung – kann als Akt der transformierenden Anverwandlung gedacht werden" (Cancik-Kirschbaum and Traninger 2015, p. 2). Concerning the specific case of transfers of knowledge through negation, see Dadaş and Vogel 2021.

43 See vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferenes publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 4–5.

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In the second part (chapters 4 and 5), I more closely explore the debating cultures of the *conférences*: Why did the individual questions debated at the meetings not possess a conclusion? What other modes of Early Modern knowledge negotiation influenced them? In chapter four, I analyse their relation to Scholastic disputation, declamation, and dialogue. All three left their mark on the *conférenciers*' debates. A comparison with disputation and declamation reveals that the *conférenciers*' contributions cannot simply be equated with their personal opinions, as dialectical and rhetorical modes of arguing complicate any accountability. This especially counts for the debate of moral-philosophical questions. Open-ended dialogues, in which various divergent opinions appear next to each other without conclusion, are especially relevant to the printed *Conférences*.

The fifth chapter takes an even closer look at why the *conférenciers*' debates do not end with any kind of judgement about the best answer to a question. One possible reason for this can be found in their mediality. The *Conférences* were printed and distributed to a large public; discussions did not, therefore, remain sealed off from the public as they did in an exclusively oral environment. This made the *conférenciers* vulnerable to attacks, a problem which was resolved through their anonymisation in print and the practice that no opinion was preferred over the others – a procedure that lets the *Conférences* border on learned journalism. Another important factor is the close relationship of Renaudot to Cardinal Richelieu. The cardinal probably would not have been pleased if his *créature* printed dogmatic answers to questions which did not coincide with the stance of the state. If Renaudot wanted to keep the *liberté de raisonnement* so dear to him,[44] he could not, therefore, print potentially problematic conclusions to the *conférenciers*' questions.

The third part of my study (chapters 6 and 7) contains two case studies. One treats a moral-philosophical topic: the question of the hierarchy between men and women debated in various instances at the Bureau d'Adresse. The other is concerned with the *conférenciers*' medical debates. These two topics serve to illustrate how different kinds of questions were discussed by the *conférenciers*. I show that while moral-philosophical questions were determined by rhetorical *in utramque partem* argumentation, the medical questions did not necessarily follow this pattern.

In the sixth chapter, I address *querelle des femmes*-related questions, whereby the *conférenciers* debated gender order. While many speakers voiced harsh criticism of women and decidedly placed them beneath men, a number of surprising interventions occurred in favour of women. Still, my analysis discloses that the *conférences* on *querelle* topics inscribed themselves in a long-standing tradition of answering moral-philosophical questions in rhetorical patterns. The *conférenciers* constructed their answers in the mode of praise or blame, lauding or attacking women in the *genus demonstrativum*. Their answers belong to the realm of rhetoric, where interventions are supposed to be convincing yet do not necessarily expose the speak-

44 See vol. 1, "Avis au lecteur", n.p.

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er's personal opinions. Apart from that, answers in favour of women did not aim at modifying the order of society and were of no consequence to the lives of real women. Overall, it is highly unlikely that women took part in the *conférences*. Consequently, they could not speak for themselves – their fate was decided by men.

In the seventh chapter, I focus on the *conférenciers*' discussions of medical questions. In sharp contrast to the debates about women, these questions were of immediate socio-practical relevance to Renaudot and his contemporaries. Many physicians from Renaudot's alma mater, the University of Montpellier, as well as from other universities, seem to have taken part in the *conférences.* They put their theoretical knowledge to direct test in their everyday practice of medicine. Unsurprisingly, their arguments often revolved around their medical *expérience*. The question of what exactly this *expérience* is stands at the centre of this chapter. I show that the notion of *expérience* in the *Conférences* in general differs somewhat from the *conférenciers*' understanding of *expérience* in the medical debates. In the former, the speakers mostly refer to generic Aristotelian experience. That being said, the medical *expérience* to which they allude seems to be something like the collective experience acquired by generations of physicians. It becomes apparent that medical *expérience*, just as *expérience* in the *Conférences* in general, is seldom personally acquired (experimental) experience.

The question of what legitimate medical experience is also dominates the debate concerning chemical medicine. This debate rages in the *Conférences*, and it also enflamed all physicians residing in Paris in Renaudot's times. While Renaudot and his associates were in favour of chemical remedies, the Parisian Faculty of Medicine opposed them with utmost fervour. This led to the faculty regarding all Renaudot's medical undertakings with extreme distrust. After his protectors, Cardinal Richelieu and King Louis XIII, had died and could no longer shield him, it was the faculty who had Renaudot stripped of most of his privileges. Altogether, the conflict between Renaudot and the faculty reveals once more that a real *liberté de raisonnement* reigned at the Bureau d'Adresse.[45] Whereas the faculty tried to silence those arguing for chemical remedies, all kinds of opinions on them were presented at the *conférences*: the speakers attacked chemical medicine as much as they defended it. Nevertheless, and in the manner of an open-ended dialogue, Renaudot printed a variety of these contributions without favouring his own stance.

Théophraste Renaudot is somewhat of a household name in France, even though many might not be aware of the history of the man who lends his name to the renowned French literary prize created in 1926, the Prix Renaudot. Today, the house in Loudon where Renaudot was born is a small museum, and the city proudly proclaims itself "Ville natale de Théophraste Renaudot" on its website.[46] There is

45 On the limits of the *liberté de raisonnement* at the Bureau d'Adresse, see chapter 3.

46 For more on the museum, see "Le musée Renaudot", City of Loudun's website, n.d., URL: https://www.ville-loudun.fr/services-au-public/culture/les-musees/le-musee-renaudot (10.05.2023). As this website mentions: "Ouvert en 1981, ce musée de cire retrace la vie et

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an Institut Renaudot concerned with community medicine in Paris,[47] and Nicole Buresi even wrote an obscure novel concerned with the founder of the Bureau d'Adresse: *Le testament secret de Théophraste Renaudot* (2019).[48]

Renaudot's curious inventions naturally have aroused the interest of scholars. For instance, he is mentioned as an example in a number of articles in Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston's *The Cambridge History of Science: Early Modern Science* (2006)[49] as well as in other current publications concerned with the history of science.[50] Anton Tantner, investigating the possibilities available to people in their search for information in the seventeenth century in *Die ersten Suchmaschinen: Adressbüros, Frageämter, Intelligenz-Comptoirs* (2015), provides a comprehensive analysis of Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse.

Among all Renaudot's endeavours, the *Conférences* certainly have received the least in-depth attention. One obvious reason for this is that their printed records span more than 4,000 pages and they constitute – given the variety of theories put forward in them – not the easiest or the most agreeable reading. Those who have braved the difficult material include Simone Mazauric and her *Savoirs et philosophie à Paris dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle – Les conférences du bureau d'adresse de Théophraste Renaudot (1633–1642)* (1997), which should be mentioned first, as it is, up to this point, the most detailed analysis available of the *Conférences* and the intellectual abilities of their participants. While Mazauric detects a "modernité dans la forme" when it comes to the printed *Conférences*,[51] her final verdict about the knowledge disseminated in Renaudot's circle is somewhat more pessimistic. She is of the opinion that, in contrast to other academicians, the *conférenciers* did not present new theories able to supplant the knowledge of the ancients but merely rehashed what was already known in their times.[52] Sebastian Kühn, however, has shown that the underlying view of the innovative powers of other academies is somewhat overly optimistic.[53] Moreover, I would argue that Mazauric's focus on

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l'œuvre du fondateur de la presse française, et nous rappelle que cet homme fut à la base d'institutions modernes comme les Monts de Piété, les Petites Annonces, l'Agence pour l'emploi, l'Assistance Publique".

47 See, for example, the first page of the twenty-second issue of the *Lettre de l'institut Renaudot* (Institut Renaudot 1998).

48 In a preface to the text, Buresi explains that given the "injustice de son [Renaudot's] sort", the goal of her novel is the following: "Dans cette autobiographie fictive, j'ai voulu brosser le portrait d'un médecin du XVII^e siècle, infatigable, généreux, intelligent, soucieux des autres et du bien public, et pourtant malmené, malgré l'aide du père Joseph, de Richelieu et du Roi, mais surtout après leur mort" (p. 9).

49 Renaudot appears, for example, in the articles written by Serjeantson (2006, p. 170), Schiebinger (2006, p. 195), Smith (2006, p. 302), Blair (2006, pp. 394–395), and Cook (2006, p. 430).

50 Daston also mentions Renaudot in some of her articles. See, for example, Daston 1997, pp. 50–51.

51 Mazauric 1997, p. 129.

52 See Mazauric 2017, p. 53.

53 See Kühn 2011.

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the content of the debates takes away from the important point she makes about the *Conférences*' form.[54]

Kathleen Wellman, in *Making Science Social: The Conferences of Théophraste Renaudot, 1633–1642* (2003), also applies herself to the *Conférences*. She provides a good survey of the topics treated in them, even though she does not necessarily approach them in a very detailed or critical manner. Also worth mentioning is Marie-Rose Carré's *Le Bourgeois Parisien de 1640 peint par lui-même* (1994), in which she describes the *Conférences* as one of the birthplaces of *bourgeois* self-conception. Carré also authored a short article exclusively concerned with the questions regarding women discussed at the *conférences*.[55] She argues that while the *conférenciers* were in general mostly conservative and presented rather misogynistic views, there were a few participants who took the side of women, thereby heralding a "conception de l'égalité des sexes".[56] In my own analysis of these questions, I come to a somewhat different conclusion, as explicated in chapter 6.

Before the publication of these more detailed studies of Renaudot's academy, there was a decided lack of texts dealing with the *conférences* "de manière satisfaisante", as Philippe Vanden Broeck claims in "Les '*Conférences* du Bureau d'Adresse' et l'anthropologie classique" (1981).[57] Vanden Broeck succinctly explains how the *conférences* functioned, and he especially studies those meetings concerned with the relation between humans and the world.

Among the earlier analyses of the *Conférences* that lack thoroughness, one might name an early and short study of Renaudot's circle found in the *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Sciences* from 1916: Guillaume Bigourdan's paper "Les premières sociétés scientifiques de Paris au XVII^{e} siècle". Much later, J.J. Denonain provided a comparison of the *Conférences* with Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1634) in "Les problèmes de l'honnête homme vers 1635. *Religio medici* et les *Conférences* du Bureau d'Adresse" (1965).[58] Denonain mostly studies thematic overlaps between the two oeuvres and claims that the printed *Conférences* are a direct ancestor of the *Journal des Savants* – a false assumption.[59]

54 I discuss this in more detail in chapter 5.

55 See Carré 1975.

56 Ibid., p. 549.

57 Vanden Broeck 1981, p. 25.

58 Denonain points out himself that the printed *Conférences* and Browne's book have little in common other than the fact that medical topics play an important role in both and that their creators were both medical doctors in the first half of the seventeenth century (see Denonain 1965, p. 237). "Il n'y a pas – vous le savez bien – de serpents en Islande. Tout aussi vainement chercherait-on, entre Thomas Browne et son *Religio Medici* d'une part, et, d'autre part, Théophraste Renaudot et les débats de son Bureau d'Adresse, le moindre contact, la moindre relation personnelle ou épistolaire, la moindre influence possible d'un ouvrage à l'autre" (ibid., p. 235).

59 See ibid., p. 236. As Feyel points out: "Le journalisme de critique savant et scientifique du *Journal des savants* ne peut être compare aux joutes orales rapportées par les *Conférences*" (Feyel 2000, p. 79).

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In the context of research concerned with Early Modern academies, societies, and developments in the sciences, Renaudot and the *conférences* are sometimes mentioned, but they rarely receive much consideration. This can be seen, for instance, in James McClellan's seminal study *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (1985)[60] and Mario Biagioli's "Etiquette, Interdependence, and Sociability in Seventeenth-Century Science" (1996).[61]

In *Science for a Polite Society* (1995), however, Geoffrey V. Sutton dedicates a whole chapter to the *conférences*, in which he studies them as a part of the scientific "status quo" in the first part of the seventeenth century in Paris (and, as he puts it, before the onset of the Scientific Revolution).[62] Sutton argues that the *conférences* presented an eclectic mix of theories largely cast in peripatetic terms.[63] The occasional bit of "new" science did surface, yet without a coherent interpretation of nature ever emerging.[64] Arguably, this is a somewhat inevitable conclusion, as the form the discussions at the Bureau d'Adresse took necessarily led to a large collection of divergent opinions.[65] Sutton points out that the state and the church seemingly did not feel threatened by the *conférences*, even though some borderline heretical arguments were presented there[66] – as I will argue in chapter 5, an important reason for this lack of threat is certainly their form.

Harcourt Brown, in his *Scientific Organizations in Seventeenth Century France (1620–1680)* (1934), discusses Renaudot and the *conférences* in half a chapter. As one example of the "succession of minor associations, clubs, conférences and assemblies" in France at the time, he believes the *conférences*' printed records to be a source for "popular scientific literature of seventeenth-century France".[67] Like others after him, Brown concludes that the meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse "do not seem to have rendered much service to the cause of science".[68] Nevertheless, they inspired later endeavours with more clearly defined pedagogical goals, such as Jean Oudart de Richesource's *conférences académiques et oratoires*,[69] which began

60 In McClellan's book, Renaudot and the Bureau d'Adresse are mentioned on p. 47.
61 Biagioli refers to Renaudot on pp. 203–204.
62 Sutton 1995, p. 19.
63 See ibid., p. 27.
64 As Sutton puts it: "Renaudot's Conferences on science, like everything else associated with him, proved a collection of the new and the old, the orthodox and the heterodox and the outrageous. Natural philosophy at the bureau was nothing else if not eclectic. Not only did half a dozen styles of natural philosophy vie for the attention of the auditors, but many individual speakers displayed a serious internal tension between a given natural philosophy and the formulation of arguments in support of that philosophy" (ibid., p. 41).
65 Sutton himself acknowledges this fact when writing that "[i]n one sense, this makes the proceedings an inappropriate source for a simple worldview, since it lacked the coherence a single speaker might have brought to each subject" (ibid., p. 28).
66 See ibid., p. 41.
67 Brown 1934, p. XIII.
68 Ibid., p. 18.
69 Ibid., p. 27.

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in 1653 and put much greater focus on rhetoric than did the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse.[70]

Renaudot and the *conférences* also appear in accounts treating literary and societal developments in the seventeenth century. In his *La politesse mondaine et les theories de l'honnêteté* (1926), Maurice Magendie mentions them in the context of other early academies as well as salons when discussing the "commencement de la vie mondaine".[71] Claire Cazanave uses Renaudot's circle as an example in her analysis of dialogue in the *âge classique* but does not seem to differentiate between texts like the printed *Conférences* – based on actual oral debates – and literary dialogues that are altogether made up.[72] This is problematic, as I discuss in more detail in chapter 4.

Researchers concerned with Samuel Hartlib and the developments in seventeenth-century republican England inevitably mention Renaudot and the Parisian Bureau d'Adresse, as it inspired Hartlib to try to found his own Office of Address.[73] Yet the material about the Bureau d'Adresse and Renaudot that can be found among the *Hartlib Papers* is even more revealing.[74] In many instances, it shows Renaudot in a critical light but also proves beyond any doubt what influence the *gazetier* and his ideas had gained in seventeenth-century Europe.[75] In *Hartlib, Drury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib's Papers* (1947), G.H. Turnbull analyses certain of Hartlib's documents concerned with the Bureau d'Adresse in Paris and the establishment of one in England.[76] Stéphane Haffemayer also concerns himself with Hartlib and the English Puritans in *Les Lumières radicales de la Révolution anglaise. Samuel Hartlib et les réseaux de l'Intelligence (1600–1660)* (2018). Haffemayer's intimate knowledge of Renaudot and his projects allows for some interesting comparisons between Hartlib's plans for an Office of Address and the Parisian bureau.[77]

The medical aspects of Renaudot's career have received a certain amount of attention through several generally shorter texts. Most important among them is Michel Emery's *Renaudot et l'introduction de la médecine chimique* (1889). Its title perfectly summarises what Emery is concerned with: the origins of chemical

70 See Richesource, *La premiere partie des conferences academiques et oratoires, accompagnees de leurs resolutions. Dans lesquelles on voit le plus bel usage des maxims de la Philosophie & des preceptes de l'eloquence* (1661). In stark contrast to Renaudot, Richesource moderated his conferences, presented three alternative *disours* to rhetorical questions such as "Si la goire qui accompagne la vie est preferable à celle qui la fuit" (p. 23), and always finished a topic with a conclusion.

71 Magendie 1926, p. 120. For the discussion of the *conférences*, see pp. 140–141.

72 See Cazanave 2007, p. 81.

73 See, for example, Webster 2002, p. 68; Greengrass and Perman 2013, p. 53; and Greengrass 2014, p. 308.

74 See M. Greengrass, M. Leslie, and M. Hannon, *The Hartlib Papers*, published by the Digital Humanities Institute, University of Sheffield, 2013, URL: https://www.dhi.ac.uk/hartlib (05.01.2023).

75 For a more detailed analysis, see chapter 1, pp. 25–27.

76 See pp. 77–88.

77 See, for example, Haffemayer 2018, pp. 318–323 and 325–335.

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medicine. Emery sees Renaudot as a revolutionary in the field of medicine who was terribly wronged by the Parisian Faculty of Medicine. Many other studies, often presented by members of medical faculties, set Renaudot in a similar light, and these add little to what was already known about the founder of the Bureau d'Adresse.[78] For his endeavours in the sphere of chemical medicine, Renaudot also finds his place in Alan Debus's much more thorough contemporary study *The French Paracelsians: The Chemical Challenge to Medical and Scientific Tradition in Early Modern France* (1991). Augustin Cabanes ascribes Renaudot to *Les évadés de la médecine* (1932) and discusses Renaudot's conflict with the Parisian Faculty of Medicine. François Lebrun, in "Théophraste Renaudot, médecin des pauvres, a travers *Les Consultations charitables* et *La Présence des absens*" (1987), dwells on the two – according to him – most original aspects of Renaudot's medical career. Renaudot's *La presence des absens* (1642), a curious medical text which will play its part in chapter 7, is furthermore analysed by Alexander Wenger in "'Rendre un grand bien communicable': *La Présence des Absens* de Théophraste Renaudot" (2009).

As Renaudot is widely regarded as one of the forefathers of journalism, the *Gazette* also has received its fair share of scrutiny. Several texts have examined Renaudot's journal, mostly books exploring the origins of the press. For example, Renaudot has his own chapter in the first two volumes of Eugène Hatin's monumental *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France* from 1859.[79] Hatin views Renaudot as the inventor of the periodical press in France but notes that, in other countries, various (sometimes handwritten) publications had been distributed at an earlier point in time.[80] René Mazedier, in his *Histoire de la presse parisienne. De Théophraste Renaudot à la IV^e^ République, 1631–1945* (1945), is also aware of the fact that Renaudot was not the first to publish newspapers; however, he insists that, in France, journalism proper began with Renaudot.[81]

The *Gazette* and Renaudot claim more than 300 pages in Gilles Feyel's extensive oeuvre *L'annonce et la nouvelle. La presse d'information en France, sous l'Ancien Régime (1630–1788)* (2000). Feyel takes a decisive stand against the mythology surrounding Renaudot. So numerous were Renaudot's undertakings, Feyel claims, that they seem to have discouraged endeavours by any serious historian freed from the "légendes romanesques" woven around the *gazetier*, especially in the Romantic period.[82] Consequently, Renaudot's history is to be rewritten completely, Feyel

78 Two nineteenth-century examples are Achille Chéreau's *Théophraste Renaudot* (1878) and André Bégué's *Les Consultations Charitables de Théophraste Renaudot* (1899). Some much more recent works fall into the same category. See, for example, André Morvan's *Un médecin oublié: Théophraste Renaudot* (1979).

79 In total, Hatin's oeuvre comprises eight volumes.

80 See Hatin 1859, vol. 1, p. 27.

81 See Mazedier 1945, p. 11.

82 Feyel (2000, p. 11) counts Hatin among the first "vrais" historians concerned with Renaudot. The weavers of legends comprise, for example, Félix Roubaud and his *Théophraste Renaudot, créateur du journalisme en France* (1856).

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announces.[83] While he successfully completes this task when it comes to the *Gazette*, he dedicates only one chapter to the analysis of the *Conférences*, which cannot do them justice.[84] In that chapter, Feyel examines the publication rhythm of the printed *Conférences* in great detail and statistically surveys the topics discussed at Renaudot's academy. Analysing the arguments brought forward to a number of interesting questions and lauding the rationality he often observes in them, Feyel comes to the conclusion that the discussions at the Bureau d'Adresse served to "de-asinine" information – a function they shared with the *Gazette*.[85] In his final verdict, Feyel might not be wrong, but, like Mazauric, he puts too much emphasis on the content of the arguments and not enough on their form, even though he begins his study with an analysis of the printed *Conférences*, which he classifies as a "journal".[86]

In the much less extensive study *Les impatients de l'histoire* (2009), Jean Lacouture classes Renaudot among other trailblazing journalists. Lacouture adds little to Renaudot's much-discussed life story and mostly cites well-known sources, but he paints quite a sophisticated and concise picture of Renaudot's complicated relation to those in power.[87] Another more contemporary take is Stéphane Haffemayer's *L'information dans la France du XVII^e siècle: La Gazette de Renaudot de 1647 à 1663* (2002). Haffemayer provides an extremely detailed study of the *Gazette*. He analyses its distribution in France and other European countries and even calculates how long it took for the *Gazette* to arrive in various places via post. He also provides statistical data on how often it mentions different cities in Europe and which topics it treats. Stella Spriet studies Renaudot's newspaper as an instrument of political power in "La *Gazette* de Théophraste Renaudot: une vision orientée du monde" (2012).

There are a number of texts devoted to Renaudot as a historical figure. The most widely cited early examples are Eugène Hatin's *Théophraste Renaudot et ses 'innocentes inventions'* (1883) and Gilles de la Tourette's *La vie et les œuvres de Théophraste Renaudot* (1892). Both provide an overview of Renaudot's life and his various activities but overall do not view him very critically. The programmatic 'innocence' they ascribe to Renaudot and his endeavours must be questioned, as chapter 1 of the present study will show. At the end of the nineteenth century, Hatin and Tourette equally felt the need to recover Renaudot from oblivion and to celebrate him

83 "L'histoire de Théophraste Renaudot est à réécrire entièrement. Les initiatives du fondateur du Bureau d'Adresse et de la Gazette furent si nombreuses, si foisonnantes qu'elles semblent avoir toujours découragé l'historien sérieux, libéré des légendes romanesques de la période romantique" (Feyel 2000, p. 11).

84 See ibid., pp. 78–130. That he dedicates only one chapter to the *Conférences* is of course understandable – Feyel's book already counts 1,289 pages. Renaudot's various enterprises are just too diverse and numerous to adequately treat them in one study.

85 The French word Feyel uses is *'déniaiser'*, an expression he indicates borrowing from René Pintard and his *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (1943) without citing the exact source. See ibid., pp. 124 and 130.

86 See ibid., pp. 79–89.

87 See Lacouture 2009, pp. 26–30.

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as a great social reformer. Outside of France and in an English-speaking context, there are two early articles concerned with Renaudot, both written by Edith Sellers and published in 1894.[88] They varnish various crucial episodes of Renaudot's life in a somewhat overinterpreted manner and Sellers does not cite any sources;[89] but, in contrast to Hatin, Tourette, and many others, she does not represent Renaudot as a saint.[90]

La vie de Théophraste Renaudot, written by a group of authors for Gallimard in 1929, is much less detailed than Hatin's and Tourette's books but otherwise falls in the same category.[91] Pierre Roudy's *Théophraste Renaudot. Journaliste et médecin du peuple* (2006) and Nicole Vray's *Théophraste Renaudot. Pionnier du journalisme et de la lutte contre la pauvreté* (2014) are more contemporary takes, yet they add little to the previous texts.

Howard Solomon's *Public Welfare, Science, and Propaganda in 17th-Century France: The Innovations of Théophraste Renaudot* (1972) provides a more detailed and critical analysis of Renaudot's inventions. Solomon especially considers Renaudot's relation to political power in the shape of Richelieu and Louis XIII. However, as has already been criticised by Gérard Jubert, he seemingly did not visit French libraries and archives to verify his assertions. Consequently, he sometimes errs in the dating of Renaudot's undertakings,[92] which fragilises the foundation that supports certain of his arguments. Obviously, Solomon was not able to refer to Jubert's later corpus of Renaudot-related documents, *Père des Journalistes et Médecin des Pauvres, Théophraste Renaudot* (2005), which has proven extremely useful to me.

Overall, Renaudot and his various ventures left a big enough mark for historians of science concerned with Early Modern France to be largely familiar with him. In one way or another, Renaudot's inventions surface in many publications, but aside from Mazauric's, Wellman's, and Carré's books, in-depth analyses of the *Conférences* are rare. With this study, I aim to add to the knowledge about Renaudot's debating circle and their publications in the form of the printed *Conférences*, which contributed to the development of a plurimedial public sphere for debate. A detailed analysis of form and content of the *Conférences* reveals them to be a transitional phenomenon between modes of knowledge negotiation prevalent in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and later developments in the increasingly public and international Republic of Letters.

In studying the *Conférences*, it becomes apparent that transformations of knowledge (*Wissenswandel*) do not happen at once, in the manner of a revolution, and must rather be qualified as long-term processes.[93] The *Conférences* clearly display

88 See Sellers 1894a and 1894b.
89 The articles were printed in the journal of the Lend a Hand Society, a charitable organisation that continues to exist today. Their approach was, therefore, not strictly speaking scientific.
90 See Sellers 1894a, p. 211.
91 It is this group of authors who launched the Prix Renaudot in 1926.
92 See Jubert 2005, p. XXI.
93 See Cancik-Kirschbaum and Traninger 2015, p. 1.

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that various discourses can exist next to each other, and that new discoveries and ideas need time to impose themselves. While two *conférenciers* in the discussion "Du mouvement, ou repos de la Terre",[94] for example, are certain that the sun revolves around the earth,[95] another defends Galileo's heliocentrism: he proclaims that the sun is the centre of the universe.[96]

Critics such as Brown and Mazauric repeatedly stress that the *conférenciers* did not exactly find themselves on the forefront of scientific discovery. Mazauric's seminal study demonstrates that they mostly ruminated on traditional sources and – on an individual level – could not claim innovative new approaches to the questions they discussed.[97] According to Mazauric, they decidedly were not the spearheads of the Scientific Revolution.[98]

Yet what is so fascinating about the *Conférences* is not their content but rather the form they take. Placing divergent opinions next to each other without making any decision about which one is the best is highly unusual when we think of Scholastic disputations as well as of the prize questions of later academies. The fact that Renaudot immediately printed what had been said in the *conférences*, in order to allow a large public to benefit from them, stands against the more secretive discussion practices of other academies, which would not let the public apprehend what had been voiced in closed quarters.[99]

The practice of positioning conflicting opinions next to each other in print puts discussions on the same page which usually would not have left the sphere of the spoken word. And this does something to those arguments: arranging them side by side might reveal the absurdity of certain statements, and presumably makes it easier for reason to assert itself. Concerning learned journals, which began to gain influence at the end of the seventeenth century, Martin Gierl has pointed out that they aimed at proposing an inventory of all scholarly knowledge.[100] The accumulation of material rendered it possible to better evaluate (and verify) it, which made it easier to acquire scientific knowledge: "Denn was immer man unter Wis-

94 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 10.I, pp. 163–170.
95 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 10.I, pp. 163–167.
96 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 10.I, pp. 167–170.
97 See Mazauric 1997, p. 196.
98 See ibid., pp. 127–128. Mazauric still seems to understand the Scientific Revolution as a singular, monumental moment of change in the scientific community – a concept that many researchers have heavily contested in the past decades. See, for example, Shapin 1996, p. 12. In "De-centring the 'Big Picture': *The Origins of Modern Science* and the Modern Origins of Science" (1993), Andrew Cunningham and Perry Williams propose an in-depth analysis of how the Scientific Revolution came to be regarded as *the* key event in the history of science and explain why this is problematic.
99 See Biagioli's (1996, pp. 212–225) discussion of the Accademia del Cimento and the early Académie royale des sciences, before it was formalised through statutes and protocols. Regarding the case of the Académie royale des sciences, see also McClellan 1985, p. 51. For a more detailed analysis, see chapter 5.
100 See Gierl 2004, p. 436.

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senschaft versteht: Die Möglichkeit, Wissen zu kumulieren und zu überprüfen, gehört dazu."[101]

Another crucial point is the fact that Renaudot encouraged those not present in Paris to participate in the *conférences* in writing, a practice later adopted by the academies in their prize questions.[102] In this, the *gazetier* showcases how the 'making of society by face-to-face interaction' (*Vergesellschaftung unter Anwesenden*), still dominant at the beginning of the Early Modern period, according to Rudolf Schlögl,[103] began to lose importance through the advent of the printed (and written) word, which was used not only as a means of storing knowledge but also as a genuine means of communication.[104] In facilitating remote participation in his debating circle, Renaudot revealed himself to be a true trailblazer.

As in the case of the learned journals, the decision of which argument to favour lies with the *Conférences*' readers. No senior university professor, no committee, no gathering of academy members, but the reader themselves, must decide what they think is the truth. As long as they were *gens d'honneur* – and men – the *conférenciers* even had the possibility to voice their own personal opinions whenever they wanted to in the *conférences*, even if they often adhered to the opinions of authorities.

Renaudot, all in all, did not manage to de-dust learning when it comes to the sources the *conférenciers* used or the individual mode of arguing most of the participants employed. However, he certainly did play an important role in making knowledge more accessible and in opening up new possibilities for non-present participation in debates. He even enabled a possible dethroning of authoritative assertion by conferring judgement to his readers.

101 Ibid.

102 See Renaudot, *Recueil des Nouvelles Ordinaires et Extraordinaires* 1638 [1639], *Gazette* N°143, p. 604. For a more detailed analysis of this point, see the first part of chapter 1.

103 See Schlögl's "Kommunikation und Vergesellschaftung unter Anwesenden. Formen des Sozialen und ihre Transformation in der Frühen Neuzeit" (2008), which proposes an in-depth study of the fundamental processes of transformation and media revolutions leading from a society based on face-to-face interaction to a society shaped by written forms of communication.

104 See ibid., p. 161.

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Sources

Renaudot's *Conférences* are not rare and the books can be found in many European libraries that hold Early Modern editions. However, I have only been able to find the earliest editions of the first four volumes, dating from 1634 to 1641, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF) in Paris. These early versions were printed directly at the Bureau d'Adresse, whereas later reprints were issued by a variety of Parisian printers.

Volume 1: *PREMIERE CENTVRIE DES QVESTIONS TRAITEES EZ CONFERENCES DV BVREAU D'ADRESSE, DEPVIS le 22 iour d'Aoust 1633. iusques au dernier Iuillet 1634. Dediee A Monsieur le Cardinal. Avec une Table des Matiéres.* A PARIS, Au Bureau d'Adresse, rüe de la Calandre, sortant au Marché neuf, prés le Palais. MDCXXXIIII.

Volume 2: *SECONDE CENTVRIE DES QVESTIONS TRAITE'ES EZ CONFERENCES DV BVREAU D'ADRESSE, DEPVIS le 3. jour de Novembre 1634. jusques à l' II. Février 1636. DEDIEE A MONSEIGNEVR le Chancellier. Avec une Table des Matieres.* A PARIS, Au Bureau d'Adresse, ruë de la Calandre, sortant au Marché neuf, prés le Palais. MDCXXXVI.

Volume 3: *TROISIESME CENTVRIE DES QVESTIONS TRAICTEES AVX CONFERENCES DV Bureau d'Adresse, depuis le 18. Fevrier 1636. jusques au 17. Ianvier 1639. DEDIEE A MONSIEVR De Bautru. Avec une Table des Matieres.* A PARIS, Au BVREAV D'ADRESSE, ruë de la Calandre, au grand Coq. 1639.

Volume 4: *QVATRIESME CENTVRIE DES QVESTIONS TRAITEES AVX CONFERENES DV Bureau d'Adresse, depuis le 24^{e} Ianvier 1639. jusques au 10^{e} Iuin 1641. AVEC VNE TABLE DES MATIERES.* A PARIS, au BVREAV D'ADRESSE, ruë de la Calandre, au grand Coq 1641.

The fifth volume is an exception, as it was never printed at the Bureau d'Adresse and only saw the light of day after Renaudot's death. It was first published in 1655.

Volume 5: *RECUEIL GENERAL DES QUESTIONS TRAITTEES és Conférences du Bureau d'Adresse, sur toutes sortes de Matieres, Par les plus beaux Esprits de ce temps. Non encore mises au iour.* A PARIS, Chez IEAN-BAPTISTE LOYSON, au Palais, à l'entrée de la Salle des Merciers, du costé de la Saincte Chapelle, à la Croix d'Or. MDCLV. [Information regarding the volume number is lacking on this title page.]

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In this study, I do not use the early BNF versions for my citations of the first four volumes but rather the versions freely available as scans on Gallica, which have considerably facilitated writing a book on Renaudot's *Conférences* from Berlin. During my research in Paris, I studied the differences between the earliest printed *Conférences* and the later editions. The first volume of *Conférences* from 1634 is dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu and includes an *epistre* addressed to the cardinal, which is not reprinted in later versions. Compared to later reprints, the volumes of *Conférences* issued from the Bureau d'Adresse are printed more neatly and more beautifully, with decorated initials and other embellishments. Besides the missing dedicatory letter to Richelieu, the earlier versions differ only very little from the later reprints. A few small changes appear in the preface, but the *Conférences* themselves are exactly the same.

The volumes I use for citations in the present study are the following:

Volume 1: *RECVEIL GENERAL DES QVESTIONS TRAICTEES és Conferences du Bureau d'Adresse, sur toutes sortes de Matieres; Par les plus beaux esprits de ce temps*. TOME PREMIER. A PARIS, Chez LOVIS CHAMHOVDRY, au Palais, vis à vis la Sainte Chapelle, à l'image Sainct Louis. MDCLVI.

Volume 2: *RECVEIL GENERAL DES QVESTIONS Traittées és Conferences du Bureau d'Adresse és années 1633. 34. 35 iusques à present, sur toutes sortes de matieres, par les plus beaux esprits de ce temps*. TOME SECOND. A PARIS. MDCLV.

Volume 3: *RECVEIL GENERAL DES QVESTIONS TRAICTEES és Conferences du Bureau d'Adresse, sur toutes sortes de Matieres; Par les plus beaux esprits de ce temps*. TOME TROISIESME. A PARIS, Chez CARDIN BESONGNE, au Palais en la Gallerie des Prisonniers, aux Rozes Vermeilles. MDCLVI.

Volume 4: *RECVEIL GENERAL DES QVESTIONS TRAITE'ES és Conferences du Bureau d'Adresse, sur toutes sortes de Matieres; Par les plus beaux Esprits de ce temps*. TOME QVATRIE'ME. A PARIS, Chez IEAN BAPTISTE LOYSON, ruë Sainct Iacques, prés la grande Poste, â la Croix Royale. MDCLX.

Volume 5: *RECVEIL GENERAL DES QVESTIONS TRAITTEES és Conferences du Bureau d'Addresse, sur toutes sortes de Matieres, Par les plus beaux Esprits de ce temps. Non encore mises au iour*. A PARIS. Chez IEAN BAPTISTE LOYSON, au Palais, à l'entrée de la Salle des Merciers, du costé de la Saincte Chapelle, à la Croix d'Or. MDCLV.

Translations, if not otherwise specified, are my own. When quoting words or phrases in French, I adhere to the orthography of the sources cited. However, from this point forward, I dissolve abbreviations and modernise 'v' into 'u' and 'i' into 'j', when applicable.

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Part I –
Renaudot, His Projects, and His Audiences

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1

Renaudot's (Not So) Innocent Inventions: The Bureau d'Adresse and the Question of the Poor

When perambulating the Île de la Cité in the Paris of the 1630s, a flâneur would eventually find himself in the rue de la Calandre, facing the Maison du Grand-Coq. "La rue de la Calandre, parallèle à la Seine, commençait rue de la Barillerie, boulevard du Palais actuel. […] elle s'inclinait légèrement vers le sud-est, se redressait franchement vers la direction de l'est, et arrivait pour finir dans la rue de la Juiverie (rue de la Cité et fond ouest du parvis Notre-Dame actuel)."[1] Today, no trace is left of either house or street, the latter having been destroyed in the second half of the nineteenth century during the construction of the Préfecture de Police.[2] Yet in 1630, the rue de la Calandre lay unaware of her future, and it was on this street that Théophraste Renaudot set up his Bureau d'Adresse, the centre of most of his numerous activities.[3]

Howard Solomon argues that the Bureau d'Adresse was established before 1630 but does not provide documents proving his statement.[4] Arguably, he comes to this conclusion because Renaudot presented plans for a bureau as early as 1612,[5] and the (first) *lettres patentes* of Louis XIII, authorising Renaudot to establish Bureaux d'Adresses, date from 31 March 1628.[6] Yet Eugène Hatin, in his *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse* (1859), shows that the bureau could not have been established any earlier than 1630.[7] Concerning its creation, Renaudot himself proclaims:

1 Fedgal 1934, pp. 246–247.
2 A comparison of the two maps showing the Île de la Cité before 1850 and after 2000 in Michel Huard's "L'Île de la Cité et le centre de Paris" in the *Atlas Historique de Paris* (online) shows this layout change. The later map indicates the period in which new buildings were constructed.
3 For a more detailed analysis of the first Bureaux d'Adresses and Renaudot's Parisian Bureau d'Adresse in particular, see Tantner 2015.
4 See Solomon 1972, p. 39.
5 In 1612, the king issued a document allowing Renaudot to keep Bureaux d'Adresses: "Brevet de Louis XIII accordant à Théophraste Renaudot, son médecin ordinaire, une somme de six cents livres et l'autorisation, exclusivement à tous autres, à tenir des bureaux et registres d'adresses 'de toutes les commoditez réciproques et de ses sujets' en tous les lieux du royaume et terres de son obéissance et à mettre en pratique toutes ses autres inventions pour l'emploi des pauvres valides et le traitement des invalides" (1612, 14 octobre), in Jubert 2005, pp. 16–17.
6 The document in question can be found in ibid., p. 88.
7 See Hatin 1859, p. 58.

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> [I]l avint l'an mil six cens trente, fondé sur l'authorité d'Aristote, lequel au 4. Livre de ses Politiques chapitre 15. dit: Oportet esse aliquid tale cui cura sit populum consilio praevenire ne ociosus sit. Idem lib. Politicorum secundo, cap. 7. Quod igitur necessarium est in bene constituenda Republica necessariorum adesse facultatem omnes fatentur sed quemadmodum id futurum sit non facile est comprehendere.[8]

To intellectually justify the Bureau d'Adresse, Renaudot here and elsewhere frequently invokes Aristotle. Yet he also calls upon Montaigne, asserting that without the philosopher's contribution, he never would have had the idea for the initiative. As Renaudot indicates in the "Discours sur l'utilité des bureaux d'adresse,"[9] it is in Montaigne's essay "D'un defaut de nos polices"[10] where the idea for a *bureau de rencontre* originates.[11] Hatin has shown that the "Discours sur l'utilité" originally figured as preface to the *Inventaire des addresses du Bureau de rencontre, ou chacun peut donner & reçevoir avis de toutes les necessitez, & commoditez de la vie & societé humaine* (1630).[12]

But before Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse came to realisation, others had already found inspiration in Montaigne's *Essais*. In his quest to stimulate the economy, Barthelemy de Laffemas, contrôleur général du commerce under Henry IV, was similarly inspired by Montaigne's idea and had recommended the creation of a place dedicated to the exchange of information during Henry IV's reign (1589–1610). However, Renaudot was the first to carry out the idea with his bureau in

8 Renaudot, *Mercure Francois*, tome XXII, 1637, p. 61. The passages cited by Renaudot appear in Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples's Latin edition of Aristotle's *Politics*. In the version from 1515, the first passage is on p. 83, and the second on p. 31. H. Rackham's English translation for the first passage reads: "[…] for there is bound to be some body of this nature to have the duty of preparing measures for the popular assembly, in order that it may be able to attend to its business" (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1299b34–35, transl. Rackham 1932, p. 361). He renders the second passage as: "Now it is a thing admitted that a state that is to be well governed must be provided with leisure from menial occupations; but how this is to be provided is not easy to ascertain" (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1269a35–37, transl. Rackham 1932, p. 133).

9 The "Discours sur l'utilité" was printed in the *Mercure Francois*, tome XXII, 1637, pp. 61–68.

10 Montaigne 2007, I, 34, "D'un défaut de nos polices", pp. 229–230, p. 229. In Renaudot's *Inventaire* 1630, p. 11, the passage is cited as follows: "Feu mon Pere, homme pour n'estre aydé que de l'experience & du naturel, d'un jugement bien nét, m'a dit autrefois qu'il avoit desiré mettre en train qu'il y eust ez Villes certain lieu designé, auquel ceux qui auroyent besoin de quelque chose se pourroyent addresser, & faire enregistrer leur affaire à un Officier estably pour cét effect: Comme, je cherche à vendre des Perles, je cherche des Perles à vendre; tel veut compagnie pour aller à Paris; tel s'enquiert d'un serviteur de telle qualité, tel d'un Maistre; tel demande un ouvrier: qui cecy, qui cela, chacun selon son besoin. Et semble que ce moyen de nous entr'advertir, apporteroit non leger commodité au commerce publique. Car à tous coups, il y a des conditions, qui s'entre-cherchent, & pour ne s'entr'entendre, laissent les hommes en extréme necessité."

11 "Pour servir de preuve au bien qui en reviendra aux hommes de lettres, & monstrer quel est leur avis sur cette matiere, mesmes en nostre âge & en celuy de nos Peres: je transcriray icy le 34. Chap. Des Essais du sieur de Montagne" (Renaudot, *Mercure Francois*, tome XXII, 1637, p. 65).

12 See Hatin 1883, pp. 26–27. See also Pannetier 1929, pp. 83–84.

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Paris.[13] Later on, Renaudot allowed other people to establish bureaus in several French cities, namely Bordeaux, Aix-en-Provence, Lyon, and Rouen.[14]

So unfolds the story of the establishment and the existence of the Parisian bureau – but what exactly was the Bureau d'Adresse's function? Like Montainge's imagined *lieu designé*, Renaudot's bureau was a place where people could find all kinds of useful information. If they were looking for work, an individual could go there and view a list of people searching for employees or workers and vice versa, thereby bypassing the *compagnonnage* system.[15] If one wanted to sell something, one could advertise one's goods at the bureau, and for those searching for certain items, the bureau probably had information on where to obtain them. As Renaudot proclaimed, it was the goal of the Bureau d'Adresse to figure as a platform for exchange and to provide access to information: "[…] ce Bureau n'estant que le centre et l'abord des choses dont les hommes voulent se donner avis & communication les uns aux autres […]."[16] In considering the bureau's purpose, the historian Anton Tanter argues, therefore, that it was one of the first search engines.[17]

Given its great utility for the population, the idea for such a place raised interest beyond France: in England, for example, attempts to establish an Office of Address began in 1611.[18] Taking particular interest was Samuel Hartlib,[19] who in the 1640s requested his contacts in Paris to send him any material about or printed at Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse as soon as they were able to lay their hands on it.[20] In a letter dated 26 July 1648, the Dutch physician Arnold Boate returned Hartlib's request for answers to no less than thirteen questions concerning the bureau. Paint-

13 See Solomon 1972, p. 38, and Tantner 2015, p. 20.

14 The documents proving this fact can be found in Gérard Jubert's (2005) extremely helpful corpus of texts concerning Renaudot and his activities. For Bordeaux, see "Procuration donnée par Théophraste Renaudot à Jean du Graney, avocat au Conseil privé du roi pour établir ou faire établir à Bordeaux, un bureau d'adresse identique à celui de Paris" (1630, 20 août), in Jubert 2005, p. 115. For Aix-en-Provence, see "Lettres de commission accordée par Théophraste Renaudot à Eustache Roux, avocat au parlement de Provence, de la charge de maître et intendant du bureau d'adresse d'Aix-en-Provence, enregistrées aud. parlement" (1633, 12 avril), in ibid., p. 153. For Lyon, see "Pouvoir donné par Théophraste Renaudot à Claude Boytel, d'établir en son nom, un bureau d'adresse en la ville de Lyon" (1639, 19 avril), in ibid., pp. 232–233. For Rouen, see "Bail consenti par Théophraste Renaudot à Jean Lamy, demeurant à Rouen, du privilège de l'exercice d'un bureau d'adresse dans cette ville" (1646, 25 mai), in ibid., p. 467. Feyel, describing the many difficulties Renaudot encountered outside of Paris explains that Renaudot ultimately was not able to give "une dimension nationale à son Bureau d'adresse" (Feyel 2000, p. 279).

15 For a detailed discussion of the *compagnonnages*, see Solomon 1972, pp. 40–43.

16 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 11.

17 See Tantner 2015.

18 See ibid., pp. 51–54. Tanter gives a very detailed overview of the attempts to open Offices of Address in various countries.

19 As Dorothy Stimson explains, Hartlib, Haak, and Oldenburg, "became the outstanding connection links between the scientific activities of the amateurs in England and on the continent" (Stimson 1940, p. 310). For a more detailed discussion of Hartlib as a "vital point of contact between England and the république des lettres" (p. 304), see Greengrass 2014.

20 See Stagl 2002, p. 180.

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ing a rather bleak picture of Renaudot, Boate stated: "[T]he master, Viz Renaudot, was a phÿsition, of little practise, no means, and no conscience: Who bÿ revolting from us to Rome procured for himselfe leave for erecting this office […]".[21] Boate, a fervent Protestant, did not appreciate Renaudot's conversion to Catholicism, but he also criticised him for being a "[…] shameless flatterer, and manie times grosslie out in forraine affaires" in his printed publications. "[F]urther than this, he is little thought-off, or spoke-off, among the people", Boate concluded.[22]

In an earlier letter from 3 April 1641, J. Epstein, who was supposed to procure Renaudot's *Inventaire* for Hartlib, came to a similarly negative conclusion about the *gazetier* and his endeavours: "Aber wan mir der herr glauben will, Es ist alles lumpen werk, und sucht unser Gazetier ettwas anderst dadurch, hat aber kein nutzen davon, und ob Er woll seine Charlantereÿ offter auszgebotten, ist doch niemant in gantz Frankreich der Sie begehrt."[23]

The critical views of the Parisian Bureau d'Adresse and its originator, however, seemingly did little to bridle Hartlib's enthusiasm. He often mentions the *conférences* in the *Ephemerides*, his journal,[24] and is especially interested in their pedagogical function: "It is an excellent constitution. In it all manner of Inventions should have beene examined. Apart the excellency of them is not much observed but taken together it containes the substance of many Authors. By it the use of pedantic schooles and universitys will bee insensibly overthrowen."[25]

According to Hartlib – who "believed that all knowledge should be collected and indexed", to the effect of revealing contradictions and duplications[26] – the collection of opinions in the printed *Conférences* functions as a shortcut to access the knowledge of many authors. Hartlib was very interested in everything concerned with learning and scientific education, and he devised multiple plans for education reform.[27] Aligning with Renaudot's critical comments regarding the universities, Hartlib views the new approach to learning proposed in the *conférences* as a successful direct attack on the 'pedantic' schools and universities. As he wrote to an unknown correspondent in 1642, "[…] I am almost confident there are no Encyclopaedias in any Nation yet divulged that can be compared with them […]".[28]

Hartlib's keen interest in Renaudot and the Parisian Bureau d'Adresse is also visible in his *A Further Discoverie of the Office of Publick Addresse for Accomodations*

21 HP 58/3A.
22 HP 58/3B.
23 HP 27/35/4A. According to Haffemayer, "Epstein faisait écho aux jugements très négatifs qui croulaient à Paris sur celui qui avait établi son monopole sur l'impression des nouvelles" (Haffemayer 2018, p. 175).
24 See, for example, HP 30/4/33A, 30/4/48B, and 30/5/50A.
25 HP 30/4/51B.
26 Yeo 2014, p. 97.
27 See Haffemayer 2018, p. 98. For a detailed overview over Hartlib's various endeavours regarding educational reform and the advancement of learning, see Charles Webster's *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626–1660* (2002), especially pp. 100–245.
28 HP 7/24/1A.

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(1648). This text accompanied Hartlib's petition to Parliament, seeking permission to open his own Office of Address. In it, Hartlib heavily relied on Renaudot's ideas – many parts of the text are simply direct translations of Renaudot's *Inventaire des Addresses du Bureau de Rencontre* (1630).[29]

Yet there were also differences: Hartlib's plan for an Office of Address envisaged the establishment of two branches – one in London (closely resembling Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse) and one in Oxford, which would have been concerned with (international) communication among scholars.[30] While the former seems to have been in business for a short time under one of Hartlib's acolytes, the latter – in its more scholarly conception the proposed domain of Hartlib – could not be realised.[31] As Stagl explains, the Oxford branch was designed as a centre for research and documentation, where the public would receive answers to religious, scientific, and technical questions[32] – a function that appears to have certain similarities with Renaudot's *conférences*.[33]

The idea that a Bureau d'Adresse would be highly useful (and potentially profitable) inspired many others, and several made further attempts to establish an office for the exchange of information in London.[34] The same goes for the German-speaking countries,[35] where even the polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz took inspiration.[36] As these pan-European efforts show, the bureau responded to a genuine need for better organised knowledge exchange.

Besides enabling people to efficiently search for information, the Maison du Grand-Coq also provided a home to Renaudot's numerous other undertakings. It accommodated printing presses, which Renaudot needed to print his magazine, the *Gazette*,[37] one of the earliest European – and indeed, earliest French – *periodical* newspapers. It has been erroneously assumed that the *Gazette* was the *first*, or at least the first *French*, *newspaper*.[38] This is not the case,

29 See Turnbull 1947, p. 81.

30 See Stagl 2002, pp. 180–182. Given the proximity to the university, Oxford was a better suited site than London for the second branch.

31 See ibid., p. 182. See also Greengrass 2014, p. 309.

32 See Stagl 2002, p. 181.

33 The *conférences*, of course, did not provide any straightforward answers to practical questions, and religious questions could not be discussed there. See chapter 3 of this study.

34 See Turnbull 1947, pp. 84–87, and Tantner 2015, pp. 56–59.

35 For an overview over the developments in the German speaking countries, see Tantner 2015, pp. 67–82.

36 See ibid., p. 72.

37 The first *Gazette* appeared on 30 May 1631. See Fedgal 1934, p. 258. See also Jubert 2005, p. LX. "A sa fondation, *La Gazette* est de quatre pages in-4° (environ 0,30x0,40). Moins d'un an après, en 1632, le format est doublé, le nombre des pages est porté de quatre à huit" (Fedgal 1934, p. 259). For a detailed study of the *Gazette*, its distribution in France and Europe, the topics treated in it, and the places from which news was sourced, see Haffemayer 2002. Feyel provides an in-depth analysis of the way the *Gazette* was designed and printed and also discusses Renaudot's various informants. See Feyel 2000, pp. 149–190.

38 Joseph-Henri Reveillé-Parise, the editor of Gui Patin's letters, argues, for example, that Renaudot "[…] fonda le premier journal qui ait paru en France […]" (Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 201, comm.

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as *feuilles périodiques* were already published in Prague (1597), Antwerp (1605), Strasbourg (1609),[39] Frankfurt (1615), and Vienna (1621).[40]

Gérard Blanchard claims Renaudot took the idea for the *Gazette* from the writer Marcellin Allard, who in 1605 published a book under the same title. Yet besides the name, Renaudot's *Gazette* and Allard's *Gazette* do not have much in common. While Renaudot published political news from France and across Europe, Allard wrote a book resembling a romance, providing a fictional *récit* inspired by historical events.[41] In any case, Allard's text has nothing to do with a newspaper.[42] According to his own words, Renaudot picked the title to appeal to "le vulgaire" to whom he thought it necessary to speak, that is to say, whom he wanted to reach with his publication.[43] This assertion must not distract from the fact that his public indeed mostly consisted of the upper echelons of society.[44]

Reveillé-Parise). Michel Emery is of the same opinion: "C'est lui [i.e., Renaudot] qui avait fondé le premier journal en France, la *Gazette* […]" (Emery 1889, p. 61). Eugène Hatin claims that the *Gazette* was the first ever *periodical* French newspaper. He acknowledges that other irregular publications, often handwritten, had existed before the *Gazette*. See Hatin 1859, vol. 1, p. 27. Roger Drouault, like Reveillé-Parise, assumes that the *Gazette* was the first *French* newspaper. See Drouault 1892, p. 7. Folke Dahl discusses certain materials indicating that the *Gazette* was *not* the first ever periodical French newspaper but was preceded by the *Nouvelles ordinaires de divers endroits*; see Dahl 1951, pp. 25–30. Feyel cites a variety of conflicting sources concerning the matter but comes to the conclusion that the *Gazette* was the first French periodical newspaper; see Feyel 2000, pp. 137–149. Stéphane Haffemayer agrees with this assertion; see Haffemayer 2002, pp. 13–14.

39 Strasbourg was, at that time, part of the Holy Roman Empire. For the (ignored) importance of the Strasbourg *Relation* for German press studies, see Welke 2008, p. 24. Martin Welke asserts that the *Relation* was first published as early as 1605 (ibid.). Furthermore, he adds the monthly printed *Historische erzehlung* (1597) from Rorschach to the list of the earliest newspapers (ibid., p. 27).

40 See Dalat 1959, p. 9. Solomon cites different examples for early periodical publications. He suggests the *Relations semestrielles* (1587) and *Mercurius gallo-belgicus* (1604), both printed in Frankfurt, and stresses that many *courantos* were published in Holland and distributed in England but also later reached France. See Solomon 1972, p. 107.

41 See Blanchard 1973, pp. 66–81.

42 Hatin comes to a similar conclusion: "Mais cette *Gazette françoise* d'Allard n'est point un journal, comme le pourrait faire supposer ce titre, d'ailleurs assez remarquable; c'est une sorte de salmigondis, de potpourri […]" (Hatin 1859, vol. 1, p. 72).

43 "Et quant aux Nouvelles que je vous donne sous ce titre [i.e., de Mercure François] ou sous celuy de Gazettes, (nom par moy choisi pour estre plus connu du vulgaire avec lequel il faut parler) […]" (Renaudot, *Mercure Francois*, tome XXII, 1637, p. 2).

44 Feyel writes, regarding the readers of the *Gazette*: "On aimerait savoir par qui était lue la *Gazette* au temps de Renaudot. Tout prouve que la noblesse d'épée et le monde parlementaire lui donnaient de nombreux lecteurs: son contenu d'abord, parfaitement adapté aux préoccupations de ces élites de naissance et du talent, mais aussi l'intense besoin d'information révélé par les correspondances de Peiresc, Arnauld, Chapelain. Au-delà de ces élites, la *Gazette* touchait très certainement la Petite Robe, ces avocats et ces médecins si présents aux Conférences du Bureau d'adresse, ainsi que le monde de la marchandise. Les gens de métier et les franges alphabétisées du peuple citadin devaient certainement avoir des contacts occasionnels avec la *Gazette*, au moins avec ses Extraordinaires" (Feyel 2000, p. 256).

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But even if Renaudot did not borrow the idea for the *Gazette* from Allard, he might have taken it from someone else. According to an argument first raised by the librarian and newspaper historian Folke Dahl,[45] a newspaper very much like the *Gazette* had appeared in Paris a few months before the *Gazette* was first printed.[46] Founded by Jean Martin, Louis Vendosme, and Françoise Pommerai, the *Nouvelles ordinaires de divers endroits* were weekly *courantos* in the same format Renaud used. Martin, Vendosme, and Pommerai tried to take legal action against Renaudot's publication when the *Gazette* first appeared, as Renaudot had sought no official approval for it. What is more, he was not even part of the corporation of printers. Yet Renaudot, bestowed with the king's favour, effectively forced the *Nouvelles ordinaires* out of the market. He also poached their editor and even stole their name, Dahl argues.[47] After this incident, nobody but Renaudot was allowed to print and distribute news in the manner of the *Gazette*.[48] This series of events leads Solomon to the following assessment of the birth of Renaudot's newspaper:

> An idea, an editor, a title stolen from others; flagrant disrespect for normal civil procedures; undisguised royal favoritism in granting a monopoly – thus the modern political newspaper was born. Renaudot may indeed remain as its father, but its birth was a bit more sordid than his nineteenth century biographers would admit.[49]

While there is no doubt that Renaudot used his connection to his powerful protectors to his advantage, Gilles Feyel does not agree with Dahl and Solomon and casts doubt on the claims of the printers Martin, Vendosme, and Pommerai.[50] The fact that between 17 July and 19 December 1631, the *Nouvelles ordinaires* appeared with the numbers 27 to 49 at first suggests that the previous numbers were published before Renaudot's first *Gazette* on 30 May 1631.[51] Yet as Feyel rightly points

45 See Dahl 1951 in general, but especially pp. 25–30. Solomon follows Dahl's argumentation; see Solomon 1972, p. 107.

46 For an overview of the affair, see Feyel 2000, pp. 137–149.

47 See Dahl 1951, pp. 34–35. Solomon again presents the same argument; see Solomon 1972, pp. 112–114. Feyel explains, regarding the 'incorporation' of the *Nouvelles ordinaires* into the *Gazette*: "A la fin de 1631, Renaudot doubla le volume de son hebdomadaire en lui annexant la gazette de ses malheureux concurrents Epstein et Vendosme. Peut-être parce qu'il était plus rapide et plus commode de faire imprimer d'une part la demi-feuille de la Gazette, de l'autre celle des Nouvelles ordinaires, peut-être aussi parce que des accords avec Epstein l'y contraignaient, peut-être enfin pour garder et 'fideliser' les lecteurs de la gazette de Vendosme, le gazetier poublia désormais deux cahiers séparés, la *Gazette* et les *Nouvelles ordinaires*, soit 24 000 signes" (Feyel 2000, p. 151).

48 This order also included handwritten *nouvelles à la main*. See Hatin 1859, vol. 1, p. 58.

49 Solomon 1972, p. 114.

50 On p. 144, Feyel (2000) provides an overview of the conflict's episodes and the legal actions taken on both sides. In 1951, Marguerite Boulet had already done the same, concluding that Renaudot was in the wrong; see Boulet 1951, p. 64.

51 See Feyel 2000, p. 137.

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out, no trace can be found of numbers 1–26 of the *Nouvelles ordinaires*. The printers effectively drew up a contract for their joint endeavour only on 9 June 1631, in which they mention they still need to ask for permission to sell their newspaper.[52] According to Feyel, they originally did not claim "paternité des gazettes" but instead were eager to assert the rights of the corporation of printers:[53] "Si les libraires laissent faire, ils risquent de perdre l'impression et la distribution, non seulement des feuilles hebdomadaires (*Gazette* ou *Nouvelles ordinaires*) mais aussi des occasionnels, source appréciable de revenus".[54]

Given the history of its origins, it is not surprising that Renaudot's *Gazette* cannot exactly be qualified as independent. Obviously, freedom of the press did not exist under an absolute monarch such as Louis XIII and his power-conscious principal minister Cardinal Richelieu. French studies scholar Stella Spriet asserts that Richelieu, when presented with Renaudot's *Gazette* project, immediately recognised the potential of this device and made a "veritable arme politique" out of the journal.[55] The *Gazette* was destined to spread the king's and the cardinal's propaganda.[56] Louis XIII and Richelieu closely supervised what Renaudot printed in the *Gazette* at all times, and they even had him publish articles they had written themselves.[57] A letter sent by Richelieu to the comte de Chavigny certainly proves as much: "Je vous envoye aussy un mémoire pour la Gazette, que le roy corrigera ainsy qu'il luy plaira, ensuite de quoy le cas requiert qu'il soit escrit par le sr Lucas et envoyé, comme Sa Majesté a accoustumé, à Renaudot."[58] As another of Richelieu's letters illustrates, Renaudot did not have much of a choice but to accept the king's and the cardinal's direct oversight, if he wanted to keep the pensions bestowed upon him: "La Gazette fera son devoir ou Renaudot sera privé des pensions dont il a joui jusqu'à présent."[59] The pages printed in Renaudot's workshop effectively figured as the official journal of power.[60]

Even though Richelieu and the king were particularly involved in the editing of the *Gazette*, we must not overlook that early newspapers in general could hardly acquire independence from those in power. This state of affairs can

52 See ibid., pp. 140–141.
53 Ibid., p. 142.
54 Ibid., p. 143.
55 Spriet 2012, p. 198.
56 See ibid. For a detailed analysis of the *Gazette* between propaganda and information, see Feyel 2000, pp. 191–263.
57 Spriet (2012, pp.199–200) cites a number of letters written by Richelieu to various addressees that highlight his contributions to the *Gazette*. See also Feyel 2000, pp. 172–176.
58 Richelieu, lettre à M. de Chavigni, 12 novembre 1636, in Avenel 1863, vol. 5, p. 670.
59 Richelieu, lettre au marquis de Sourdis, 8 ou 9 juin 1635, in Avenel 1863, vol. 5, p. 51.
60 See Spriet 2012, p. 198. One more example, taken from a letter from Richelieu to Chavigny, should suffice to accentuate how much power the government had over the *Gazette*: "Je juge important et pour cause que le roy mande à Renaudot qu'il ne mette rien dans la Gazette du siége de Corbie qu'il ne luy envoye; et demain vous aurés un mémoire de ce que je pense" (Richelieu, lettre à M. de Chavigni, 11 novembre 1636, in Avenel 1863, vol. 5, p. 669).

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be seen, for example, regarding German newspapers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[61] Media historian Jörg Jochen Berns affirms that even though newspaper producers saw themselves bound to an ideal of impartiality, they suspended this principle when it came to the political interests of their own governments: "Die Unparteylichkeitsmaxime ist immer da, wo der Zeitunger die Interessen seiner eigenen Obrigkeit zu vertreten hat, außer Kraft gesetzt."[62]

The Bureau d'Adresse's printing presses not only enabled the production of the *Gazette*; they also permitted Renaudot to immediately publish the *comptes rendus* of his *conférences*, his weekly discussion meetings open to the public, where participants examined an astonishing variety of questions. The first printed volume of *Conférences*, dating from 1634, effectively confirms the fact that each *Conférence* was printed one week after its corresponding meeting took place. On that same day, the next meeting was scheduled.[63] The short delay of one week presumably allowed Renaudot and his *commis* to assemble and correct the statements voiced in a particular session. After approximately one year of debate meetings,[64] Renaudot's workshop bound together the various brochures to form the first *Centurie*. Such an iterative process also constituted the earliest versions of the second, third, and fourth *Centuries*, whereas the fifth was first printed in 1655 and in its entirety, with the whole year's production bound at once. Later reprints of the first four volumes of *Conférences* were also printed in one go and therefore do not bear the markers of their original weekly publication cycle.

Concerning the questions the *conférenciers* discussed, it is important to note that they cover an extremely large variety of topics.[65] In the thirty-fifth debate meeting, for example, the attendees discussed the question "Du Reglement des pauvres."[66] On other occasions, they considered topics such as "Quel est le plus noble de l'homme ou de la femme,"[67] "D'où vient la saleure de la mer?,"[68] and "S'il

61 See Berns 1976.

62 Ibid., p. 212.

63 Vol. 1, *Conférences* (1634). I have consulted this earliest printed edition of the first volume of *Conférences* in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. See the explanation of my sources on pp. 19–20. The first *conférence* in the first *Centurie* was held on 22 August 1633 and printed on 29 August. The second was held on 29 August and printed on 5 September. The third took place on 5 September, and so on.

64 The first *Centurie* contains *Conférences* spanning from 22 August 1633 to 31 July 1634. The second *Centurie* begins with a *Conférence* from 3 November 1634 and ends with one taking place on 11 February 1636. The third *Centurie* begins with 18 February 1636 but ends with 17 January 1639, which shows that the number of meetings taking place each year varied considerably. See vol. 1, *Conférences* (1634), vol. 2, *Conférences* (1636), and vol. 3, *Conférences* (1639).

65 From 1633 to 1636, each discussion session examined two questions. From 17 November 1636 onwards, the *conférenciers* discussed only one question. See vol. 3, *Conférence* 116, p. 249: "La seconde question a esté remise à la huitaine: & résolu, pour plusieurs raison, qu'il ne seroit plus traité qu'une qu'estion á chaque Conference: le reste demeurant à l'ordinaire".

66 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, pp. 594–603.

67 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 446–456.

68 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 29.I, pp. 498–504.

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est bon de se servir de remédes chymiques?"[69] Given this rich collection, Robert Aulotte claims that the *conférenciers* established an inventory of everything educated men would have known to exist in the world at that period of time.[70] Geoffrey Sutton argues in a similar manner that "[f]rom the reports of these Conferences, it is possible to piece together the intellectual and physical worlds inhabited by the cultured classes during the early reign of Louis XIII".[71] Undoubtedly, the *conférenciers* accomplished the examination of a vast variety of topics that were also of concern to other *savants*.[72]

Knowledge about medicine was essential when Renaudot and his associates held their *consultations charitables* at the Bureau d'Adresse. These consultations allowed poor inhabitants of Paris to see a doctor free of charge and took place in the bureau's *grand salle* every Tuesday. According to Howard Salomon, the *consultations charitables* were held as early as 1632.[73] However, the administrative documents recording Renaudot's activities that Gérard Jubert has assembled prove that it is only in 1640 that they really began.[74] Regarding their organisation, Renaudot, in *La presence des absens* (1642), explains that his doctors reserved "[…] toutes les semaines une apres-disnée entiére, qui est celle des Mardis, aux Consultations qui se font dans la grande salle du Bureau d'Adresse destinée par elle à cet éffet, pour y recev-

69 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 97–106.

70 They are an "inventaire de tout ce que les hommes instruits savent alors de ce qui est dans le monde" (Robert Aulotte, in Carré 1994, p. I).

71 Sutton 1995, p. 24.

72 Most interestingly, Marin Mersenne, in the *Recreation des scavans* (1634), treated a number of questions the *conférenciers* also debated over the years. See Mersenne 1946, pp. 601–606. For the thirty-seventh question, Mersenne asked: "Pourquoy l'aymant attire-t-il le fer et pourquoy se tourne-t-il vers le Pole?"; the equivalent to this can be found in vol. 2, *Conférence* 51.II, pp. 17–32: "Pourquoy l'aimant attire le fer"; and in vol. 4, *Conférence* 205, pp. 161–168: "Pourquoi l'aiguille aimanté tire-t-elle vers le Nord?". He also formulated the question "Pourquoy le flux et le reflux de la mer est-il si bien reglé?", and the *conférenciers* debated "Du flux et reflux de la mer" in vol. 1, *Conférence* 19.I, pp. 328–334. While Mersenne asked "Pourquoy son eau est-elle salee?", the debaters at the Bureau d'Adresse were concerned with "D'où vient la saleur de la mer", in vol. 1, *Conférence* 29.I, pp. 498–504. "Le mouvement perpetuel est-il possible?" finds its counterpart in "Du mouvement perpetüel" in vol. 1, *Conférence* 4.II, pp. 63–70. Mersenne was concerned with "Pourquoy la glace nage-elle sur l'eau?" and the *conférenciers* with "Pourquoy la glace estant plus dure que l'eau, et-elle neanmoins plus legere" in vol. 4, *Conférence* 280, pp. 793–800. Finally, "Et comment la volonté peut elle suivre la lumiere de l'entendement puisqu'elle ne peut rien voir?" finds its equivalent in "Comment l'entendement esmeut la volonté" in vol. 3, *Conférence* 120, pp. 285–288. Some of these questions were debated before Mersenne's publication, which shows that the *conférenciers* did not simply take them from him.

73 See Salomon, 1972, p. 46.

74 See Jubert 2005, p. LXII. "Adresse de Théophraste Renaudot à Sublet de Noyers pour mettre sous sa protection les consultations charitables pour les pauvres malades" dates from 7 November 1640. It was originally printed in the *Gazette* and can be found in Jubert 2005, pp. 267–271. Therein, Renaudot claims: "Car encore que les pauvres malades ayent toujours receu de moi l'assistance gratuite qu'ils m'ont demandée, si est-ce qu'ayant vaqué plus assiduement depuis quatre mois à consulter pour leurs maladies, je puis asseurer qu'il ne s'est renvoyé depuis ce temps là aucun […]" (ibid., p. 268). This means that the *consultations* began in July 1640.

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oir tous les malades qui se présentent […]."[75] In 1640, Renaudot also received *lettres patentes* allowing him to install a laboratory with furnaces at the Bureau d'Adresse. In this laboratory, he could prepare his own chemical remedies.[76]

Renaudot's consultations and chemical preparations probably brought him the gratitude of the poor and ill, but they did not amuse the Parisian Faculty of Medicine. The Parisian physicians saw the *consultations charitables* as an infringement on their rights, which, given the legal situation, they effectively were.[77] Furthermore, as the Parisian faculty was fervently opposed to chemical medication, Renaudot's *fourneaux* greatly alarmed them. The resulting conflict between the faculty and Renaudot is analysed in more detail in chapter 7, where I discuss the medical *Conférences*. What is important at this juncture, however, is that regarding the *consultations charitables*, Renaudot again heavily profited from his association with those in power. As in the case of the *Gazette*, his relation to Richelieu and Louis XIII allowed him to place himself above – or at least beside – the law.

Renaudot's imperium comprised still other ventures. Aside from medical examinations and prescriptions for detected diseases, the bureau's *mont-de-piété* facilitated loans.[78] Renaudot probably brought back the idea for this facility from his travels to Italy, where he went after obtaining his doctorate from the Faculty of Medicine in Montpellier in 1606.[79] In March 1637, Renaudot was permitted to open a *bureau de ventes à grâce* at the Bureau d'Adresse while he awaited the decision concerning the *mont-de-piété*.[80] According to Renaudot's presentation, the most pressing argument in favour of the *ventes* was the restoration of some noble families' solvency:

75 Renaudot, *La presence des absens* 1642, p. 4.

76 See "Lettres patentes permettant à Théophraste Renaudot et à tous ceux qui auront fait quelques découvertes pour le bien et soulagement des pauvres, tant valides que malades et invalides, de le faire dans la maison dudit Renaudot, d'y tenir des fourneaux et d'y faire toutes sortes d'opérations chimiques, à la condition que ce soit exclusivement pour le service de la médicine" (1640, 2 septembre), in Jubert 2005, pp. 262–263. On the specificities of Early Modern laboratories, see Ursula Klein's "The Laboratory Challenge: Some Revisions of the Standard View of Early Modern Experimentation" (2008).

77 See Riolan 1641, pp. 15–16. See also chapter 7 in this volume.

78 Feyel has shown that Renaudot's loans were not as low interest as he claimed and that he was effectively "coupable de l'usure la plus manifeste" (Feyel 2000, p. 69). For a detailed discussion of the *mont-de-piété* and the *ventes à grâce* at the Bureau d'Adresse, see ibid., pp. 58–77.

79 Jubert provides a document proving Renaudot's admission to the *examens du doctorat* in 1606: "Délibération du doyen et des professeurs de la faculté de Médecine de Montpellier autorisant Théophraste Renaudot, licencié, à subir les examens du doctorat" (1606, 5 juillet), in Jubert 2005, p. 12. Tourette describes Renaudot's voyage to Italy and the discovery of the *monts* as follows: "Reçu docteur en 1606 […] et 'sachant que l'aage est nécessaire pour authorizer un médecin', il résolut de voyager et passa directement en Italie, où certainement il étudia l'organisation des Monts-de-Piéte qui y fonctionnaient sous la surveillance des papes" (Tourette 1892, p. 4).

80 See "Arrêt du Conseil privé du roi permettant à Théophraste Renaudot, en attendant l'établissement de monts-de-piété, d'ouvrir, à Paris seulement, dans son bureau d'adresse, un bureau de ventes, troc et achat de hardes, meubles, marchandises et autres biens mobiliers généralement quelquonques" (1637, 27 mars) in Jubert 2005, pp. 196–197. Renaudot also mentions the *ventes* in the *Mercure Francois*: "Environ le mesme temps furent faits en ce Royaume quelques nouveaux establissements, & entr'autres celuy des Bureaux de ventes à grace des meubles &

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> Sur ce qui a esté representé au Roy en son Conseil par Theophraste Renaudot, Intendant general des Bureaux d'Adresse de France: Qu'il se presente [sic!] journellement en sesdits Bureaux plusieurs Gentils-hommes & autres sujets de Sa Majesté, qui auraient grand desir de la servir en ses armées, s'ils estoient promptement secourus, & aidez d'argent en la necessité presente pour se mettre en équipage: ayans des meubles & autres biens qu'ils exposeroient volontiers en vente, si la honte ne les retenoit & empeschoit de descouvrir leur indigence: laquelle ne pourroit estre tenuë secrette s'ils se servoient du ministere des revendeurs, revenderesses & autres menuës gens qui ont accoustumé de s'entremettre tel negoce: joint le peu de seureté qui se rencontre parmi eux.[81]

We cannot be certain whether members of the nobility in financially difficult situations like these really formed the biggest group of Renaudot's customers. Yet the argument about the nobility's willingness to go to war for their king – only hindered by their lack of liquid monetary means – certainly had the sovereign convinced. The king also quickly reached a decision regarding the *mont-de-piété*: from April 1637 onwards, the Crown granted Renaudot the right to operate as a pawnbroker.[82]

Renaudot's status as a social reformer leads us back to the Bureau d'Adresse and the question of the poor. Overall, primarily upper- and middle-class inhabitants of Paris used the bureau's services, as Salomon has shown through an analysis of the *Tables des choses dont on peut donner et recevoir advis au Bureau d'adresse*.[83] Renaudot's argument in favour of establishing the *ventes à grâce* before the *mont-de-piété* could be opened points in a similar direction.

Nevertheless, the bureau was also intended to respond to the needs of a less advantaged part of the population. In seventeenth-century France, large numbers of destitute citizens fell into pauperism because of wars, taxes, and the feudal (and ineffective) organisation of agriculture.[84] Paris especially was inundated with

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autres biens quelconques, en attendant l'establissement des Monts de Pieté […]" (Renaudot, *Mercure Francois*, tome XXII, 1637, p. 55). Explaining how these *ventes* functioned, Renaudot writes: "[…] quiconque y voudra apporter hardes, meubles, marchandises […] sera asseuré de ne s'en retourner point sans quelque contentement. Pour ce qui, où il rencontre la juste valeur desdites choses en eschange & troque ou en argent: & en ce cas il ne tiendra qu'à luy qu'il ne les eschange, ou vende purement & simplement: ou s'il en trouve moins qu'il ne les estime, il les vendra à grace & faculté de rachapt, en estant quite en l'un & l'autre de cas cy-dessus pour les six derniers pour livre du prix de la chose venduë ou eschangée" (ibid., p. 57).

81 Renaudot, *L'ouverture des ventes, troques & achats* 1637, pp. 3–4.

82 See "Brevet de Louis XIII faisant don à Théophraste Renaudot et aux siens, exclusivement à tous autres, de la direction et intendance générale des monts-de-piété et incorporant inséparablement celle-ci à celle des bureaux d'adresse dont jouit ledit Renaudot" (1637, 1 avril)", in Jubert 2005, pp. 197–198.

83 See Solomon 1972, pp. 53–54. Solomon prints the *Table* in his appendix on pp. 227–232, and it can also be found in Jubert 2005, pp. 102–107.

84 For a discussion of pauperism in seventeenth-century France, see Feillet 1886. Concerning the Ancien Régime's economic system, and especially its taxation and agricultural organisation, see Feillet's chapter three.

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the poor, who resorted to begging to survive.[85] Renaudot and his contemporaries divided these beggars into two groups: those invalided, and those still able to work.[86] The latter were further divided into those who were poor 'by accident' – because they had lost their job and could not find another one – and 'vagabonds' thoroughly unwilling to work.[87] One of the Bureau d'Adresse's primary aims was to help those in need of a job to find one, thereby preventing them from begging. In the *Inventaire*, Renaudot argues that the best means to prevent poverty and mendicity was to promptly provide occasions for those at risk to find a paid occupation: "Que le plus asseuré moyen et praecaution pour empescher la Pauvreté et mendicité d'advenir, est de fournir promptement à tous ceux qui en sont menacez, les occasions de s'ayder de leur industrie & des autres moyens qu'ils ont en main […]".[88] To facilitate this scheme, the poor were not charged when using the Bureau d'Adresse's service, whereas others had to pay three sous to register their *annonces* or gain insight from the bureau's registers.[89]

To facilitate the *règlement des pauvres*, Louis XIII named Renaudot commissaire général des pauvres du royaume as early as 1618.[90] Given Renaudot's close association to those in power, the Bureau d'Adresse was always more or less closely affiliated to the state. Yet it achieved the greatest possible official recognition in 1639, when the law obliged all hoteliers and other short-term landlords to register their (lower-class) guests at the Bureau d'Adresse twenty-four hours after their arrival at the latest.[91] This order effectively transformed the bureau into a government agency equipped with a monopoly.[92] Only nine years after the Parisian Bureau d'Adresse's opening, Renaudot had reached a position of considerable power, thereby revealing that his inventions were not that innocent after all.

85 See Solomon 1972, pp. 22–23.

86 See Renaudot's "Factum présenté par Théophraste Renaudot pour le règlement des pauvres mendiants de ce royaume" (1618), in Jubert 2005, p. 34. One century earlier, Juan Luis Vives had dedicated himself to the question in *De subventione pauperum* (1526), as Solomon asserts; see Solomon 1972, p. 25. Renaudot's arguments sometimes appear similar to those presented by Vives (see the argument that follows in the text).

87 See ibid., pp. 30–31.

88 Renaudot, *Inventaire* 1630, p. 22.

89 "[…] sans qu'il soict payé plus de trois soulz pour chescun enregistrement ou extraict desdicts registres et gratuitement pour les pauvres […]" ("Lettres patentes de Louis XIII autorisant Théophraste Renaudot à établir des bureaux d'adresse et des tables de rencontre partout où il le jugera necessaire" (1628, 31 mars), in Jubert 2005, pp. 88–89, p. 89).

90 "Arrêt du Conseil du roi accordant à Théophraste Renaudot la charge de commissaire général des pauvres, tant maladies que valides et mendiants, du royaume" (1618, 3 février), in ibid., p. 32.

91 "Ordonnance d'Isaac de Laffemas, lieutenant civil de la ville, prévoté et vicomté de Paris, enjoignant aux hôteliers, cabaretiers et autres ligeant en chambres garnies au mois, à la semaine ou à la journée des manouvriers, compagnons de métier et autres domestiques, de les déclarer au Bureau d'adresse, comme aussi tous ceux qui cherchent maîtres, dans les vingt quatre heures de leur arrivée à Paris, à peine de galères, comme vagabonds et gens sans aveu" (1629, 9 décembre), in ibid., pp. 241–243.

92 See Solomon 1972, pp. 45–46.

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In light of Renaudot's entanglement with the French government, it is revealing to analyse the most noteworthy contemporary arguments regarding the question of the poor, as voiced in the *Conférence* "Du Reglement des Pauvres" from the first volume of *Conférences*.[93] Its first speaker is primarily concerned with vagabonds, often discharged soldiers dubbed *caimans*,[94] who were able enough to work but instead resorted to begging and stealing: "Je soustien donc qu'il faut contraindre les valides au travail, en les enfermant & chastiant; voire les envoyer aux galeres, comme veut l'Ordonnance du Roy Francois I. plustost que de souffrir leurs desordres."[95] The first speaker's argument indicates the changing perception of the poor in the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Where they had long been seen as worthy of protection and support, they now were more and more perceived as a threat.[96] It became common to confine *les pauvres valides* to working houses,[97] and repeat offenders of begging could even be sent to the galleys.[98]

While the second speaker is preoccupied with the general necessity for the Christian duty of charity, the third contradicts him. He wishes to establish in which cases it is better to act charitable and where discipline must be applied. The latter, he argues, often proves more useful: "Le 3. dist, Qu'il s'agissoit ici non tant de loüer la charité, comme de la déterminer, & sçavoir laquelle des deux aumosnes, dont parle S. Augustin, du pain ou de la discipline, doit ester donnée à chacun pauvre; la derniere leur estant souvent plus utile que la premiere […]."[99]

Strongly positioned against the many efforts led by Renaudot, the fourth speaker asserts that the poor should be left as they are, and that everyone should give them the alms they can afford: "Le 4. dist: Qu'il faloit laisser les pauvres comme ils sont, en nous contentant de les assister chacun de nos aumosnes, selon nostre poivoir."[100] He quotes the Bible, saying that "[…] nous aurions tousiours les pauvres avec nous […]",[101] by which he wants to indicate that it is not possible to solve poverty. Moreover, he states that the many past efforts to police and confine the poor have mostly been futile, and that they are inappropriate anyway, as being poor should not be considered a crime.[102] All in all, this speaker's opinion represents a position on the question of the poor that was very common in the seventeenth century: complete resignation. The rich should give alms and the poor merely accept their lot.[103]

Quite to the contrary, the fifth speaker proposes arguments emphasising the urgent need to regulate the poor. He is certain that "[…] il est fort aizé de donner

93 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, pp. 594–603.
94 See Tourette 1892, p. 1.
95 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 596.
96 See Solomon 1972, p. 24.
97 See ibid., p. 30.
98 See ibid., p. 45. See also Isaac de Laffemas's *ordonnance* above at note 91.
99 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 598.
100 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 598.
101 John 12:8.
102 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 598.
103 See Feillet 1886, p. 53.

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ordre au déreglement de nos pauvres […]".[104] According to this speaker, almost all other countries besides France have already tried to do so.[105] Overall, he professes a detailed knowledge of possible options for the *reglement des pauvres*. Indeed, the fifth *conférencier*'s arguments bear significant similarities to texts which Renaudot wrote on various occasions concerning the question. Therefore, it seems more than probable that Renaudot himself is this speaker.[106]

As the fifth speaker argues, one of the greatest administrative problems regarding the question of the poor is the fact they leave their villages and come to Paris in great numbers.[107] Renaudot invokes the same argument in the *Inventaire,* where he claims:

> Entre toutes les causes de la pauvreté, dont la deduction seroit ennuyeuse, nous pouvons dire asseurement que l'une des plus manifestes, & qui reduit les personnes de moindre condition au miserable estat de mendicité, ou à soustenir leur vie par moyens illicites, & finalement à l'Hostel Dieu, si pis ne leur arrive. C'est qu'ils accourent à trouppes en cette ville, qui semble ester le centre et le païs commun de tout le monde sous l'esperance de quelque avancement qui se trouve ordinairement vaine et trompeuse.[108]

To prevent begging, the poor must be prohibited from coming to the cities in the first place – an idea that Renaudot, in the *Inventaire*, illustrates through an example stemming from Aesop: "Ce que vouloit dire Esope quand il parloit d'empescher les rivieres d'entrer dans la mer avant que la boire."[109] The fifth speaker cites the exact same example, arguing: "Aussi peut-on dire de ce réglement; ce qu'Æsope disoit à ceux contre lesquels Kantus avoit gagé qu'il boitoit toute la mer: à sçavoir qu'il ne le pourroit faire s'ils n'arrestoient premierement le cours de toutes les rivieres qui s'y dégorgent."[110]

As a remedy to this situation, the fifth *conférencier* proposes sending back all the *pauvres valides* to the places they came from and employing them there, according to their capacities: "Il faut renvoyer les pauvres valides chacun àu lieu de sa naissance […] là les distinguer selon le sexe, l'aage, les conditions, force du corps & de l'esprit, selon leur capacité & industrie: pour estre distribüez ez divers emplois don't ils se trouveront capables […]."[111] This argument is very similar to what the Renaissance humanist Juan Luis Vives recommends in his *De subventione pauperum* (1526),[112] an oeuvre which probably inspired the speaker.

104 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 599.
105 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 599.
106 Feyel comes to the same conclusion; see Feyel 200, p. 34.
107 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 600.
108 Renaudot, *Inventaire* 1630, p. 12.
109 Ibid., p. 22.
110 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 600.
111 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 601.
112 See Solomon 1972, p. 25.

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Later on, the *conférencier* even proposes to send to the colonies those able to voyage: "Ceux qui seront propres à voyager seront envoyez dans la nouvelle France."[113] The same solution also appears in an issue of Renaudot's *Nouvelles ordinaires de divers endroicts* from 1632. There, Renaudot remarks what a great relief it would be for France to send the *pauvres valides* away to the colonies: "Sur tout est cette entreprise à estimer par la descharge qu'elle nous fait esperer de tous les mendiants valides de la France."[114]

Furthermore, the most honourable residents of a place should be selected to govern the poor, the speaker argues. He also asserts that having previously served in this capacity should become mandatory for people wanting to proceed to more important charges.[115] Again, Renaudot presents a very similar idea in his "Requête en faveur des pauvres présentée au roi par Théophraste Renaudot, ainsi qu'aux membres de l'assemblée des notables convoquée à Paris" (1626).[116]

The fifth speaker continues that those who do not have a *métier* could be employed for public work: "Ceux qui ne sçauront faire autre chose seront employez aux atteliers & ouvraves publics, refection des ponts, levées & chaussées […]."[117] This again overlaps with the "Requête", where Renaudot demands precisely the same measure.[118]

Altogether, a considerable number of intersections emerges between texts definitively written by Renaudot and arguments put forward by the fifth speaker in the *Conférence* concerning the poor. Therefore, I suggest that it is Renaudot himself who rises to speak in the guise of an anonymised participant. After all, why shouldn't he partake in the debate concerning the *règlement des pauvres*? In all probability, he was the most prolific expert on the matter in the congregation of *conférenciers*.[119]

113 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 602. In itself, the argument is of course not very original, as it was voiced by many of Renaudot's contemporaries. Members of the Hartlib circle, for instance, proposed a similar solution to poor relief. See, for example, Leng 2009, p. 191.

114 See Renaudot, *Recueil des Gazettes, Nouvelles, Relations, Extraordinaires* 1632 [1633], Nouvelles Ordinaires de divers endroicts, 16 January 1632, p. 24.

115 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, pp. 601–602.

116 For the document, see Jubert 2005, pp. 70–78. Therein, Renaudot states that "[…] nul ne puisse estre admis a aucune charge honorable sans avoir esté, un an pour le moins, du bureau desdits pauvres du lieu" (p. 76).

117 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 35.II, p. 602.

118 "Permettre ausdits Pauvres de nettoyer les rues, eslargir, reparer ou entretenir les chemins, chaussées et levées […]" (Renaudot, "Requête en faveur des pauvres", in Jubert 2005, p. 75).

119 Feyel also comes to this conclusion; see Feyel 2000, p. 33. As he points out, Renaudot could not realise his more ambitious original plans to reorganise the *reglement des pauvres*, neither as they appear in his publications nor in the arguments raised by the fifth speaker: "Le grand dessein de Renaudot était décidément beaucoup trop ambitieux pour avoir une chance quelconque de retenir Richelieu. Il demandait la création d'une administration d'Etat, centralisée et hiérarchisée, financée par l'impôt. Il vidait de leur substance les anciennes Aumônes générales et le Grad Bureau de pauvres de Paris qui ne désiraient pas disparaître. Il heurtait de plein front les intérêts de divers corps de métier. Renaudot put bien solliciter encore et toujours, il put bien flatter son éminent protecteur […]" (ibid.).

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2

Neither Vulgar nor Pedantic: The *Conférences*' Audience(s)

Having located the Maison du Grand-Coq on the Île de la Cité, our flâneur wishing to participate in the *conférences* would now head to the *grande salle* of the Bureau d'Adresse. Just like on every other Monday, he would find numerous people assembled there and wait for the debate on the question of the week to commence. On 22 November 1638, this question was "S'il est venu plus de bien que de mal du partage des parties de la Medecine, en Medecins, Chirurgiens & Appotiquaires."[1] Therein, the *conférenciers* discussed the strict separation between physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries in the field of medicine. In Paris, the division between the three medical professions was strictly upheld by the Faculty of Medicine, whose doctors governed the surgeons and apothecaries.[2] Renaudot and his associates, it seems, were of a more liberal opinion.[3] Consequently, our flâneur would encounter an exceedingly lively debate on this particular Monday. But who were the people thus animated by such a question? That is to say, how was the *conférences*' public constituted?

The many medical questions discussed at the *conférences* suggest that quite a few of the *conférenciers* were physicians. Yet to say anything definitive about the participants is a troublesome matter, as their names were purged from the pages of the printed *Conférences*: the speakers were anonymised. Names of participants sometimes appear in Renaudot's other publications, but this happens only very rarely. Therefore, we also cannot know for certain whether women took part in the *conférences*. Certain signs indicate, however, that they most likely were excluded.[4] But women were not the only group of people unable to attend. Despite the *conférences*' relative openness compared to other academies, only "gens de la qualité requise"[5] could participate. In view of this, it is revealing to consider the *conférenciers*' self-perception. What image did they construct of themselves in contrast to the uneducated – the 'vulgar' – who were excluded from the *conférences*? And where did the *conférenciers* see themselves compared to the Schoolmen and the

1 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, pp. 855–863.
2 On the tumultuous relationship of Parisian physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, see Solomon 1972, pp. 167–170.
3 See ibid., pp. 173 and 175.
4 For a more detailed discussion of this point, see chapter 6.
5 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.

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universities? Through my analysis, it becomes evident that the rejection of both the 'vulgar' and the Scholastics figured as a means for the *conférenciers* to position themselves as members of the educated, urban classes in the Republic of Letters.[6] Their identity is constructed in opposition to the perceived ignorance of the uneducated on the one hand, and the universities' supposed pedantry on the other. In the face of these two negative attributes, the concept of *honnêteté* – which began to play an ever-greater role in seventeenth-century society – emerged as a positive point of identification for the *conférenciers*.

As everyone sooner or later needs medical counsel, the first speaker on 22 November 1638 argued, the debate about separating the medical profession into physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries concerns all. Therefore, it must be treated with more circumspection than any other topic.[7] The first *conférencier*'s cautious conclusion is that he personally would not change the way society is organised, as this could lead to utter confusion: "Quant à moy qui laisse volontiers le monde comme il est: j'estime qu'il ne faut pas sans grande raison troubler la societé civile […]."[8]

However, the second puts forward that, in the past, a single person occupied the three branches of medicine.[9] Later on, the separation into physician, representing the intellectual faculty; surgeon, representing the vital faculty; and pharmacist, representing the natural one, took place. Yet this split, according to the second speaker, was not a good idea. The medical professions belong together in the same manner as different organs belong to one body. Consequently, their separation, which he likens to the separation of theory and practice, culminated in the emergence of great numbers of *ignorants* and *empiriques*.[10] This *conférencier*'s argument probably met Renaudot's approval. Under his roof at the Maison du Grand-Coq, he assembled not only the *consultations charitables*, the domain of the physicians, but also laboratories where (chemical) medicines could be produced and immediately handed out to the sick. Like the organs working together in the human body, Renaudot's various ventures at the *maison* could act jointly. They were supposed to provide everything a person would need to lead a good and healthy life.

The third speaker, to the contrary of the second, does not believe in medical unity. He is certain that separation is the preferable strategy, as it leads to better therapeutic results. When members of the medical profession concentrate on one

6 On the Republic of Letters, see Waquet 2017. Françoise Waquet points out the difference between the educated, erudite, learned, semi-learned, and simply curious (ibid., p. 69). While Renaudot and the *conférenciers* might have perceived themselves as erudite, other members of the Republic of Letters possibly would have challenged this view.

7 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, p. 855.

8 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, p. 856.

9 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, p. 856.

10 "Aussi le Medecin representant la faculté intellectüelle: le Chirurgien, la vitale: & l'Apotiquaire, la naturelle: les diviser, c'est vouloir separer le foye, le coeur & le cerveau d'un mesme homme: & la theorie n'estant jamais bien connuë sans sa pratique, ce n'est pas merveille si de cette desunion sont venus tant d'ignorans & Empiriques" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, p. 860).

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specific area, they acquire greater expertise, he believes.[11] Likewise comparing the medical professions to different parts of the human body, the speaker analogises the physician to the human head. This placement attests to the physician's superiority over the apothecary and surgeon, who are represented by the hands: "[…] le Medecin tenant le *superius*, & autres deux leurs parties: le I. estant comme les la [*sic*] teste, & les autres ses deux mains."[12] This speaker's opinion resembles the view upheld by the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, which scrupulously surveilled the medical field's division. The physicians belonging to the faculty saw surgeons as mere craftsmen and apothecaries as simple salesmen. In their view, both needed to be closely supervised by the physicians. Otherwise, turmoil would ensue.[13]

Renaudot himself was a doctor of medicine who, as a Protestant, had studied medicine not at the Parisian Faculty of Medicine but at the rivalling faculty of Montpellier.[14] Like their Parisian counterparts, the physicians from Montpellier, when they won their degrees, were given permission to practice *hic et ubique terrarum*.[15] Doctors from Paris, however, disputed this right.[16] They took legal proceedings against every foreign doctor practising in their city but could not do so in the case of Renaudot. Having been named *médecin ordinaire du roy*, he stood under the king's protection.[17] Renaudot's academic origin is one reason for his long-lasting conflict with the Parisian faculty, which stands at the centre of my chapter on the medical *Conférences*.

Through the *consultations charitables* and the laboratory he established, Renaudot assembled various physicians from Montpellier and other provincial universities in the Maison du Grand-Coq.[18] It stands to reason that many of them also participated in the *conférences.* Moreover, it seems that students from the Parisian Faculty of Medicine also attended the (medical) discussion meetings. Supposedly, they were curious about methods of treatment not usually taught in Paris.[19] Be-

11 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, p. 861.
12 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, p. 862.
13 See, for example, Patin 1868, vol. 1, pp. 172 and 218.
14 See Solomon 1972, pp. 166 and 170.
15 This means that they were allowed to practice in Montpellier as well as every other part of the realm.
16 See Riolan 1651, p. 7. To be fair, the argument goes both ways for Jean Riolan. He asserts that the doctors from Paris have no business practising in Montpellier, just as he forbids the physicians from Montpellier to practice in Paris. As the climates of the cities are extremely different, doctors who were not trained *sur place* do not know how to best treat the 'natives', he explains.
17 The "Brevet de Louis XIII accordant à Théophraste Renaudot, son médecine ordinaire, une somme de six cents livres et l'authorisant, exclusivement à tous autres, à tenir des bureaux et registres d'adresses […]" (1612, 14 octobre), in Jubert 2005, pp. 16–17, identifies Renaudot as one of the king's *médecins ordinaires*.
18 From the "medecins consultans pour les pauvres […] la plus grande partie sont Docteurs de la Faculté de Montpellier […]" (Renaudot, *Factum du procez* (1640), p. 12).
19 See Solomon 1972, p. 175. See also the debate surrounding chemical medicine in chapter 7.

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cause of the presence of these two groups of physicians, medical questions were discussed frequently and with great expertise at Renaudot's academy.[20]

Assumptions about the professions and the social status of the participants aside, it is almost impossible to establish who took part in the debate meetings, due to the anonymised printed *Conférences*. According to Renaudot, the *conférenciers* themselves requested the anonymisation to avoid their names influencing the readers' judgement. Yet they also wished to test their reasonings without being held personally accountable:

> […] c'est la principale des conditions qu'ils ont requise de moy: plusieurs pour laisser libre à un chacun le jugement de leurs opinions, que la connoissance des personnes préoccupe volontiers: d'autres pour essayer à couvert quel sentiment le public auroit d'eux.[21]

The first argument suggests the speakers at the *conférences* developed a new *ethos*[22] – one whereby the identity of a speaker (or at least his public *persona*) prior to a speech in no way plays a role, as it (partly) does in Aristotle's understanding of the concept.[23] The *conférenciers* wish to convince the public only by what they present in their contributions and how they present it, not by their status. Later developments in the Republic of Letters, such as the academic prize competitions, point in a similar direction.[24] As historian Martin Urmann explains, the *concours académique*, due to its anonymised form, was conducted without taking into account the reputation or rank of the participants. What was important was their

20 Regarding the question of which topics were debated at the *conférences*, the composition of the public was decisive. The *conférenciers* collectively decided which subjects they wanted to discuss. See chapter 3.

21 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

22 For an early and very detailed overview of *ethos* and its conception as presented by various ancient Greek writers, see Süss 1910. While Wilhelm Süss examines the term *ethos* in all the dimensions of its meaning, S. Michael Halloran presents a somewhat truncated definition, which is nevertheless useful for the present argument: "*Ethos* is one of the three modes of appeal – […] the other two being *logos* and *pathos*. In its simplest form, *ethos* is what we might call the argument from authority, the argument that says in effect, Believe me because I am the sort of person whose word you can believe" (Halloran 1982, p. 60). For a discussion of *ethos* in science, see Robert K. Merton's seminal study "A Note on Science and Democracy" (1942), later reprinted as "The Normative Structure of Science" (1973). For a critical analysis of Merton's concept, see Nico Stehr's "The Ethos of Science Revisited: Social and Cognitive Norms" (1978).

23 As Markus H. Wörner explains, the rhetorical concept of *ethos* was originally devised for the free citizens of the *polis*, who were supposed to participate in democratic decision-making processes (see Wörner 1984, p. 52). In the understanding of Aristotle, one part of *ethos* results from the moral personality of the speaker as perceived before the speech, but another part is constructed in the speech itself. Wörner (1984, p. 47) calls the former "atechnisch" and the latter "entechnisch". The connection to the Greek *polis* also makes clear that *ethos*, often translated as "character", "emphasises the conventional rather than the idiosyncratic, the public rather than the private. […] To have *ethos* is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks" (Halloran 1982, p. 60).

24 For an introduction to the *concourse académique*, see Jeremy L. Caradonna's *The Enlightenment in Practice* (2012).

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argumentative performance: "Der concours lief […] somit systematisch 'ohne Ansehen der Person' ab, das heißt ohne Ansehen der Standesperson des Autors […]. Stattdessen wurd die Leistung des Konkurrenten in den Mittelpunkt des Verfahrens gerückt."[25] Similar notions evolved in learned journalism.[26] Given these later developments and the importance they gained, the *Conférences* can be seen as a sort of transitional phenomenon in the Republic of Letters.

Regardless of our modern appraisal of the significance of the *conférenciers*' mode of presenting their arguments, it appears Renaudot was none too happy about it. He seemingly would have preferred to print information about the speakers, as it would have enhanced the profile of the debate meetings, as one of his comments in the introduction to the first volume indicates:

> […] que la gloire deüe à tant de personnes d'honneur qui rendent nostre assemblée celebre par leur affluence, en soit plus grande lors que le jugement qu'ils verront faire d'eux, se tenans à couvert, leur aura donné sujet de me permettre de produire leurs noms au frontispice de leurs suffrages […].[27]

Renaudot hoped that the *conférenciers* would allow him to print their names once they saw the readers' favourable judgement, thereby resolving their second concern. This would increase the *conférences*' glory. Yet it appears the *conférenciers* at no point agreed to waive their anonymity.[28] One reason for this was certainly the novel medial form the *Conférences* took: through the publications, the *conférenciers*' opinions reached a far larger public than did discussions at other academies, which were accessible only to a chosen few. Such academies usually saw no problem in identifying their members, as the philosopher Simone Mazauric asserts.[29] Renaudot himself, whose name was attached to his various projects, must have

25 Urmann 2016, p. 113.

26 Bayle's later characterisation of the (idealised) Republic of Letters in the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* indicates that what was most important was the argument, and not the person presenting it: "Cette République est un Etat extrêmement libre. On n'y reconnoit que l'empire de la vérité et de la raison; et sous leur auspices on fait la guerre innocemment à qui que ce soit. Les amis s'y doivent tenir en garde contre leurs amis, les pères contre leurs enfans, les beaux-pères contre leurs gendres […]" (Bayle 1734, vol. 2, "Catius", pp. 363–366, p. 364). I return to the case of learned journalism in chapter 5.

27 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 5–6.

28 On Renaudot's desire to publish the *conférenciers*' names and their refusal, see also Mazauric 1997, p. 93.

29 Mazauric cites the example of the Académie Bourdelot and the Académie des Philosophes Orateurs. See ibid. That an academy's members were known does not necessarily mean, however, that individual authorship was recognised in its publications. Mario Biagioli discusses this fact using the example of the Accademia del Cimento and the early Académie royale des sciences, which both anonymised contributors to their collective works. According to Biagioli, this anonymisation results from each academy's close association with the regent of a territory. See Biagioli 1996, pp. 215–222. Through the anonymisation, an ambiguous author function was created, "by which both the academicians and the king could share in the credit" (ibid., p. 222).

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known a thing or two about the problems that might ensue from personal publicity: he was a frequent target of attacks.[30]

Several researchers, intrigued by the mystery of who took part in the *conférences*, have launched attempts to clearly identify individual *conférenciers*. Both Howard Solomon and Mazauric provide evidence for the attendance of La Calprenède, for example. The novelist and dramatist is identifiable as a participant through a passage in the oeuvre of Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux.[31] Tallemant des Réaux's dismissive tone furthermore suggests he did not view taking part in the *conférences* as a prestigious occupation. He reveals that, even though La Calprenède avowed himself to be of noble extraction, the novelist did not miss one single *conférence* at the Bureau d'Adresse: "[…] quoyqu'il fist l'homme de condition, il fut longtemps un des arcs-boutans du bureau d'adresses et ne manquoit pas une conference."[32]

Furthermore, Solomon and Mazauric both agree that Ismaël Boulliaud, an astronomer, mathematician, and theologian, most likely participated in the *conférences*.[33] As Mazauric points out, this is implied in a letter that the philosopher Pierre Gassendi wrote to Boulliaud concerning another participant in Renaudot's debating circle: "Il m'a aussi donné le meme advis de l'Assemblée qui se fait toutes les semaines au Bureau d'Adresse, et m'a confirmé toutes les mesures choses que vous m'en aviez escrites."[34] The more recent historian Gilles Feyel also has no doubts regarding Boulliaud's participation and even cites an opinion voiced by a *conférencier* that corresponds to a passage in one of Boulliaud's works.[35]

Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones gather from the letters of Gui Patin, a Faculty of Medicine physician, that Isaac Cattier, a physician educated at Montpellier, was a frequent attendee of the *conférences*.[36] Solomon argues that the philosopher Tommaso Campanella and the chemist Etienne de Claves took part,[37] and he also asserts that the polymaths Jacques Dupuy and Marin Mersenne probably sometimes followed the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse.[38] John Headley likewise is sure that Campanella and de Claves participated.[39] Mazauric, for her part, sees a lack of evidence to confirm the attendance of either Campanella or de Claves and heavily

30 See the attacks of Gui Patin and Jean Riolan from the Parisian Faculty of Medicine as discussed in chapter 7.
31 See Solomon 1972, p. 68. See also Mazauric 1997, p. 96.
32 Tallemant des Réaux 1960–1961, vol. 2, p. 584.
33 See Solomon 1972, p. 73, and Mazauric 1997, p. 96.
34 Lettre à Boulliaud du 17 mai 1633, in Mersenne 1932–1988, vol. 3, p. 401.
35 See Feyel 2000, p. 111.
36 See Brockliss and Collins 1997, p. 331. Patin indeed writes that "M. Is. Cattier étoit un médecin du bureau d'adresses du gazetier […]", but does not say anything definite regarding Cattier's presence at the *conférences* (Patin 1846, vol. 2, p. 138).
37 See Solomon 1972, p. 68.
38 See ibid., p. 73.
39 "Dilettantes, *virtuosi*, and even some widely recognized scholars such as Jean Baptiste Morin and Étienne de Claves could be found there. Here, Campanella could settle into more congenial surroundings" (Headley 1997, p. 126).

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doubts that Dupuy regularly went to the *conférences*.[40] As to the participation of Mersenne, Mazauric judges it possible but again states a lack of definite evidence.[41]

Feyel again is certain that Mersenne actively participated in the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse. He cites two instances that he considers to be indubitable proof for Mersenne's presence. The first is the fact that the astronomer Peiresc, in one of his letters, accused Mersenne of informing Renaudot of the sentence Rome handed down to Galileo,[42] since news of it was published in the *Gazette*.[43] While this indicates that an exchange between Mersenne and the *gazetier* seemed conceivable to their contemporaries, it does not prove that the Minim friar took part in the *conférences*. Given Renaudot's powerful position as the editor of the *Gazette*, it seems equally plausible that Mersenne sometimes communicated the news he received through his extensive network directly to Renaudot, and that this was the connection between the two men to which Peiresc alludes. Feyel's second proof also cannot be classed as irrefutable. According to Feyel, the fact that Mersenne informed one of his correspondents, Christophe de Villiers, about the two "monstruous" cases discussed at the *conférences*[44] confirms that Mersenne was present at the respective discussions at the Bureau d'Adresse.[45] Yet Feyel, who puts so much emphasis on the printed *Conférences* and their distribution, equally could have concluded that Mersenne read about them in the Bureau d'Adresse's weekly pamphlets. While Feyel's arguments doubtlessly support the theory that Mersenne's participation at the *conférences* is possible, they do not form definite proof for his attendance.

As can be seen, these potential participants are identifiable only through the writings of others. There are, however, certain participants personally identified by Renaudot himself. One of them is the mathematician and astronomer Jean-Baptiste Morin, professor at the Collège Royale, who spoke at a *conférence* treating a mathematical topic.[46] While his name was purged from the printed *Conférences*, an announcement in the *Gazette* mentions it. Renaudot reports that Morin presented a new method to calculate longitudes to a few "personnes de marque" at the Arsenal. The *gazetier* adds that it is the same method Morin previously already explained at the Bureau d'Adresse.[47] The *Conférence* in which Morin's calculation method seems to be represented is the seventy-fourth *Conférence*, dating from 23 April 1635,

40 See Mazauric 1997, pp. 97–98.
41 See ibid., p. 98.
42 See Feyel 2000, pp. 112–113.
43 See Renaudot, *Recueil des Gazettes, Nouvelles, et Relations de toute l'Année 1633* [1634], Relation N°122, pp. 525–532, pp. 531–532.
44 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 10.II, pp. 170–179, and vol. 1, *Conférence* 11.I, pp. 180–191.
45 See Feyel 2000, pp. 113–114.
46 See also Solomon 1972, p. 72, and Mazauric 1997, pp. 95–96. Feyel cites a number of other *conférences* at which Morin probably voiced his views. See Feyel 2000, pp. 109–111.
47 See Renaudot, *Recueil des Gazettes, Nouvelles, Relations, Extraordinaires* 1634 [1635], Gazette N°30, p. 128. See also "Conférence faite au Bureau d'Adresse par Jean Baptiste Morin, professeur du roi 'ès mathématiques' sur le secret des longituedes" (1634, 30 mars), in Jubert 2005, p. 176.

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where the debate centred on "De la Navigation & Longitudes".[48] Therein, the third[49] speaker deliberates at length on various methods of calculating longitudes before introducing his own new approach.[50]

Another speaker whose presence can be confirmed through Renaudot's journal is Charles de Lamberville.[51] It appears that he performed an experiment with carbon-like, combustible earth in front of the king.[52] According to Renaudot, he had also previously presented his ideas concerning this matter at the *conférences*. The *Conférence* in question appears to be the thirty-sixth, where a speaker's *mémoire* regarding a carbon-related question was read at the *heure des inventions*.[53] As far as I can confirm, Morin and Lamberville are the only participants whom Renaudot identified in the *Gazette* and whose attendance at the *conférences* can therefore be proven. For other individual participants, the matter is far more difficult, as I have shown above.

This complicated situation also applies to another group of participants: women. Even though a number of scholars claim that women contributed to the *conférences*,[54] it is highly unlikely they were present when the *conférenciers* met for discussion.[55] The most pertinent evidence for this stems from Renaudot himself. In the second book of his *Inventaire*, he states:

> V. La corruption du siècle, le soupcon et la médisance excuseront le Bureau envers les dames et damoiselles vertueuses, de ce qu'il en permet l'entrée aux hommes seulement, et la dévotion et charité familière à leur sexe leur fera supporter en

48 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 74.II, pp. 391–400.

49 In the printed *Conférences*, this speaker is also marked as "le 2.", but he is actually the third person who presented an opinion.

50 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 74.II, p. 393–396. Given that the *Gazette* reporting Morin's presentation is dated 1634, it is curious that the *Conférence* in which Morin's calculation method seems to be represented appeared in 1635. Yet it is possible that his method was first introduced at the *heure des inventions*. Originally, the third hour of the discussion meetings was reserved for the discussion of inventions. Yet reports from the *heure des inventions* are found only in the first twelve *Conférences*. Later sessions seem to have abandoned the discussion of inventions, but the *conférenciers* still discussed inventions during the *vacances* they took in summer (see vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 4). I have not been able to find an invention corresponding to Morin's, but it is possible that not all were reported in the printed *Conférences*. Cornelis de Waard presents another possible explanation. He argues that Morin explained his method in one of the debate meetings in 1633 after all. This was, however, a few months before Renaudot began to print the *comptes rendus* of the *Conférences*. See Mersenne 1933–1988, vol. 3, p. 401, comm. de Waard.

51 See also Solomon 1972, p. 74.

52 See Renaudot, *Recueil des Gazettes, Nouvelles, Relations, Extraordinaires* 1634 [1635], Gazette N°43, p. 180. See also "Conférence faite au Bureau d'adresse par Charles de Lamberville sur le charbon de terre" (1634, 28 avril), in Jubert 2005, p. 176.

53 "A l'heure des inventions fut rapporté le memoire d'une proposition de tirer du charbon de forge des terres de ce Royaume […]" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 26.II, pp. 617–618).

54 See Reynier 1929, pp. 142–149, and Jellinek 1987. Like Jellinek, many later authors refer to Reynier when affirming the presence of women. See, for example, Sutton 1995, p. 22.

55 Mazauric comes to a similar conclusion. See Mazauric 1997, pp. 100–101.

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> gré la peine qu'on leur donnera de se pourvoir hors ledit Bureau de demoiselles suivantes, filles de chambre, femmes de charge, nourrices et autres servantes.[56]

Renaudot's statement proves that it was one of the fundamental statutes of the Bureau d'Adresse that women could not use its services. Entry to the bureau was permitted only to men. It seems possible that women, while not allowed to use the Bureau d'Adresse, were able to attend the *conférences* or the *consultations charitables*. Yet other evidence, which I discuss in more detail in chapter 6, nevertheless corroborates my conviction that women did not take part in the *conférences*.

Besides being a woman, other factors barred one from participating in the discussions of Renaudot's academy. This runs counter to the Bureau d'Adresse's fundamental openness to the general public and seemingly triggered quite a number of complaints. Consequently, Renaudot deemed it necessary to explain himself in the "Avis au lecteur" in the first volume of *Conférences*:

> Quelques uns y ont aussi trouvé à dire qu'on n'y admettoit point toutes sortes de personnes, comme il sembloit se devoir faire, en un lieu dont l'accez est libre à tout le monde. Mais ceux qui considereront que les Académies ne sont pas pour le vulgaire, ne trouveront pas estrange qu'on y ait apporté quelque distinction.[57]

First, he says, the *conférences*, like other academies, are not for the "vulgaire" but only for "gens de la qualité requise".[58] This category of 'people of the required quality' remains quintessentially elusive. According to historian of science Roger Hahn, this was also the case for other seventeenth-century academies. The impossibility of defining how this 'required quality' is constituted results from the fact that "identity is not a stable category but depended on how one was able to perform his or her own status and how that display was confirmed or contested by the surrounding community".[59]

Accordingly, the need to dissociate from anyone who could appear vulgar is visible in places other than Renaudot's introductory comments. It also appears in the *conférenciers*' proclamations. When speaking of "De la sympathie & antipathie",[60] one speaker emphasises the difference he sees between uneducated ignoramuses and the *conférenciers*: "C'est pourquoy au lieu d'imiter le vulgaire ignorant, qui se contente d'admirer une éclipse sans en rechercher la cause, il faut que la difficulté nous en augmente le desir […]."[61] While the uneducated marvel at

56 Renaudot, *Inventaire* 1630, p. 26.
57 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.
58 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.
59 Hahn 1971, p. 206. Hahn's explanations furthermore show that Renaudot's *conférenciers* – mostly belonging to the professional urban bourgeoisie – did not match the self-conception of elite academicians. That group felt superior to professionals such as physicians and lawyers as well as to craftsmen and took pride in their independence. See ibid., pp. 40–41.
60 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 32.I, pp. 543–551.
61 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 32.I, p. 550.

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phenomena they cannot understand, the curious *conférenciers* aim at finding their cause, however difficult.

A few pages further on, discussing "De la lycanthropie",[62] another speaker feels the urge to disclose that "[…] les doctes prenans par metaphore ce que le vulgaire prend à la lettre".[63] Only common people take phenomena such as werewolves literally and believe in their supernatural origin; the educated know they must be understood in a metaphorical manner. A similar idea emerges in the *Conférence* "Du noüement d'eguillette".[64] There, the fifth speaker argues that – unlike "le vulgaire" – one should not ascribe everything one does not understand to supernatural causes: "Le 5. dist: Qu'il ne falloit pas faire comme le vulgaire, rapportant presque tout aux causes surnaturelles."[65]

As shown by the frequency at which "le vulgaire" surfaces as a negative example, the participants wished to point out that they themselves were educated and knew how to comport themselves in scientific debates. By continuously referring to the distinction, they aim to establish their identity as people of the required quality. Without the 'vulgar' as a reference point, the expression 'people of the required quality' would, indeed, have no meaning.[66]

Concerning the *conférenciers*' exact level of education and their social status, Mazauric argues that most certainly Renaudot's public was similar to the one frequenting other academies. This means the speakers were physicians, lawyers, public officials, and *maîtres des requêtes*, but also "gens du monde" and so forth.[67] Indeed, the argumentation structures used in the *Conférences* show that most of the participants can be counted among the well-educated.[68]

Mazauric furthermore assumes that nobles would not have often frequented the *conférences*, as Renaudot's various economic activities made him unsuitable for noble society.[69] Solomon is of a different opinion. He argues that that the discussion of numerous questions of interest to nobles shows that they must have been regularly present.[70] In itself, Solomon's argument seems insufficiently convincing, as the questions discussed at the Bureau d'Adresse were interesting for

62 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 33.I, pp. 572–589.
63 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 33.I, p. 580.
64 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 36.I, pp. 604–613.
65 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 36.I, p. 610.
66 Steven Shapin shows that the 'vulgar' were perceived as unreliable when it came to their sense perception. Gentlemen, on the other hand, were deemed trustworthy witnesses in seventeenth-century England. See Shapin 1994, pp. 77–78. Maclean counters that the testimony of the well-born was not necessarily more trusted in late Renaissance Europe. See Maclean 2000, p. 245.
67 Mazauric 1997, p. 95. Anne Goldgar provides a similar verdict regarding the people who frequented Early Modern academies: "In general we can say that the population of the community was bourgeois and professional […]" (Goldgar 1995, p. 3).
68 See chapter 3.
69 See Mazauric 1997, p. 119. Shapin explains the perceived baseness of the mercantile class in the Early Modern period; see Shapin 1994, pp. 93–95.
70 See Solomon 1972, p. 69.

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gens du monde in the broadest sense.[71] Similar topics stand at the centre of many other publications and were discussed by other *savants* and circles contemporary to Renaudot's.[72] Yet certain members of the lesser nobility indeed did frequent the discussion meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse, as the cases of La Calprenède and Lamberville show. These individual examples, however, cannot confirm whether others commonly did the same.

Renaudot's various economic enterprises and his contact with the poor certainly posed a problem for the more illustrious parts of society. Proof for this can be found in the *Renouvellement des Bureaux d'adresse* (1647). In this text, Renaudot deems it necessary to explicitly defend himself against accusations that he discredited himself through his contact with the "bas peuple":

> Pauvres gens, qui ne considérent point que le Soleil n'en est pas moins estimé pour luire également sur l'or & sur le fumier: que le Roy n'est pas moins Roy des païsans que des Princes, & que l'escarlate des Présidens ne perd pas son lustre dans le Palais, pour ce qu'on y vend des pantoufles.[73]

Comparing himself with the sun, which shines on gold just as it shines on a dung heap, he was certain that his contact with the poor did not abase him. Others were not so sure. The physician René Moreau, in an official communication from the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, accused him of "[…] des trafics indignes à un homme d'honneur […]".[74] According to the faculty, Renaudot even made the public pay to partake in the *conférences*,[75] an accusation for which no further evidence can be found.[76] Overall, Renaudot's business activities assuredly made him unworthy of practising medicine, the faculty argued.[77]

Renaudot also had other, far more prosaic problems limiting access to the *conférences*. It appears the *grande salle* of the Bureau d'Adresse simply did not have enough space for everyone: "Et si toutes les personnes de la qualité requise n'y

71 As Maurice Magendie points out, the *conférenciers* discussed questions "qui intéressaient les gens du monde, et qui étaient débattues dans les salons ou dans les romans" (1926, p. 140).

72 Mersenne, for example, was concerned with a number of topics that were also discussed at the *conférences*. See note 72 on p. 32.

73 Renaudot, *Le Renouvellement des Bureaux d'adresse* 1647, p. 8.

74 Moreau 1641, p. 17.

75 Moreau claims that Renaudot is one "[…] qui fait payer les bancs & sieges sur lesquels on prend place pendant ses Conferences, comme on fait aux Comediens […]" (ibid.).

76 Furetière's mention of the *Conférences* in his *Roman bourgeois* (1666) indicates the contrary. Describing the habits of Jean Bedout, an advocat characterised by great avarice, Furetière writes: "L'apresdisnée il alloit aux Conférences du Bureau d'Adresse, aux harangues qui se faisoient par les professeurs dans les colleges, aux sermons, aux musiques des églises, à l'orvietan, et à tous les autres jeux et divertissements publics qui ne coustoient rien. Car c'estoit un homme que l'avarice dominoit entierement […]" (p. 165). Here, the *conférences* are counted among public amusements that do not cost anything.

77 "[…] son trafic & negotiation à vendre des Gazettes, à enregistrer des Valets, des terres, des maisons, des Gardes de malades, à exercer une Fripperie, prester argent sur gages, & autres choses [sont] indignes de la dignité & de l'employ d'un Medecin" (Moreau 1641, p. 19).

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ont pû trouver place, les plus diligens peuvent tesmoigner aux autres qu'il l'a fallu imputer au lieu, lequel, tout spacieux qu'il est, ne pouvoit suffire à tous les survenans."[78] After the debate meetings had taken place for some time, the problem grew so urgent that Renaudot seemingly even resorted to a kind of ticketing system. People who wished to take part in the *conférences* had to present themselves days in advance at the bureau, where they received a permit guaranteeing them a place at the following *conférence*.[79]

Not only did Renaudot and many of the *conférenciers* reject the 'vulgar', they also fiercely distanced themselves from the Scholastics.[80] In the introduction to the first *Centurie* of *Conférences*, Renaudot's comments still seem conciliatory. He describes the universities as 'worthy wet nurses' to reason. Yet, he argues, learning nevertheless profits immensely from being freed from the 'dust' that accompanies its production at the universities. This de-dusting process is supposed to take place at the Bureau d'Adresse. The *conférences* are, as Renaudot claims in a slightly self-satisfied manner, the first place in the *royaume* especially dedicated to the gallant sharing of knowledge:

> Laquelle [i.e,. la raison] bien qu'une infinité de doctes personnages cultivent [*sic*] soigneusement dans leurs escoles: si est-ce que nous pouvons dire sans déroger au respect qui leur est deu, comme à de bonnes meres nourrices, qu'il n'y a point eu jusques icy de lieu en ce Royaume, qui fut particulierement destiné à se faire part les uns aux autres de cette estude, nettoyée de la poussiere, qui toute inseparable qu'elle est de sa production, toutefois lors qu'elle est separée, accroist son prix & la rend de meilleur debit.[81]

In the "Avis au lecteur" in the same *Centurie*, Renaudot increases the hostilities. There, he states that the Schoolmen's way of arguing leads only to disputes and contradictions, thereby making any grace or pleasure in a debate impossible. All ends in riots and insults:

> Mais la Conférence ne pouvant compatir avec la façon d'argumenter qui se pratique aux Escholes, & ces disputes & contradictions n'offusquans pas seulement

78 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

79 See Mazauric 1997, p. 94. In an *extraordinaire* from the third of November 1636, Renaudot explains: "Le nombre de ceux qui seront desormais admis à s'y trouver, sera limité: & que pour cet effet ceux qui seront de la condition propre à en faire partie, sont priez de venir tels autres jours que bon leur semblera, avant celui du Lundi, pour déclarer leur dessein. & prendre au Bureau les mereaux qui leur seront gratuitement délivrez pour ce sujet: & tous les autres qui ne se voudront assujetir à cet ordre, requis de s'en abstenir" (Renaudot, *Recueil de toutes les Nouvelles Ordinaires, Extraordinaires, Gazettes, & autres Relations* 1636 [1637], Extraordinaire N°168, p. 692).

80 As Robert Schneider puts it: "Whatever else the *honnête homme* was, he was certainly not a pedant" (Schneider 2019, p. 41). The term 'scholastics' here not only refers to the Medieval Schoolmen and their methods but also encompasses the humanists and their traditions. See note 15 on p. 3.

81 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 2.

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> toute la grace & le plaisir de l'entretien, mais finissans mesmes d'ordinaire en riotes & injures pedantesques […].[82]

Many of the *conférenciers* continue in a similarly adverse manner. Take, for example, the discussion of "Pourquoy chacun est jalou[x] de ses opinions, n'y eust-il aucun autre interest".[83] In this *Conférence*, a speaker argues that people holding on to an erroneous opinion disgrace themselves, lose their credit and their time, and render themselves disagreeable to their auditors. The best example for such useless debates, he claims, are Scholastic disputes: "[…] il y a de la honte, on y perd souvent son credit, mais toûjours le temps, & on se rend desagréable aux auditeurs, comme il se void ez disputes scholastiques."[84] Consequently, he argues, people educated at the schools are bad company; they only become tolerable when they finally discard the habit never to yield. The polite, on the other hand, know how to prevent acrimony through deference, even if they are in the right.

> D'où vient qu'un escolier nourri en ces alterations ne commance à estre estimé dans les compagnies, que lors qu'il a dépoüillé cette habitude de ne ceder jamais. Là où au contraire les plus polis déclinent ces aigreurs par des paroles de déference és choses mesmes où ils ont apparemment le plus de raison.[85]

Renaudot and the *conférenciers* evidently saw the *conférences* as a place where such polite manners in debate could be learned and enjoyed. To guarantee no belligerence emerged in the discussion meetings, they insisted upon an ideal of civility intended to break with the 'rude' manners of the schools.

This kind of criticism is not unique to Renaudot and his cirle. Emulating the earlier French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, who in his *Essais* had advanced the view that the wrong kind of learning made students "incapable of civil conversation",[86] many of Renaudot's contemporaries voiced similar ideas.[87] The states-

82 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.

83 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 3.II, pp. 45–52.

84 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 3.II, p. 46. In the debate concerning the question "S'il faut joindre les armes aux lettres", another speaker argues along similar lines: "Finalement, l'estude comme elle se pratique vulgairement auiourd'huy, au lieu de rendre un homme plus adroit, luy imprime des mœurs de College, insuportables à tout le monde, qui rendent odieux le nom d'escolier. Peu de gens ont moins de conduite qu'eux […]" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 5.II, pp. 82–89, p. 88).

85 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 3.II, pp. 46–47. The speaker adds to this comment that a strong spirit, in contrast to a weak one, voluntarily accepts a better opinion than its own: "[…] ainsi est-ce volontiers le propre d'un esprit fort de revenir à un meilleur advis que le sien, sans s'arrester à la crainte qu'ont les plus foibles […]" (ibid., p. 47).

86 "[…] je ne veux pas qu'on emprisonne ce garçon, je ne veux pas qu'on l'abandonne à la colere et humeur melancolique n'un furieux maistre d'escole: je ne veux pas corrompre son esprit, à le tenir qu'à la gehenne et au travail […], Cela les rend ineptes à la conversation civile, et les destourne de meilleures occupations. Et combien ay-je veu de mon temps, d'hommes abestis, par temeraire avidité de science?" (Montaigne 2007, I, 25, "De l'institution des enfans", pp. 150–184, p. 170).

87 See Bury 2006, p. 120.

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man and scholar Nicolas Faret, for example, was of the opinion that, for many, learning Greek and Latin did not lead to greater wisdom but only rendered them impertinent and self-opinionated: "Il ne se voit que trop de ceux à qui le Grec & le Latin n'ont servy de rien qu'à les rendre plus impertinents & plus opiniastres, & qui au lieu de rapporter de leur estude une ame pleine de sagesse & de docilité, ne l'en raportent qu'enflée de Chimeres & d'orgueil."[88]

This preoccupation with leaving behind the perceived bad manners of the schools was shared by the *conférenciers* and other academicians, whose focus on politeness has been scrutinised by historians such as Barbara Shapiro, Roger Hahn, Steven Shapin, Anne Goldgar, and Lorraine Daston. Shapiro, in *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (1983), discusses the Royal Society of London's emphasis on cooperation and its insistance on "modest and tentative modes of expression".[89] Examining the case of the Parisian Académie royale des sciences, Hahn, in his *Anatomy of a Scientific Institution* (1971), similarly argues that the academies established behavioural rules in order to better handle disagreement between the academicians' conflicting views.[90] Shapin, in *A Social History of Truth* (1994), shows how gentlemanly codes of honour and truthfulness emerged in scientific culture in the English context.[91] In *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (1995), Goldgar studies the interactions of the scholarly community and the values on which these interactions were based. She concludes that, in many cases, form gained precedence over content in the academies' debates: "The form of disputes – ideally moderate and measured – was frequently the focus of attention, and arguments were often judged on the politeness with which they were presented, rather than on their intrinsic merit."[92] Citing the examples of the Accademia del Cimento in Florence and the Académie Montmor in Paris, Daston argues that "academies and discussion circles […] praised cultivated conversation as a new way of seeking the truth, both more pleasant than either solitary study or reading."[93]

The *conférenciers* seem to have been of a similar opinion. One speaker in the debate concerning the question of "De la Conference, & si c'est la plus instructive sorte d'enseigner"[94] claims that Renaudot's discussion meetings rescued a number of *beaux esprits* from the schools, where they had been at risk of drowning in the dust: "[…] elle [i.e., la conférence] se peut vanter d'avoir […] mis en leur jour

88 Faret 1630, pp. 45–46.
89 Shapiro 1983, p. 65.
90 See Hahn 1971, pp. 31–34 and 37.
91 See Shapin 1991, and especially chapter 3, "A Social History of Truth-Telling", pp. 65–126, where he claims that "[c]redible knowledge was established through the practices of civility" (p. 66).
92 Goldgar 1995, pp. 239–240.
93 Daston 1994, p. 51.
94 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 833–840.

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plusieurs beaux esprits qui s'estoient auparavant tenus cachez & comme ensevelis dans la poussiere des Escoles […]."[95]

The expression *beaux esprits* indeed best describes how the *conférenciers* saw themselves: "On appelle, Beaux esprits, Ceux qui se distinguent du commun par la politesse de leurs discours & de leurs ouvrages", as the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie françoise* (1695) puts it.[96] The members of Renaudot's circle identified as polite and agreeable and did not want to have anything to do with the 'rude' manners of the schools, just like many other seventeenth-century academicians.[97] The academies were always eager to demonstrate their politeness, the "crowning rule of the Republic of Letters", as Goldgar puts it.[98] To do so, men of letters in the seventeenth century wanted to distance themselves from pedantry,[99] just as the humanists had done before them.[100] As Shapin points out (regarding the Early Modern English context): "In view of those advocating a reform of learning, what was wrong with Scholasticism was that it proceeded from, and fostered, a form of life that was in no way suitable for a civic gentleman."[101]

The *conférenciers* presented themselves as being completely unlike the Schoolmen and the common population. While the former indulged in abstruse arguments and always wanted to be in the right, the latter did not ask themselves enough questions about the hidden features of the world surrounding them. Yet the *conférences*, in the opinion of their participants and of their host, figured as a fecund middle ground, gallantly fostering the fruit of learning.

What emerges as a positive point of identification for the *conférenciers* between the vulgar and the pedantic is the *honnête homme*, a concept that gained great importance in Renaudot's times. While *honnêteté* was mostly understood in a moral sense at the beginning of the seventeenth century – meaning that a person was virtuous[102] – another connotation soon began to take the upper hand.[103] Rather than suggesting moral qualities, the term now indicated that someone knew how to conduct themselves in society. As the French scholar Marcella Leopizzi explains: "La représentation d'honnêteté touche de plus en plus à la maîtrise de soi, à la politesse mondaine, à la complaisance, à la prudence verbale, à l'aptitude à briller par la vivacité de ses traits dans les conversations de la bonne société".[104] According to

95 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 839.
96 *Dictionnaire de l'Academie Françoise* 1695, vol. 1, "Esprit", pp. 243–244, p. 244.
97 See Hahn 1971, p. 43. See also McClellan 1985, p. 42, and Biagioli 1996, p. 201.
98 Goldgar 1995, p. 116.
99 See Schneider 2019, p. 41.
100 See ibid., pp. 42–43. For the relationship between gentleman and scholar in the Medieval and Early Modern period in England, see Shapin 1991, pp. 282–292.
101 Ibid., p. 292.
102 See Leopizzi 2020, p. 11.
103 See Magendie 1926, p. 467.
104 Leopizzi 2020, p. 11.

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literary scholar Maurice Magendie, the former conception of *honnêteté* can be understood as its "bourgeois" form and the latter as its "aristocratic" interpretation.[105]

The place where this new *honnêteté* reigned supreme where the salons, where aristocratic men and women freely mingled, and not the male-dominated academies.[106] The prototype for the *honnête homme* is the courtier,[107] as can be seen in texts such as Nicolas Faret's influential *L'honneste-homme ou, l'art de plaire à la cour* (1630).[108]

This association with the court did not keep Renaudot from inscribing his learned society in this ideal. Renaudot insisted on the fact that the *conférences* were a "divertissement honneste" and that only "gens d'honneur" could participate.[109] That he did not consider *honnêteté* in the purely moral sense is confirmed by his focus on the behaviour of the *conférenciers* in the debates. They were to present their opinions in an agreeable fashion – not insisting on their arguments like the Schoolmen, as we have seen above – so that an "aimable concert & rapport de plusieurs avis" could be formed.[110]

This creates a certain tension: in polite conversation, the *honnête homme* is forbidden to flaunt his knowledge or to insist on a certain topic about which he is knowledgeable.[111] As Antoine Gombaud, the chevalier de Méré, puts it: "[…] & plus un Avocat plaide éloquemment, plus il s'attire de loüanges, mais il ne plaide pas toûjours, & quand il va dans le monde, s'il y veut paroître honnête-homme & agreable commerce, il doit laisser dans son cabinet toutes les choses qui ont l'odeur ou le goût du Palais."[112] The *honnête homme* is supposed to flutter from topic to topic without insisting on his professional abilities. Paradoxically,[113] *honnêteté* in its courtly conception is, in the words of the literary scholar Emmanuel Bury, a "veritable amnésie maîtrisée".[114]

The courtly understanding of *honnêteté* as 'controlled amnesia' stands in stark contrast to the debates of learned societies such as the *conférences*: "Les savants ne

105 See Magendie 1926, p. 467.
106 See ibid., p. 120.
107 Leopizzi 2020, p. 13.
108 Like many other French authors writing about *honnêteté*, Faret was inspired by Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortegiano* (1528) and other Italian texts. See Lévêque 1957. Magendie explains the influence of the individual texts on *honnêteté* conceptions in the seventeenth century in more detail; see Magendie 1926, pp. 305–338.
109 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 3.
110 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 3.
111 See Wild 2020, p. 264.
112 Gombaud 1700, p. 205. Even though the Chevalier de Méré's *Conversations* were first published in 1668, they are concerned with "un univers datant du milieu des années 1640" (Bury 1996, p. 55).
113 Bury explains the paradox at the heart of the concept of *honnêteté* as follows: "Pourtant, et là réside le paradoxe dont je parlais en commençant, le modèle français, bien que greffé sur une tradition qui valorise le lient entre 'honnêteté' et culture lettrée, entre 'doctrine' et 'civilisation', n'a cessé d'affirmer à partir de Montaigne et durant tout le XVII^{e} siècle, […] que la doctrine pouvait nuire à la vraie honnêteté" (Bury 2006, p. 119).
114 Bury 1996, p. 65.

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peuvent suivre une telle ligne de conduite, qui exclurait toute citation ou référence, toute discussion suivie et fortement argumenté."[115] The opposite of (aristocratic) *honnêteté* is pedantism.[116] The academician was at great risk of being seen as a pedant, as was every learned man at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[117] To avoid being discredited, the *conférences* and other academies vehemently insisted on new forms of conduct, even if their debates would always be different from polite conversation.[118]

Renaudot was aware of the fact that the *conférenciers* might not immediately take up his newly proclaimed code of conduct. In the preface to the first volume of *Conférences*, he professes that it might be difficult for them to suddenly relinquish the modes of arguing they had known since their university training. Renaudot admits that some Scholastic terms might still be visible in the *conférenciers*' contributions, but he ascribes this fact to the persistence of custom, which can be overcome at a later point:

> J'enten [*sic*] ces termes de l'escole qui font sembler les meilleurs discours à un soulier remply de sa forme: ou pour les traitter plus magnifiquement, à une voûte garnie des chevrons qui luy ont servy de cintre, & desquels si vous reconnoissez encor quelque trace en nos premiers exercices, imputez-le à la difficulté de dépoüiller si-tost cette seconde nature, qu'on appelle la coustume.[119]

He pleads for patience and assures his readers that the remains of Scholastic argumentation will one day be discarded. Ironically, the phrase 'custom is second nature' is itself a Scholastic tag.[120]

To summarise, the *comptes rendus* of the *conférences* did not include the names of the speakers, which makes it impossible to establish who exactly the *conférenciers* were. My analysis of the debate concerning the division of medicine into the three roles of physician, surgeon, and apothecary served to illustrate that Renaudot was most certainly not the only physician participating in the *conférences*. We can identify only a small number of speakers by name, due to mentions of them as participants in other publications such as Renaudot's *Gazette*. Most certainly, women did not take part in the *conférences*; they were outright banned from using the (eco-

115 Wild 2020, p. 257.
116 Ibid., p. 259.
117 Regarding the risk of being treated as a pedant that every learned man faced, see Magendie 1926, pp. 59–60.
118 Or, as Goldgar (1995, pp. 239–240) puts it: "Despite the fact that disagreement was fundamental to academic existence, indeed considered valuable by many within the community, scholars tried – though constantly failed – to gain society's approval by presenting a harmonious face to the world".
119 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferenes publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 2–3.
120 See Maclean 2010, p. 232. In another text, Maclean describes the idea of custom as second nature as a "topos […] derived from various Aristotelian and post-Aristotelian loci", often found in natural-philosophical and medical writings (Maclean 2002, p. 245). For a study of custom as second nature in European law, society, and culture, see chapter 4 in Kelley 1997, pp. 131–173.

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nomic) services of the Bureau d'Adresse. Aside from this, the public nature of the *conférences*, so proclaimed by Renaudot, at first seems to suggest that all other potential speakers were welcome in the *grande salle* of the Bureau d'Adresse. Yet two factors restricted participation: one social, the other material. Firstly, access to the *conférences* was not completely unrestricted, as only participants of the 'required quality' could take part. It was not for the 'vulgar' to address Renaudot's circle. Secondly, entry could not even be guaranteed for all the *gens d'honneur* wishing to attend, as the *grande salle* simply wasn't spacious enough. Besides distancing themselves from the general population, the *conférenciers* also did not want to be associated with the Scholastics, who, according to them, were nothing more than pedants savaging each other. In taking up the ideal of the *honnête homme*, the *conférenciers* committed themselves to politeness. They wished to further the cause of science in an agreeable fashion. The next chapter examines whether they really parted with the modes of arguing associated with the schools.

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3

An Amalgamation of Novelty and Tradition: Knowledge Negotiation at the *Conférences*

The polite public is again assembled in the *grande salle* of the Bureau d'Adresse at the Maison du Grand-Coq. This time, they are discussing the question "De la Conference, & si c'est la plus instructive sorte d'enseigner",[1] which explores the usefulness of conferences as a way of teaching. This meta-*conférence* would go on to reveal how the discussion meetings functioned and what they were aiming at. It serves to illustrate my argument that the *Conférences* must be considered an amalgamation of a novel overall form combined with traditional patterns of knowledge negotiation.

In her seminal 1997 study of Renaudot's circle, historian of science Simone Mazauric already detects a "modernité dans la forme" in the *Conférences*,[2] yet in concentrating too much on their content, she fails to grasp the full innovative potential of their format. This potential is reflected in aspects such as their publicity, their record in print and their lack of conclusion. Renaudot announced the topic to be discussed at the *conférences* in his *Gazette* as well as other publications. He printed *comptes rendus* almost immediately after the discussion meetings had taken place, thereby transforming an originally oral debate into a written text. Renaudot's wish to implement the *conférences* as a legitimate institution of knowledge negotiation can be observed in the rules he gave them. To avoid displeasing Renaudot's patrons – King Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu – and to prevent conflict with the Sorbonne, examining religious and political questions was prohibited. Furthermore, French was designated as the *conférences*' official language, and speakers were supposed to abstain from citing authorities. Most interestingly, no final answers were determined for the questions debated at the Bureau d'Adresse. Instead, the *conférenciers*' various opinions were left standing next to each other without conclusion.

Yet the majority of *conférenciers*, as eager as they were to attend Renaudot's newly founded circle, did not altogether discard traditional patterns of dialectical and rhetorical argumentation. The speakers did not necessarily obey Renaudot's rules, and this sometimes doubtlessly resulted from their inability to do so. However, in certain cases, their knowledge in rhetoric also allowed them to bypass the reg-

1 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 833–840.
2 Mazauric 1997, p. 129.

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ulations in a sophisticated manner. This recourse to rhetorical devices, as well as the way the participants constructed their arguments, reveals long-lasting strands of knowledge transfers that remained on display at the *conférences*, regardless of Renaudot's proclamations of a breaking point between Scholastic university education and his own venture.[3]

The complex combination of novelty and tradition also manifests itself in the different types of questions proposed for discussion. Analysing these questions reveals much about the chances of success of Renaudot's project to *nettoyer l'étude le la poussière*.[4] While some of the *conférences*' questions offer an open format, others clearly demand the use of rhetorical praise and blame, thereby inscribing themselves in the tradition of the *genus demonstrativum*. Taken together, my observations in this chapter lay the groundwork for an understanding of the *conférences*' relation to other modes of Early Modern knowledge negotiation, which stand at the centre of the next chapter.

Renaudot described the debates at the *conférences* as a pleasant concert and report of diverse opinions, meant to enable the audience to form their own conclusions: "[…] la conference […] est un aimable concert & rapport de plusieurs avis, par la diversité desquels l'auditeur forme le sien."[5] As is characteristic of the debate meetings, the first person who voices an opinion in "De la Conference" does not at all agree with Renaudot. The speaker even argues that proposing a multiplicity of opinions merely leads to irresolution in the public: "[…] l'employer [i.e., la briéveté de nostre vie] en une diversité d'avis qui laisse tousiours nostre esprit en irresolution, le pire estat auquel il se puisse trouver […]."[6] This demonstrates that Renaudot, who personally was of course convinced of the *conférences*' suitability as a mode of teaching and learning, did not shy away from publishing opinions obverse to his. He believed that comparing contraries was the best approach to find the truth.[7]

The second speaker does Renaudot the favour of taking a completely different opinion than the first. He argues that nothing hinders the search for truth as much as the presumption to already possess it. Those who present various opinions and their reasons, however, demonstrate the same respect vis-à-vis their public as an advocate owes to a judge:

> […] il n'y a rien plus contraire à cette recherche [i.e., recherche de la vérité] que la confidence & presomption de l'avoir dé-ja trouvée. Là où ceux qui nous

3 As Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum and Anita Traninger have pointed out, transfers of knowledge take place regardless of whether actors involved accept or negate them. See Cancik-Kirschbaum and Traninger 2015, p. 2.

4 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 2.

5 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 3.

6 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 834.

7 See vol. 1, "Avis au lecteur", n.p.

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> representent les differens avis & leurs raisons contraries les unes aux autres, rendent le mesme respect à nostre jugement que font les Avocats aux Juges […].[8]

For judges, it would be absurd to hear only one party and pronounce their ruling without listening to the other side. Yet this is exactly what those who proceed by resolutions and already formed conclusions do, the *conférencier* is certain.[9]

Rather reluctantly, the third speaker also concludes that *conférences* are a good way to instruct. Nevertheless, he still prefers other forms of questioning and answering: "C'est pourquoy mal aisément peut on conclure qu'il n'y ait point de methode plus propre à instruire que la Conference, à laquelle je prefererois celle des interrogations & des responses, telles qu'on void dans les Catechismes et dans les Dialogues de Platon […]."[10] The reference to the catechism suggests that the *conférences* were not regulated enough for this speaker, who would have preferred a kind of didactical dialogue whereby one party occupies a position of authority.[11] The open and inconclusive form of the *conférences* does not seem to be to his liking.[12] As Claire Cazanave explains regarding the catechism as a form of dialogue: "Le dialogue n'est pas ici mobilisé comme une forme herméneutique, au sens où la connaissance s'élaborerait dans et par l'échange. Aucune capacité de jugement n'est sollicitée chez celui qui est interrogé, les réponses qu'il prononce relèvent davantage du réflexe que de la réflexion."[13] The *conférences*'s inconclusive form does not instruct in a straightforward or authoritative manner and they therefore require a much greater intellectual involvement than didactical dialogues. Yet their objections aside, both the first and third speaker obviously thought it a worthwhile pastime to participate in Renaudot's discussion meetings.

Finally, the fourth speaker addressing the "De la Conference" question proclaims that Renaudot's *conférences* would not have lasted eight years if they were not a useful mode of instruction. He argues that "[…] la Conference telle qu'on la pratique ceans il y a huit ans, fait bien confesser son utilité à toutes sortes de personnes, n'estant pas possible qu'une institution eust tant duré si elle n'eut esté trouvée grandement profitable".[14]

The *conférencier* professes an enormous knowledge concerning the beginnings of the *conférences*, and he is also familiar with their broader context. To begin with, he knows that the publications of the *Conférences* started only about one year after the first in-person *conférence* took place, without any *comptes rendus* published

8 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 836.
9 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 836–837.
10 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 838.
11 Regarding the "catechism" (as a form of dialogue) in the seventeenth century, see Cazanave 2007, pp. 107–122.
12 The Platonic dialogues do not really fit into the picture the *conférencier* paints. As Virginia Cox points out, they are less authoritarian than other forms of dialogue. See Cox 1992, pp. 10–21. On "monological" Renaissance dialogue, see ibid., pp. 68–71.
13 Cazanave 2007, p. 111.
14 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 838–839.

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until then.[15] Then he alludes to the fact that among all the useful inventions of the Bureau d'Adresse, it is only the *conférences* that have not suffered harsh public criticism. According to him, the *conférences* even inspired the founding of other similar circles.[16] The fourth speaker furthermore argues that the *conférences* are pivotal regarding the education of young men. Fresh out of the universities, where they trained in Scholastic methods of arguing, they are completely unable to partake in polite society or court life:

> […] ceux qui sortent fraischement des estudes se trouvans incapables de la frequentation de la Cour & des autres lieux ou ils doivent paroistre. Incapacité qui provient de la rudesse des termes de l'Escole & de l'hmeur [*sic*] opiniastre que les Escoliers contractent ordinairement parla [*sic*] dispute, où ils apprennent ne ceder jamais: l'une des plus desobligeantes qualitez & la plus inepte en compagnie qu'un jeune homme y puisse apporter. Et il void icy au contraire que chacun y expose son advise en toutes douceur […].[17]

Like many other members of seventeenth-century academies and scientific societies, this *conférencier* claims that university education mostly leads to pedantry and rude manners.[18] In accordance with Renaudot's comments in the introductions to the first two *Centuries* of *Conférences*, he is certain that those who have finished their training at university must be educated in polite conversation in order to appear at court and in society. Participating in the debate meetings such as those held at the Bureau d'Adresse is just the way for young men to learn to leave behind their argumentative intransigence. The *conférences* teach them to argue and behave in a gentle manner more suitable for society, the last speaker believes.

Aside from showcasing the growing concern with politeness and *honnêteté* in seventeenth-century society, the debate on the usefulness of conferences perfectly exemplifies the multiplicity of conflicting opinions usually voiced during Renaudot's discussion meetings. Yet at the *conférences* the confrontation of contraries was not supposed to resemble the clashes of unyielding Scholastic disputants; Renaudot envisaged it as a much more civilised encounter. The fourth speaker's contribution likewise invokes the way that Renaudot wished to present the *conférences*:

15 "Ce qui a esté cause que s'estant faite au commencement de vive voix sans en rien coucher par escrit, on ne trouva pas seulement bon d'arrester sur le papier tant de belles pensées […] mais encor de les imprimer & publier, comme il s'est fait incessamment depuis ce temps-là, avec un tel concours que chacun sçait" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 839).

16 "Aussi, de toutes les belles inventions ausquelles le Bureau d'Adresse a donné la naissance […] il n'y a eu que cette Conference qui n'a point eu de contredisans ni d'opposition; voire elle se peut vanter d'en avoir produit d'autres […]" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 839).

17 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 839–840.

18 In the *Philosophical Transactions*, the members of the Royal Society of London write, promoting their experimental philosophy: "And truly, they [i.e., the foaming disputants] do much oblige us, in that they are pleased by their frets, and eager contentions, and by their fruitless and obstreperous Verbosity, to make themselves a foil, to set off the Serene Lustre of the real and obliging performances of the Experimental Philosophers" (Vol. 2, 1667, p. 411). For information on the English context in general and the Royal Society in particular, see Shapin 1991.

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while the universities produced pedantic Scholastics, the *conférences* educated young men in a way that enabled them to appear in polite society. It is thus made clear again that the (perceived) dogmatism of the Schoolmen had no place in the *conférences* – at least in theory.

Each *conférence*'s subject of debate was defined one week in advance.[19] To reach potential participants, Renaudot even announced the topic to be discussed in his *Gazette*. Published questions can be found, for example, in the *Extraordinaire* from 29 October 1638 (N°152), where the topic "Quelles sont les plus communes causes des procez" is announced for the next meeting, and "S'il est arrivé le plus de bien que de mal de l'exercice des trois parties de la Medecine par autant de personnes differentes: au lieu qu'elles s'exercoient autresfois conjointement" is indicated for the *conférence* thereafter.[20]

Still, Renaudot did not limit his announcements to the *Gazette*: he also advertised in other publications produced on his printing presses from time to time. For example, the topics for the third *conférence* ("I. Des causes en general"; "II. Pourquoy chacun est jaloux de ses opinions, n'y eust-il aucun autre interest") appear at the end of the "Quinzième feuille du Bureau d'adresse" (1633).[21] The "Annonce de l'ouverture possible de bureaux d'adresse en province […]" (1633) also serves to reveal "I. D'où vient la diversité du raisonnement des hommes" and "II. De la pierre philosophale" as the talking points for the *conférence* on 11 July 1633.[22] This discussion meeting took place before Renaudot started to print the *Conférences*;[23] consequently, no *comptes rendus* exist for these two questions.

Renaudot's announcement practices demonstrate one point clearly: in publishing the questions for upcoming *conférences*, Renaudot aimed to reach as many eligible participants as possible. To participate, one did not even have to physically attend the Bureau d'Adresse. Those not in Paris could send their opinions via letter.[24] Through this invitation to partake in writing, Renaudot anticipated the practices of later academies and learned societies, whose prize questions obtained

19 At the end of each debate meeting, the participants fixed which topic they wanted to discuss the following week. This is visible, for example, at the end of the third *Conférence* in the first volume. See vol. 1, *Conférence* 3.II, p. 53. The topic for the fifth *Conférence* is similarly announced at the end of the fourth. See vol. 1, *Conférence* 4.II, p. 71.

20 Renaudot, *Recueil des Nouvelles Ordinaires et Extraordinaires* 1638 [1639], Extraordinaire N°152, p. 640.

21 See Jubert 2005, pp. 175–176.

22 See ibid., p. 156.

23 The first *conférence* that was subsequently printed took place on 22 August 1633 and was printed one week later at the Bureau d'Adresse. See also chapter 1, p. 31.

24 I discuss the possibility to participate in the *conférences* via letter and the implications thereof in more detail in chapter 5.

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submission from all over Europe.[25] To enable such broad-ranging submissions, the academies' also announced their prize questions in the periodical press.[26]

In facilitating the participation at the *conférences* via letter and in immediately printing their results to distribute them to a large public,[27] Renaudot created a kind of plurimedial public sphere that foretold later developments in the Republic of Letters, such as the universe of the learned journals or the networks of academies and their prize questions. In this, the *conférences* and their printed records prove that their importance transcends the content of the individual debates, on which so much stress is placed by scholars such as Mazauric or Harcourt Brown.[28]

Today's readers can access the questions discussed in Renaudot's circle through the five *Centuries* of *Conférences*, which collate the weekly pamphlets. The first *Centurie* dates from 1634 and was followed by various editions.[29] During Renaudot's lifetime alone, four versions of the first volume of *Conférences* were printed at the Bureau d'Adresse.[30] The *gazétier*'s son Eusèbe later published many more complete editions with different printers in Paris and Lyon.[31] This multiplicity of editions demonstrates how popular the printed *Conférences* must have been. Even more remarkable is the fact that a compilation of questions from the *Conférences* was translated into English and published in London as early as 1664, under the title *A General Collection of Discourses of the Virtuosi of France, Upon Questions of all Sorts of Philosophy, and other Natural Knowledge. Made in the Assembly of the Beaux Esprits at Paris, by the most Ingenious Persons of that Nation*. It appears that the first volume was such a success that a second volume, *Another Collection of Philosophical Conferences of the French Virtuosi, upon questions of all sorts; For the Improving of Natural Knowledge*

25 "Especially after the 1720s, the concours académique turned into a popular medium of the Republic of Letters, appealing to more and more participants all over France and beyond" (Urmann 2018, p. 14).

26 See Urmann 2017, pp. 114–115.

27 As already explained in chapter 1, Renaudot's printing activities for the *conférences* were not limited to announcements of forthcoming discussion questions. Within a year of starting his enterprise, he had begun issuing pamphlets containing the answers to those questions, right after the meetings had taken place. Then, he made their findings available to an even wider public through the consolidated *Centuries*, compiled annually. Throughout the years the debate meetings ran, Renaudot repeatedly emphasised the need to publish the *conférences*' materials. The *intendant* of the Bureau d'Adresse was convinced that "[…] mon ouvrage seroit imparfait, si j'obmettois entre ces commoditez celle qui se recueille de la conference des esprits au dire des plus excellens Autheurs, la plus excellente communication, voire la plus necessaire qui soit au monde" (Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 1–2). Renaudot shared this desire to communicate and to provide access to information with Samuel Hartlib, who in 1650 wrote: "I find my selfe obliged to become a conduite pipe […] towards the Publick" (Hartlib in Greengrass 2014, p. 305).

28 See, for instance, Brown 1934, p. 18, and Mazauric 2017, p. 53.

29 See the explanation of my sources on pp. 19–21.

30 The first volume was first printed in 1634 and reprinted in 1636 and 1638. There is also a slightly different version from 1635. All can be consulted at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

31 There is, for example, one complete edition from 1655–1656 (Chamhoudry), one from 1656–1670 (Valaniol), and one from 1676 (Loyson).

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Made in the Assembly of the Beaux Esprits at Paris, by the most Ingenious Persons of that Nation, was immediately published the following year, in 1665.[32] In its preface, the translators explain the speedy publication of the second volume:

> The good Reception a Volume of the like Conferences appears to have found last year by the speedy distribution of the Copies, hath given encouragement to the Version and Publication of this; wherein I assure myself the Reader will not find themselves worse entertain'd at the second Course then they were at the first […].[33]

The first English volume contains all questions treated in the first and second French *Centurie*, and the second volume assembles a selection of questions from the third, fourth, and fifth *Centurie.* Interestingly, the third volume is rendered in its entirety, but the translators chose only certain questions from the fourth and fifth. In the preface to the second collection, they legitimise their selection of questions in the following manner: "[…] the Questions here being proportionably more Philosophical, and chosen from such Subjects as are most inquir'd into at this day by the Curious of our Nation […]."[34] Effectively, they abstained from translating many of the moral-philosophical topics and mostly present the *conférenciers*' natural philosophical questions.[35]

This final selection is intriguing, because it suggests that the English public was less interested in questions leading to a rhetorical debate and more concerned with the explanation of curious phenomena. The politically explosive situation in 1660s England probably also played its part in the editors' choice. In such a political climate, dissent had to be avoided at all costs.[36] This situation led English natural philosophers to turn more decisively towards experimental culture than their Parisian counterparts, [37] according to historian of science Mario Biagioli:

> Therefore, by local standards of politeness, it was quite appropriate for English natural philosophers to do experiments and produce matters of fact rather than

32 Both can be consulted at the British Library.

33 Preface to *Another Collection of Philosophical Conferences*, 1665, n.p.

34 Ibid.

35 Questions the English did not translate include, for example "Laquelle est la plus insupportable des offenses de l'amy ou de l'enemy" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 196, pp. 81–88), "Si la mort est un mal réel" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 264, pp. 649–656), and "Si la beauté du corps est indice de la bonté et beauté de l'esprit" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 293, pp. 897–904.). They were very interested, however, in questions such as "Du ver à soye" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 278, pp. 777–784), "Pouquoy la glace estant plus dure que l'eau, est-elle neanmoins plus legere" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 280, pp. 793–800), and "D'où viennent les morts subites des Hommes et des Animaux qui descendent dans certains puits" (Vol. 5, *Conférence* 299, pp. 26–33).

36 See Shapin and Shaffer 2011, pp. 290–298, and especially pp. 291–292.

37 Mario Biagioli explains regarding the Royal Society: "The Society's emphasis on experiments and plainly formulated empirical reports (which might have been problematic in several conversation-prone continental academies) reflected the English political context and the ways in which that power regime structured the relation between the Society and the prince" (Biagioli 1996, p. 230).

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> engage in conversations about philosophical doctrines like those characteristic of early Parisian philosophical academies.[38]

By concentrating on experimentally produced evidence, dogmatic debates where unrelenting parties opposed each other could be avoided.[39] Renaudot's *conférenciers*, however, evidently did not proceed in the same manner as the Royal Society would later do: they did not conduct experiments but merely touched upon them at certain points in their debates. Nevertheless, a debate question such as "S'il n'y a rien de nouveau"[40] – forcing the *conférenciers* to take one of two possible positions (more on this below) – appears to hold more potential for dispute than a more harmlessly formulated open question such as "Des plantes sensitives".[41] Or so the English might have thought.

However, this explanation for the selection of debates for the English version does not seem altogether adequate, as the *Conférences* already possess their own device to prevent (too much) conflict. Most significantly, the written volumes provide no conclusions to the questions debated at the Bureau d'Adresse. In the "Avis au lecteur" in the first volume, Renaudot states that some participants and readers of the weekly pamphlets had demanded conclusions after hearing or reading all the different opinions of the *conférenciers*. Yet, so Renaudot claims, the decision of which opinion to favour must remain with the readers.[42] The *Conférences* retain their ambiguous form – another of their innovative aspects.[43]

Certain topics proved contentious, even without final decisions. Avoiding conflict with the state and Church meant topics regarding theology and politics were explicitly excluded from discussion at the *conférences*. Questions concerning religion were to be decided by the Sorbonne, and political topics were the matter of the king's council, Renaudot declared. Through this tactic, he wished to avoid collisions with the authorities and hoped to remain in a position to proclaim the complete innocence of the debate meetings:

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38 Ibid., pp. 233–234. In his "'Experimental Philosophy': Invention and Rebirth of a Seventeenth-Century Concept" (2016), Mordechai Feingold argues that the English virtuosi's rejection of "speculative philosophy" and promotion of "real", "new", and "experimental" philosophy in the 1660s served rather propagandist needs, as the "adjectives were devoid of deep epistemological meaning". It was only in the 1680s and '90s that a "more philosophically precise understanding of the phrase emerge[d]" (Feingold 2016, p. 27).

39 Biagioli 1996, p. 202. Lorraine Daston comes to a similar conclusion but puts more focus on the discussion of strange natural phenomena: "The rivalries that proved most divisive were theoretical ones, and the most explosive of these conflicts pitted one member's pet theory against another's. Hence the pronounced preference among academicians for strange phenomena, which baffled theories on all sides" (Daston 1995, p. 16).

40 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 258, pp. 563–600. (Note that there is a problem with the page numbers here; the question ends on page 600 and the debate covers merely eight pages).

41 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 254, pp. 553–561.

42 Vol. 1, "Avis au lecteur", n. p.

43 I discuss the *Conférences'* inconclusive form in more detail in chapter 5.

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> L'innocence de cet exercice est sur tout remarquable: car la médisance n'en est pas seulement bannie; mais de peur d'irriter les esprits aisez à échauffer sur le fait de la Religion, on renvoye en Sorbonne tout ce qui la concerne. Les mysteres des affaires d'Estat tenans aussi de la nature des choses divines, desquelles ceux-là parlent le mieux qui parlent le moins, nous en faisons le renvoy au Conseil, d'où elles procedent. Tout le reste se presente icy à vous pour servir d'une spacieuse carriere à vos esprits.[44]

Banning political and theological topics at the *conférences* also accords with the rules other academies gave themselves. Regarding scientific academies, Biagioli argues that excluding politics and theology was routine.[45] Yet this also counts for academies concerned with other matters. The 1634 statutes of the Académie française state, for example, that "[…] les matiéres de Religion en sont bannies […]. Que pour les matiéres Politiques & Morales, il est dit qu'elles n'y seront traitées que conformément à l'autorité du Prince, à l'état du Gouvernement, & aux lois du Royaume".[46]

While it seems to have been easy for the *conférenciers* to abstain from political comments, the topic of religion was more complicated. The *conférences*' questions, which never mention matters of the French state, do not easily lend themselves to political argumentation in the first place. Yet to abstain from upsetting the rules when it comes to religion – a ubiquitous issue – many *conférenciers* must actively withdraw from judgement and proclaim their intention to leave any discussion to the theologians. One speaker in the second part of the sixteenth *Conférence*, "Quel est le plus puissant de l'amour ou de la haine",[47] leaves a certain aspect of the question for the theologians to decide. He argues that one has to "[…] laisser aux Theologiens cét amour qui a eu la force d'arracher du Ciel la seconde personne de la Trinité […]".[48] In the second part of the twenty-fourth *Conférence*, "Lequel est le meilleur de la Chair ou du Poisson",[49] another speaker proceeds in a similar fashion. "Laissans aux Théologiens les considerations qui leur appartiennent en cette matiere […]", he states, leaving behind religious considerations before ded-

44 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 3–4.
45 Biagioli 1996, p. 203.
46 Pellisson 1729, p. 68. Regarding censure during the Ancien Régime, Georges Minois argues: "Dans le domaine religieux et moral, la vérité absolue est détenue par la hiérarchie ecclésiastique et les théologiens; tout avis divergent ne saurait être qu'un mensonge, une fausseté inspirée par le diable, mettant en danger le statut de toute la communauté, en détruisant croyances et valeurs. Dans le domaine politique, où le pouvoir est exercé au nom de Dieu par un souverain de droit divin chargé d'assurer le bon fonctionnement de l'État, toute contestation est une trahison qui met en danger la cohésion sociale" (Minois 1995, p. 12). This explains the academies' extreme caution regarding political and religious topics.
47 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 16.II, pp. 284–293.
48 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 16.II, p. 286.
49 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 24.II, pp. 504–521.

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icating himself to other matters.[50] There are further such examples, but I will not cite them in detail here, as they more or less resemble each other.[51]

Still, the *conférenciers* do not only censure themselves during their own contributions – some scorn other participants for mentioning theology. When the first speaker answering the question of the 286th *Conférence*, "Quelle science est la plus necessaire à un Estat",[52] proclaims that he thinks the most necessary science is theology, the following speaker argues that this cannot be the answer: "Le second dit: Qu'il n'avoit pas creu que la Theologie deut ester comprise dans cette question, veu qu'elle en est excluse par le premier plan des loix de la Conference publiées lors de son ouverture."[53]

One of the most striking examples of reprehension is found in the third *Conférence*, where the assembly seemingly makes an example of one speaker who diverts too much into theological territory. Addressing the question of "Des Causes en general",[54] the third speaker deviates from the rightful path and is immediately reminded of the debating rules: "Il entroit de là dans la Theologie lors qu'il fut adverti d'observer les regles que cette Conference s'est donnée de s'éloigner le plus qu'elle pourroit de tells matieres […]."[55]

Such caution does not seem to be exaggerated, if we take two important factors into consideration. First, there is the fact that the *comptes rendus* of the *conférences* were printed and published immediately. This brings arguments into writing which otherwise might have remained in the ephemeral sphere of the spoken word. Second, it must be recognised that all Renaudot's undertakings had semi-official character, given his close relationships with Richelieu and Louis XIII. As one of Renaudot's comments in the introduction to the second volume of *Conférences* indicates, members of government institutions seemingly attended some, if not all, discussion meetings. Renaudot claims that the freedom of discussion in the *conférences*, restricted only by the self-imposed cornerstones described in his introductions, had successfully satisfied everyone, even the *censeurs*: "[…] aucun des plus severes Censeurs des plus augustes Corps & Compagnies souveraines qui en font souvent partie, n'y ont jusques ici trouvé rien à redire."[56] The fact that such individuals attended the *conférences* certainly encouraged the participants to self-censure. If their mere presence did not suffice, the *compagnie des conférenciers* in most cases quickly stepped in and silenced those disobeying the rules.

Nevertheless, some *conférenciers* strategically circumvented the interdiction of theological argumentation.[57] In some instances, they used rhetorical devices such

50 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 24.II, p. 505.
51 For more examples of this kind, see Mazauric 1997, pp. 173–180.
52 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 286, pp. 841–848.
53 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 286, p. 842.
54 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 3.I, pp. 36–45.
55 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 3.I, p. 40.
56 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 14.
57 Concerning these strategies, see also Mazauric 1997, pp. 175–177.

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as *praeteritio* to convey their point. This can be seen, for example, in the case of the second speaker debating the question of "De l'Intellect".[58] Although acknowledging the *conférences*' rule to only plead about "connaissances naturelles & ordinaires", he plants a whole block of illegal deliberations on God in his contribution:

> Mais comme je ne nie point que Dieu, dans les connoissances surnaturelles, ne donne la foy, l'esperance, la charité & autres dons surnaturels: auquel cas Dieu peut estre dit intellect gent [*sic*]: aussi j'estime que dans les connoissances naturelles & ordinaires desquelles seuls nous parlons icy, il ne se faut imaginer aucun concours de Dieu, autre que l'universel; par lequel il conserve les causes naturelles en leur estre […].[59]

Another participant likewise could not refrain from completing his intervention on the question "Si les moeurs de l'ame suivent le temperament du corps"[60] with an excursus concerning the power of the belief in God. The effects of this belief, surely, he does not wish to mention here. But then he does: "Cessant mesme le pouvoir que la crainte de Dieu a sur nos volontez, dont je ne touche point icy les effets, comme surnarels [*sic*], puis qu'ils ont bien souvent ruiné toutes les maximes de la nature, tesmoin ceux qui se font brusler pour la foy."[61]

On other occasions, readers of the *Conférences* find themselves confronted with contributions clearly touching upon theological matters, which seemingly nobody finds offensive. In most cases, the material used in such instances stems from the Old Testament.[62] According to Mazauric, the *conférenciers* did not consider their frequent citations from the Bible to be in conflict with the *conférences*' statutes.[63] They did abstain, however, from engaging with ideas of Medieval or contemporary theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, and even avoided mentioning their names.[64] Evidently, the participants considered the Bible the word of God and the truth. [65] They used Bible citations as evidence fortifying their arguments, just as they would use other canonical sources such as texts by Plato or Aristotle.[66] On the other hand, the *conférenciers* were eager to avoid theological argumentations which could question the authority of worldly powers. They had to be careful, as the *conférences*' public nature ran counter to the space of argumentative liberty

58 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 65.I, pp. 241–250.
59 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 65.I, p. 244.
60 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 85.II, pp. 561–571.
61 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 85.II, p. 564.
62 See the reference table in Mazauric 1997, p. 174.
63 See ibid., p. 181.
64 See ibid.
65 As Ann Moss asserts: "Neither scholastics nor humanists separated truth from religious doctrine and religious texts" (Moss 2003, p. 9).
66 With this kind of theological argumentation in a 'scientific' debate, the *conférenciers* join a longstanding tradition. Rainer Specht explains regarding the High Middle Ages: "So wird man leicht die Beobachtung machen, daß Autoren des Hochmittelalters nichts dabei finden, einen wissenschaftlichen Gedankengang mit Argumenten zu komplettieren, die nach unserem Urteil in die Theologie gehören" (Specht 1972, p. 69).

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the universities could claim for themselves in their seclusion – a point I discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

All in all, my analysis of theological arguments in the *Conférences* highlights two important aspects. The first point to note is that the *conférenciers* clearly know their rhetoric, as they play with stylistic devices, allowing them to say what they want to say even though it may breach the *conférences*' rules. From this, we can infer that many of the speakers received training in rhetoric during their education.[67] This fact is of vital importance when it comes to the *conférenciers*' use of authorities, a topic to which I will return below.

The second point to consider is Renaudot's relation to Cardinal Richelieu, who closely supervised what Renaudot did and what was said in the *Gazette*, and who certainly also had an eye on the *conférences* and their printed versions. Richelieu was eager to promote certain academies as long as he could control them, as the examples of the *conférences* and the Académie française show. Paul Pellisson, in his *Histoire de l'Académie françoise* (1729 [1653]), reports how the unofficial Cercle Conrart became legitimised as the Académie française under the patronage of Richelieu in 1635. According to Pellisson, the members of Conrard's academy, described as a circle of friends who met for discussion,[68] were not necessarily pleased by Richelieu's advances.[69] However, they could not envisage rejecting him without grave repercussions.[70] Even though Pellisson presents a somewhat idealised account,[71] it is evident that Richelieu was anxious to bring academies such as the Cercle Conrard and Renaudot's *conférences* into his proximity. The cardinal wished to promote French (as a language of science) in order to strengthen national cohesion and allegiance to the French Crown, as well as to establish the cultural pre-eminence of France.[72]

67 "Rhetorical techniques in fact formed part of a cultural resource common to all educated Europeans of the time" (Dear 1988, pp. 15–16).

68 See Pellisson 1729, p. 5.

69 "Quand ces offres eurent été faites, & qu'il fut question de résoudre en particulier, ce que l'on devoit répondre, à peine y eut-il aucun de ces Messieurs qui n'en témoignât du déplaisir, & ne regrettât que l'honneur qu'on leur faisoit vînt troubler la douceur & la familiarité de leurs conférences. Quelques-uns même, & sur-tout Messieurs de Serifay, & de Malleville étoient d'avis qu'on s'excusât envers le Cardinal le mieux qu'on pourroit" (ibid., p. 9).

70 See ibid., pp. 10–11.

71 See Jouhaud 2000, pp. 12–13.

72 Regarding Richelieu's interest in establishing linguistic *unité nationale*, see Hanotaux 1941, pp. 258–261. Francesca Celi (2012, p. 276) discusses the cardinal's wish to establish French as a language of science in order to promote the *grandeur de la France* and her *rayonnement*. Florian Coulmas is certain that Richelieu established a veritable language policy which served to "stabilize and control the language (corpus planning), to spread it throughout the realm (status planning), and to enhance its prestige in Europe (prestige planning)" (Coulmas 2016, p. 83). Robert A. Schneider, on the other hand, argues that efforts regarding the establishment of French as a language of science and literature were not primarily driven by the crown and the French government but resulted from a broad movement of men (and some women) of letters; see Schneider 2019, pp. 43–46.

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The next rule the *conférences* adopted therefore does not come as a surprise: discussion meetings were conducted in French only. Renaudot specifies in the preface to the first *Centurie*: "L'une des loix de cette conference sinon absoluë, de laquelle on s'écarte le moins qu'il se peut, est qu'on n'y parle que François, afin de cultiver tant plus nostre langue, à l'imitation des anciens Grecs & Romains […]."[73] The *conférenciers* mostly abided this rule, but the occasional Latin citation nevertheless surfaces here and there. In addition, a whole *Conférence* reflects on the potential of French as a scientific language: "Si la Langue Françoise est suffisante pour apprendre toutes les Sciences".[74]

Richelieu's political goals aside, the choice of French was also a means for Renaudot to differentiate between his circle and the universities, whose official language remained Latin. In seventeenth-century France, the Latin of the Schoolmen was heavily criticised and labelled pedantic. This critique, however, intertwined with a larger debate about the French language: a broad movement was striving to establish French as a language able to rival Latin, Greek, and Italian, considered the most prestigious European vernacular.[75] Renaudot, wishing to cultivate French "à l'imitation des anciens Grecs & Romains", inscribes the *conférences* into this movement.

The majority of *conférenciers* debating the question of French's suitability for science, for their part, were not yet convinced of its potential on this front. The four first speakers heavily doubt its ability to express scientific ideas hitherto rendered only in Latin or Greek.[76] The fifth speaker is alone in his certainty that French can be used to teach and learn the sciences. He claims that employing other languages mostly comes not out of necessity but pedantic vanity: "Et ce que l'on employe les autres langues dans un discours, tient plus de la vanité pédantesque que du solide […]."[77] Even though the others do not share the fifth speaker's opinion, the *Conférences*, overall, nevertheless prove that it is possible to communicate scientific concepts in the vernacular.

Another innovative strategy of the *Conférences* is the handling of references to authorities. In the by now well-known first preface, Renaudot declares that the *conférenciers* should only rarely invoke authorities in their contributions. If an author has spoken with reason, his ideas must be convincing without the authority of a name attached to them. Besides God and the prince (which Renaudot is eager to stress), no authority should have any power over independent minds:

> […] on n'y [i.e., aux conférences] allegue des authoritez que fort rarement: non pour s'attribuer ce qui a esté dit par d'autres […] mais, outre le desir de briéveté, sur ce fondement que si l'Autheur a parlé avec raison, elle doit suffire sans son

73 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 4.
74 Vol. 5, *Conférence* 296, pp. 1–9.
75 See Schneider 2019, p. 43. Marc Fumaroli points out that the idea of French as a language capable of supplanting Latin has its roots in the fourteenth century. See Fumaroli 1984, p. 142.
76 Vol. 5, *Conférence* 296, pp. 1–3.
77 Vol. 5, *Conférence* 296, p. 4.

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> authorité: sinon, hors la loy divine & celle du Prince, une authorité ne doit point faire de force sur des ames libres.[78]

This statement bears similarities to the turning away from the *praejudicium auctoritatis* during the Enlightenment, whereby "one was no longer supposed to accept an opinion only because it was bequeathed by academic authorities," as Rainer Godel puts it.[79] In this spirit, the Académie royale des sciences (founded in 1666) proclaimed that authority stopped outweighing reason in the early years of the academy. What had been hitherto accepted without question was now (allegedly) re-examined and often rejected. Moreover, in the academy's study of nature, Nature herself was to be consulted, not the ancients:

> L'autorité a cessé d'avoir plus de poids que la raison, ce qui étoit reçû sans contradiction, parce qu'il éstoit depuis longtemps, est presentement examiné, & souvent rejetté: & comme on s'est avisé de consulter sur des choses naturelles la Nature elle-même, plûtôt que les Anciens, elle se laisse plus aisément découvrir, & assés souvent pressée par les nouvelles Experiences que l'on fait pour la sonder, elle accorde la connoissance de quelqu'un de ses secrets.[80]

By relinquishing the opinions of the ancients and concentrating on new experiences, the royal academicians could elicit some of Nature's secrets, the academicians were certain. Whether scientific academies such as the Académie royale des sciences really managed to disengage themselves so completely from authorities as their self-descriptions suggest, however, is another question.

In any case, the *conférences*' attitude towards authorities was not as radical as the (later) scientific academies' vow to study nature in a completely unprejudiced manner. Indeed, this would not have been possible, as no experiments or observations were conducted at the *conférences*.[81] The *conférenciers*' turning against the *praejudicium auctoritatis* was supposed to work in a different manner. Crucially, the speakers were not dissuaded from using authorities altogether: they were, in fact, merely advised not to *name* the authorities whose opinion they were referring to. It was still possible to recapitulate what others had said about a given topic without reference to sources. Renaudot obviously was not concerned with plagiarism: "[…] cet espece de larcin ne trouble pas grandement, à mon avis, la societé des hommes […]".[82] For him, ultimately, it did not matter where exactly opinions stemmed from, and insisting too much on the names of authorities and on referenced citations could have been perceived as pedantic and impolite.[83] Renaudot's

78 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferenes publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 4–5.
79 Godel 2014, p. 252.
80 *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences*, vol. 1, 1733, p. 2.
81 See chapter 7.
82 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 4.
83 Nicolas Faret, in his *Honnête homme* (1630), seems to propose a similar course of action in his handling of authorities, which he does not properly name and cite, as Emmanuel Bury points

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primary insistence was that the public should be enabled to view the *conférenciers*' statements without being affected by the mere names of influential authorities.[84] As Renaudot puts it: "[…] si l'Autheur a parlé avec raison, elle doit suffire sans son authorité […]."[85]

The contribution of the fifth speaker in the debate on the *conférences* as a teaching method underlines this principle. The speaker claims that *conférences* are extremely beneficial because they summarise a plurality of ideas regarding a given topic. In them, authors who passed away a long time ago are reanimated. A small number of *discours* manage to provide the public with the quintessence of many books. The *conférenciers* often incorporated these sources in such a manner that one is no longer able to recognise them. They resemble melted medals, the speaker claims. In the *conférences*, one

> […] void en abregé des pensées d'autruy sur la matiere dont il s'agit, choisie à la pluralité des voix: & pour sa décision, les autheurs decedez il y a long temps, derechef animez, & en peu de discours la quintessence de plusieurs livres souvent tellement déguisée qu'on ne la reconnoist non plus qu'une medaille fonduë.[86]

Therefore, if the *conférenciers* want to, they can still avail themselves of the ideas of well-known authorities. Yet they should not overpower their adversaries and their public with the mere blunt force of the authorities' names. It is the authorities' anonymisation which is meant to render possible the examination of their ideas without prejudice and in a polite manner. Still, this advice does not cancel out the fact that Renaudot also invited the *conférenciers* to present their own opinions.[87]

Renaudot's speakers, it turns out, seem not at all bothered by the ban on naming authorities. They excessively do what is forbidden: one of the speakers in the *Conférence* "De l'Esprit universel",[88] for example, manages to refer to "les Rabins et Cabalistes", "Trismegiste", "Platon", "les Peripateticiens", "Heraclite", and "les Chymistes" in one short paragraph.[89] This is not a record-setting example by any means – many *Conférences* overflow with references to authorities. Also, in contrast to what the speaker above contended, the *conférenciers* mostly do not even try to

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out: "Il n'est donc pas question pour Faret de ne pas reconnaître sa dette globale, mais il veut en effacer la trace, au nom même de la civilité" (Bury 1996, p. 63).

84 This nonchalant handling of citations notably changes in the course of the seventeenth century. In the first volume of his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1734 [1697]), Pierre Bayle notes, concerning the treatment of his sources – or, more precisely, his treatment of materials stemming from Louis Moréri, whose (flawed) dictionary had inspired Bayle's project: "Je pourrois jurer qu'il n'y a aucune parole ni syllable qui lui ait été volée; je le cite toutes les fois que je lui emprunte le moindre mot […]" (Bayle 1734, vol. 1, p. IX).

85 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferenes publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 4.

86 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 840.

87 See vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 14.

88 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 6.II, pp. 102–107.

89 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 6.II, p. 104.

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'smelt' authoritative opinions together to create a greater whole. They often merely enumerate them.

Overall, Renaudot wished to provide a space in which discussions could take place in a manner that was polite and differed from the one practised at the universities, where the debate always centred on authoritative opinions. Yet, seemingly, the majority of *conférenciers* were unable to step outside of the modes of arguing they were trained in. Their inability to discard authorities certainly has something to do with the fact that many of them, having attended university, were well-versed in the schools' favourite teaching method: disputation. Disputation was still a primarily oral endeavour, and what literature and religious historian Walter J. Ong states regarding oral-aural structures also holds for it: "An oral-aural economy of knowledge is necessarily authoritarian to an extent intolerable to a more visualist culture."[90] Familiar with disputation as one of the primary means of knowledge negotiation, the *conférenciers* simply could not let go of their authorities, as the next chapter covers at greater length.

With this, I conclude my discussion of forbidden topics and adopted argumentation strategies at the *conférences* and proceed to an analysis of the questions that were allowed to be asked. Crucially, apart from religion and politics, all other topics were open for discussion. Questions were formulated in various ways, but can be divided into three distinct groups. The first type encountered in the first *Centurie* functions in the manner of "De la Méthode"[91] or "De l'estre".[92] With descriptive, open questions such as these, the *conférenciers* seize the opportunity to follow all kinds of directions. When confronted with a question of this type, they are not automatically guided to answer in a certain way.

Other questions, introduced by a variety of interrogative pronouns, constitute the second, most diverse group. These questions primarily seem to aim at the practical explanation of phenomena the *conférenciers* are interested in, such as "Combien peut ester l'homme sans manger"[93] and "D'ou vient la saleur de la mer".[94] They sometimes begin with interrogative pronouns, such as *pourquoy*, *par où*, *comment*, and *qu'est-ce qui*. Importantly, moral-philosophical questions as well as natural philosophical questions can be part of this group, although the former appear only seldomly.[95]

The third group consists of polar enquiries that further divide into two subtypes. First, there are 'yes/no' questions such as "S'il est meilleur à un Estat d'avoir

90 Ong 1981, p. 231.
91 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 1.I, pp. 6–10.
92 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 1.II, pp. 10–18.
93 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 15.I, pp. 253–262.
94 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 29.I, pp. 498–504.
95 "Pourquoy personne n'est content de sa condition" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 18.II, pp. 320–328) and "Pourquoi les hommes desirent naturellement scavoir" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 39.I, pp. 650–659) are moral-philosophical questions belonging to the second group, for example.

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des Esclaves"[96] and "S'il y a une ambition loüable".[97] The second type demands a decision between two terms, such as "Quel est le plus necessaire à un Estat, la recompense, ou la peine"[98] and "Quel est le plus enclin à l'Amour, l'homme, ou la femme".[99] In this group, the traditional agonistic nature of knowledge negotiation is most evident. Speakers must pick a side and argue their case.[100] In answering such questions, the *conférenciers* in many cases reproduce patterns of rhetorical praise and blame – they speak in the *genus demonstrativum*. It is striking that both types of polar questions typically explore moral-philosophical topics, whereas questions of the early natural sciences and medicine are not usually posed in this manner.[101]

It becomes apparent, however, that the application of traditional argumentation styles is not solely motivated by the way the questions are posed: in many cases, the *conférenciers*, in answering other, more openly formulated question, also return to agonistic modes of enquiry. This can be observed regarding the first group of questions. The *Conférence* on "De la Licorne",[102] for example, fast develops into something more resembling a debate about "Do unicorns exist, yes or no?" Similarly, "Du bezoard"[103] evolves into a discussion about the healing powers of the bezoar or the lack thereof. Speakers therein firmly group themselves into two camps: one praising and one denying its powers. These examples illustrate that the *conférenciers* often revert to answering in the mode of praise and blame, even if the debated questions do not in themselves force them to do so. It is the *conférenciers*' own choice to rephrase the questions, allowing them to answer in this manner.

Only the third type of questions present a situation where the *conférenciers* practically have no other choice than to pick a side. Here again, it is important to remember that the participants chose the questions to be discussed themselves, and Renaudot seemingly did not intervene. He left the choice of topics to the assembly: "[…] ayant à contenter des esprits si differens, je n'ay rien trouvé de plus expédient que de leur laisser choisir à eux-mesmes le sujet duquel on devoit traiter."[104] The *conférenciers* selected the questions they wanted to answer, thereby inscribing themselves in traditional forms of knowledge negotiation. Again, this choice does not mean that they still do not sometimes stray from the predefined

96 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 7.II, pp. 119–129.
97 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 20.II, pp. 352–362.
98 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 13.II, pp. 229–237.
99 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 14.II, pp. 248–253.
100 For a more detailed analysis of the agonistic principle behind both rhetoric and dialectic, see chapter 4.
101 A medical question which falls into this category is the question discussed in chapter 2: "S'il est venu plus de bien que de mal du partage des parties de la Medecine, en Medecins, Chirurgiens & Appotiquaires" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 180, pp. 855–862).
102 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 248, pp. 489–504.
103 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 256, pp. 569–584.
104 Vol. 1, "Avis au lecteur", n. p.

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path in their answers. In some rare cases, the speakers refuse a decision in their own arguments, as chapter 6 will reveal.[105]

I have shown that the *Conférences* can be best described as an amalgamation of innovative elements and traditional forms of knowledge negotiation. Their innovative aspects become apparent in Renaudot's publication strategies and his wish to clearly separate the *conférences* from the universities' practices through the rules he gave them. However, the fact that these rules existed in theory does not mean that the *conférenciers* always abided them. The speakers possessed numerous strategies to circumvent the rules, as can be seen in the case of forbidden religious arguments. This discussion of the use of authorities has shown that, often, the participants in fact could not refrain from sticking to authoritative assertions. Moreover, they frequently insisted on agonistic modes of answering questions. For example, they often returned to the *genus demonstrativum*, a pattern they knew from their training in rhetoric. They even would go so far as to invoke the genre not only when the structure of the questions they discussed compelled them to do so but also in the case of other, more openly formulated questions. In their replies, they often reformulated these open-style questions so as to also answer them in the mode of praise and blame.

105 I discuss one of the most striking examples of such a refusal in my chapter on *querelle des femmes*–related *Conférences*, more precisely in my analysis of "Quel est le plus noble, de l'homme ou de la femme". See chapter 6, pp. 149–152.

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Part II –
Debating Cultures in the *Conférences*

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4

The *Conférences*' Foundations: Origins and Predecessors

The more detailed studies dealing with the *Conférences* I have presented so far often put a strong focus on the topics discussed by the *conférenciers*.[1] But it is at least equally as important – if not even more important – to also analyse the manner in which knowledge is negotiated in the printed *Conférences*. Regarding this matter, it is revealing to compare the *Conférences* to the dominant modes of arguing in the first half of the seventeenth century. In this chapter, I therefore analyse how disputation, declamation, and dialogue – all three influential patterns for negotiating knowledge in the Early Modern period – relate to the *Conférences*. An enquiry into similarities and differences between them enables a better understanding of how the *Conférences* function. It reveals insights that cannot be gained through solely focussing on their content.

Disputation, first of all, undoubtedly remained firmly in the intellectual arsenal of Renaudot's contemporaries, be it as an influential method of teaching or as a foe against which the humanists and their successors positioned themselves. Given their self-proclaimed project of *nettoyer l'étude de la poussière*, the *conférenciers*, unsurprisingly, decidedly distanced themselves from ways of arguing perceived as Scholastic. Yet even though the *conférenciers* sought alternative patterns for arranging their debates, many instances arose where the modes of arguing the *conférenciers* knew from their school and university days shine through the patterns of their discussions.

Here, declamation and dialogue come into play. Declamation (in its rhetoricity) is explicitly named as an ideal by the *conférenciers*, whereas the structural overlaps between dialogue and their debate meetings almost inevitably spring to mind when one reads the *Conférences*. While both declamation and dialogue have precursors in antiquity, they were fundamentally revitalised and (partially) transformed in the Early Modern period. Humanist declamation, mostly operating in the mode of praise and blame,[2] influenced the *conférenciers*' individual contributions, especially the debates of moral-philosophical questions. Dialogue as an ideal of polite conversation also plays its part, notably regarding the *Conférences*' overall structure. But while declamation and dialogue remain, after all,

1 See Wellman 2005 and Mazauric 1997.

2 Regarding declamation's transformation, see, for example, Van der Poel 2017, p. 273.

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fundamentally monological genres – given the fact that one author alone composes them – disputation and the *Conférences* really do function dialogically.[3] The debate meetings revolved around a genuine interplay between multiple speakers. Nevertheless, open-ended dialogue and the *Conférences*, given their inconclusive form, enable a kind of plurality that disputation and declamation cannot enact in quite the same manner.[4]

Ultimately, disputation, declamation, and dialogue all demonstrate that argumentative positions taken in debates of the Early Modern period were determined by agonistic structures. As cultural historian Walter J. Ong argues, without an adversary there would have been nothing to say in oral and residually oral cultures.[5] The comparison between the *Conférences* and disputation, declamation, and dialogue helps to better discern in what manner the *Conférences* truly are innovative and where they draw on established models of discourse.

4.1 Debating without Compromise: Scholastic Disputation

The query into the *conférences*' possible antecedents begins with disputation, which remained one of the universities' central activities throughout the Middle Ages and far into the Early Modern period.[6] As I have indicated in chapters 2 and 3, many signs in the printed *Conférences* point to the fact that the participants of the in-person *conférences* received university training. The *conférenciers* could also have become acquainted with the Scholastic way of arguing at (Jesuit) schools.[7] Both at such schools and at universities, the men who attended Renaudot's debate meetings would have encountered disputation on many occasions and been familiar with its workings. Because it was so central to Early Modern education, disputation influenced other forms of knowledge negotiation, and it also affected Renaudot's debate meetings, as I will show in the following pages. Yet to establish how the *conférences* and disputation relate to each other, I first need to explain how disputation functioned.

The *ars disputandi* – the art of making objections and solving them – was already practised in the patristic and pre-Scholastic period and ultimately dates back to

3 Concerning the 'monological' nature of dialogue, see Hempfer 2010a, p. 11.
4 Regarding plurality made possible by open-ended dialogue, see Hempfer 2010b, p. 77.
5 See Ong 1967, p. 217.
6 Disputations were practiced at universities until the eighteenth century. See Marti 1994, p. 866, and Novikoff 2013, p. 134.
7 Regarding disputations at Jesuit schools, Étienne Tabourot des Accords explains: "Une autre façon qui exerce fort les enfants et les rend capables de haranguer en public avec assurance […] est que, trois ou quatre fois l'an, les jésuites choisissent quelque beau sujet ès histoires romaines ou grecques, et le font disputer problématiquement en public […]" (Tabourot des Accords in Dainville 1978, p. 189). On the Jesuits' use of disputation, see also Marti 1994, p. 877, and Chang 2004. p. 139. For an overview of Jesuit education in general, see François de Dainville's *La naissance de l'humanisme moderne. Les jésuites et l'éducation de la société française* (1940).

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Greek philosophy and especially to Aristotle.[8] Disputation as a distinct method originated in the eleventh century in monastic circles.[9] Early disputation, however, was not identical to the highly regulated practice it would become in subsequent centuries. It should rather be understood as a "discourse in the form of questions and answers".[10] After the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations* in the twelfth century, scholars began to more rigidly formalise disputation, and its importance grew even further.[11]

To describe how exactly later Scholastic disputations – the form of concern here – were organised is challenging. This is because the Schoolmen apparently did not deem it necessary to regulate disputation, a fundamentally oral practice, in written texts.[12] If every university member already knew what they had to do, why would there be any urgency to formulate written instructions for the art of disputation?[13] Thus, romance literature scholar Anita Traninger, who has written extensively on Early Modern disputation, characterises disputation as a 'knowing how', in the sense of philosopher Gilbert Ryle,[14] who differentiated between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that' in the 1940s. According to Ryle, 'knowing that' is the knowledge of facts, whereas 'knowing how' indicates the ability to actually perform an act, not merely to name a rule.[15] He writes:

> When a person knows how to do things in a certain sort (e.g. make good jokes, conduct battles or behave at funerals) his knowledge is not exercised (save *per accidens*) in the propounding of propositions or in saying 'yes' to those propounded by others. His intelligence is exhibited in deeds, not by internal or external dicta.[16]

As Traninger shows, this also counts for disputation: what was decisive for participants was that they were able to perform in a disputation; it was not sufficient to simply know the rules disputation theoretically followed.[17]

The origins of disputation can be found in the context of the *lectio*. Here, problems of interpretation stemming from the conflicting opinions of authoritative authors were raised in the form of *quaestiones*.[18] However, not every disagreement between authorities could be qualified as a *quaestio*. *Quaestiones* merely arose when two conflicting positions both appeared equally convincing. The eleventh-century logician Gilbert of Poitiers, in a commentary on Boethius, the sixth-century Roman

8 See Grabmann 1911, p. 16, and Marti 1994, p. 871.
9 See Novikoff 2011.
10 Novikoff 2013, p. 109. See also Grabmann 1911, p. 17.
11 See Novikoff 2013, p. 106.
12 See Bazàn 1985, p. 49.
13 See Glorieux 1968, pp. 76–77.
14 See Traninger 2018, pp. 289–291.
15 See Ryle 1946, p. 7.
16 Ibid., p. 8.
17 See Traninger 2018, p. 291.
18 See Glorieux 1968, pp. 123–124. See also Bazàn 1985, pp. 25–27, and Weijers 2010, pp. 21–23.

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philosopher and politician, therefore defines the *quaestio* in the following manner: "Hic commemorandum est ex affirmatione et ejus contradictoria negatione quaestio constat. Non tamen omnis contradictio quaestio est. […] Cujus vero utraque pars argumenta veritatis habere videtur, quaestio est."[19] Later on, *quaestiones* were dissociated from the *lectio* and treated in a separate session. Eventually they evolved into full-fledged *disputationes*,[20] which no longer needed to be based on authorities in conflict but could result from doubts and questions of masters and students alike.[21] Early Modern disputations, then, no longer began with a *quaestio* but simply took a thesis as a starting point.[22]

To comprehend what disputation was aiming at, it is crucial to look at the different functions it performed. It should be understood simultaneously as a teaching method and a mode of learning. It was at the same time a lesson, examination, and exercise.[23] Yet disputation also was a scientific method, which aimed at establishing well-founded truths.[24] Given the variety of fields disputation was able to cover, it is not surprising that it became one of the central activities of masters at Medieval universities.[25] Disputation developed into a key tool for negotiating knowledge – one powerful enough to outlast many centuries.[26]

To perform a disputation, a *magister regens* assigned various roles to different members of the university. The disputation's thesis was defended by the *respondens*, who, at the end, also provided a preliminary resolution.[27] His arguments were attacked by the *opponens*.[28] Both *respondens* and *opponens* were either the *magister*'s students or other bachelors from the university, depending on the purpose of the disputation.[29] In the case of the *disputatio privata*, held for students to practice

19 Gilbert of Poitiers 2017, p. 102. Isabelle Mandrella and Hannes Möhle's German translation reads: "Hier ist daran zu erinnern, dass der Gegenstand einer Frage aus der Bejahung und deren widersprüchlichen Verneinung besteht. Aber nicht jeder Widerspruch ist der Gegenstand einer Frage […]. Das, wovon beide Teile Beweisgründe für die Wahrheit zu haben scheinen, ist aber der Gegenstand einer Frage" (ibid., pp. 103–104).

20 See Bazàn 1985, p. 31, and Lawn 1993, pp. 12–13.

21 See Bazàn 1985, p. 30, and Lawn 1993, p. 12.

22 See Chang 2004, p. 135. This, obviously, changes the procedure: "While in the medieval *quaestio* the respondent did not take or reveal his position until the debate began, the respondent of post-medieval theses took his position in advance. […] in the theses disputation the respondent […] no longer enjoyed the freedom to take one of the two contrary positions opened by a *quaestio*" (ibid., p. 136).

23 See Bazàn 1985, p. 21. See also Weijers 2002, p. 15.

24 See Bazàn 1985. pp. 21–22.

25 The three duties of the Medieval master of theology were *lectio*, *disputatio*, and *predicatio*. See Chang 2004, p. 144. Masters of other faculties did not have to preach, of course. See Glorieux 1968, p. 106.

26 Marion Gindhart and Ursula Kundert qualify disputation as a "Leitmedium des spätmittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Universitätsbetriebes" (Gindhart and Kundert 2010, p. 1).

27 See Weijers 2010, p. 23.

28 In the case of the more solemn disputations, a larger number of students assumed the roles of *respondentes* and *opponentes* respectively. See ibid.

29 See Bazàn 1985, p. 127.

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for the more solemn *disputatio ordinaria* or *disputatio de quodlibet*, the *respondens* and *opponens* were students attached to the master who organised the disputation.[30] In the *disputatio ordinaria*, which took place at regular intervals – approximately once a week[31] – other masters' bachelors could also take part.[32] Ordinary disputations were compulsory for all university members and therefore brought a halt to all other teaching activity.[33]

The *disputatio de quodlibet* was framed in a slightly different manner. It saw the disputation of various questions proposed by the public, which was larger and less restricted than for the other two types of disputations. [34] Any member of the public (*a quodlibet*) could ask a question and that question could concern any appropriate topic (*de quodlibet*).[35] The bachelors also assumed the part of *respondens* in the *quodlibetal* disputations, but the role of the master during the first session, where the dispute took place, was seemingly more active than in ordinary disputations. It saw him propose a preliminary response to each question even before the second session, which was reserved for his *determinatio* – the solution to the problem.[36] Such (more or less) public disputations were held only twice per year, during the periods of Advent and Lent.[37]

It is important to note that it was not the purpose of disputation to engage *respondens* and *opponens* in pro- and contra-arguing. Indeed, this would not even be possible, because a disputation examines only one side of a question.[38] The respondent's role was to defend the thesis by invalidating the opponent's attacks.[39] The opponent, on the other hand, merely reacted to what was presented to him, as he needed to stick to the respondent's theses and arguments.[40] As the historian of ideas Martin Mulsow puts it, the opponent specifically constructed his objections to be nullified by the respondent.[41] As a consequence, the *opponens* was not on par with the *respondens* – their roles were rather asymmetrical.[42] Crucially,

30 See ibid.
31 See Lawn 1993, p. 4.
32 See Bazàn 1985, p. 127.
33 Only the master presiding over the disputation was allowed to read in the morning of the day it took place. See Glorieux 1968, p. 101.
34 See Novikoff 2013, p. 143. "Literally anyone could attend, masters and scholars from other schools, all kinds of ecclesiastics and prelates, and even civil authorities, all the 'intellectuals' of the time", as Lawn points out (1993, p. 15).
35 See Wippel 1985, pp. 165–166. Evidently, different faculties and universities organised *disputationes de quodlibet* in different ways. For a more detailed analysis, see ibid., pp. 203–214.
36 See ibid., pp. 184–185.
37 See ibid., p. 171. See also Weijers 2013, p. 133.
38 "Vielfach scheint der Sachverhalt, dass der Respondent für eine These einsteht und der Opponent sie attackiert, als eine Operation des *pro* und *contra* eingestuft zu werden. […] Die Disputation konzentriert sich aber auf die streitförmige Überprüfung jeweils einer Seite" (Traninger 2012, p. 244).
39 See Marti 1994, p. 866, and Lawn 1993, p. 13.
40 See Gindhart and Kundert 2010, p. 17.
41 See Mulsow 2007, p. 194.
42 See Gindhart and Kundert 2010, p. 17.

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respondens and *opponens* did not try to reach a consensus; in fact, they were not even allowed to do so.[43] On the contrary, they aimed at determining a winning and a losing side.[44]

As a matter of principle, disputations did not require participants to present their personal opinion on the subject in question. *Respondens* and *opponens* assumed institutional roles they needed to uphold meticulously.[45] According to Traninger, the absolute adamancy with which attacker and defender adopted their positions in disputation derives equally from dialectics and from rhetoric. Both demand holding an argumentative position without looking for compromise.[46] Ong's assessment of Early Modern dialectics and rhetoric in *The Presence of the Word* (1967) underlines this:

> As the art of disputation, dialectic is contentious and partisan by definition, polarizing issues, even the most scientific issues, in terms of yes and no, your side and my side, forming schools or sects in the learned world. But rhetoric is even more contentious, if not always obviously so. […] rhetoric implies and engenders commitment. The public speaker is never an impartial investigator. He has taken a stand. He wishes to persuade, to win others to his side.[47]

Ong points out that the Early Modern period, in continuity with the oral-aural tradition, was still characterised by a "polemic view of life".[48]

Disputation's close relation to both rhetoric and dialectic is what allowed it to survive for so long, as historian of science Hanspeter Marti indicates. As a hybrid form, it oscillated between rhetoric and dialectic. Therefore, even the humanists' attacks on dialectic and the fact that they subordinated dialectic to rhetoric could not substantially endanger disputation.[49]

But back to our disputants: ultimately, the disputed question was solved not by *respondens* and *opponens* but by the presiding *magister* in his *determinatio*, which he presented sometime after the initial session.[50] The *determinatio* saw the master resume the arguments that the *opponens* and *respondens* had advanced in the

43 See Kundert 2004, p. 109.
44 See Lawn 1993, p. 140.
45 See Marti 2010, p. 65.
46 "Die Unerbittlichkeit bzw. Dezidiertheit der Positionen lässt sich sowohl auf die Dialektik als auch auf die Rhetorik zurückführen. Beide sind charakterisiert durch das Durchhalten einer argumentatorischen Linie ohne Kompromissabsicht und ohne unbedingte Deckung durch reale Überzeugungen" (Traninger 2012, p. 83).
47 Ong 1967, pp. 213–214.
48 Ibid., p. 213.
49 "Daß die Humanisten die Dialektik dem anmutigen Diktat der Rhetorik unterstellten und den Absolutheitsanspruch der Logik zurückwiesen, konnte die D[isputation] keineswegs in ihrem Weiterleben gefährden, da sie, ein logisch-rhetorisches Zwitterwesen, einer Rhetorisierung und dem damit verbundenen Wandel der Sprachkonvention durchaus zugänglich war" (Marti 1994, pp. 875–876).
50 It is difficult to say with certainty when the *determinatio* took place. In some cases, the next day, in others, a week following the disputation. See Novikoff 2012, p. 353, and Weijers 2013.

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previous gathering. He then gave his solution and refuted the arguments against his thesis.[51] According to the historian Ku-ming Chang, the Early Modern period brought to an end the two-session model, as *disputatio* and *determinatio*, from a certain point on, took place in the same session.[52]

What kinds of records of disputations are available to us today? Different kinds of texts attest to this fundamentally oral performance. First of all, there are *reportationes*, notes taken by an assistant during the first session, which formed the basis for the master's later *determinatio* in the second session. In the process of learning which arguments *respondens* and *opponens* could use while preparing for their mandatory participation in disputations, attending students also took notes for their private use. Students sometimes also penned *reportationes* of the second session, in which the *magister* presented his *determinatio*.[53] Crucially, these *reportationes* cannot be qualified as thoroughly authentic records of the disputation in its oral form, as objections were often synthesised and not everything was duly noted.[54]

As we have seen, the overall goal of a disputation was always to arrive at a *determinatio*, providing a dogmatic answer settling the dispute.[55] Nevertheless, some masters apparently viewed their determinations as mere momentary solutions and remained open to other, better answers.[56] In any case, the focus on the solution led many masters to publish their *determinationes*. During the "golden age" of disputation,[57] these published *determinationes* formed an important part of philosophical debate.[58] Crucially, they also do not encompass a faithful rendering of the oral disputation. The determinations of *quodlibetical* disputations could be highly edited, as masters tried to impose order on potentially chaotic discussion sessions.[59] Also, it is probable that some of the printed texts are not at all based on actual disputations but are masters' purely written treatment of a given topic.[60]

As a consequence, what forms the backbone of the study of Medieval and Early Modern disputation – the above-described texts – cannot, in fact, produce a reliable effigy of the quintessentially oral practice that disputation was. There is simply no kind of text which faithfully reproduces the actual performance of oral disputations.[61] Ultimately, disputation, in contrast to Early Modern declamation and dialogue, is a genre fundamentally predicated on a situation of orality.

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p. 131. It also depended on whether a disputation had been a *disputatio ordinaria* or a *disputatio de quodlibet* and at which university and faculty it had been held. See Bazàn 1985, p. 62.

51 See ibid., p. 66.
52 See Chang 2004, p. 135.
53 See Bazàn 1985, pp. 129–130.
54 See ibid., p. 133.
55 See Chang 2004, p. 135, and Bazàn 1985, p. 21.
56 See Weijers 2010, p. 25, and Bazàn 1985, p. 67.
57 See Weijers 2013, p. 119.
58 See Wippel 1985, p. 158.
59 See ibid., p. 185.
60 See Bazàn 1985, p. 70; Chang 2004, p. 152; and Weijers 2010, p. 26.
61 See Weijers 2013, p. 131.

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After this review of disputation and its workings in general, we can now begin to compare disputation and the *conférences*. Just like disputation, the *conférences* depart from an agonistic principle.[62] As Renaudot claims in the "Avis au lecteur" in the first volume of *Conférences*, truth can be best found through the opposition of contrary opinions: "[…] la verité […] paroist principalement en l'opposition des contraires."[63] Yet in contrast to disputation, the *conférences*' goal was not to attack and defend one doctrinal view but to propose a multiplicity of conflicting opinions that were presented next to each other without comment or conclusion. Contrary to disputation, where the focus lay on the *determinatio* – the solution to the problem – at the *conférences* the goal was not at all to attempt to provide easily discernible answers to the questions asked. While the most important role in a disputation fell to the presiding *magister*, whose decision constituted the awaited outcome of a disputation, the *conférences*' purpose was to exhibit various contrasting views. The role of the judge fell to the public, who was supposed to decide which of the suggested opinions was the best one. The readers of the printed *Conférences* could even establish their own compromise or form a totally new opinion based on what they had read. The *conférences*, therefore, subducted judgement from the institutional level of a *magister*, in his position of authority, and passed it on to the individual level of the audience member or reader.

Unquestionably, these observations are based on a rather idealised conception of the public, as proposed by Renaudot in the introductions to the *Conférences*. Even though the *gazetier* bestowed upon readers the decision about the best answer, these readers potentially could not be bothered finding their own solutions. Possibly, they simply read the *Conférences* without forming their own opinions. The way the *Conférences* present the questions treated in them renders it possible for readers to reach their own decisions, but that does not mean everyone took up that possibility.

Moreover, it is important to note that the *conférences* and their printed compendia had two very different publics that must be considered separately. First of all, there were the people who actually took part in the discussion meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse in the centre of Paris. Secondly, there was the public consisting of those who read the *conférences*' proceedings. It is certainly plausible that especially the latter took a less active stance in deciding the outcomes of the questions they read about.

Even if certain readers or listeners did come to their own conclusion, this conclusion remained solely in their own minds. *Determinationes* of disputations, on the contrary, were announced in the second session of a disputation and then often published for an even larger public to view, as we have seen above.

Through announcing the questions each *conférence* treated in a variety of publications, Renaudot wished to invite as many participants as could fit into the *grande*

62 Regarding the agonistic "Kulturmuster" of disputation, see Traninger 2012, pp. 249–250.
63 Vol. 1, "Avis au lecteur", n. p.

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salle of the Bureau d'Adresse. He even solicited written contributions from people who were interested but unable to attend.[64] While the theses for disputations were also pre-announced,[65] the disputations themselves were, quite to the contrary, reserved solely for university members. The *disputationes de quodlibet* formed a notable exception, as they were open to a larger public from outside the university and their theses were published. Still, as with any other disputation, quodlibetical disputations were held in Latin, which means that only a highly educated public – an intellectual elite – could observe them.[66] The obstacle to participation, then, was linguistic in nature. This applies also to the written determinations, which only those able to read Latin could access.

While disputations sourced their audience from an extremely limited circle of people, Renaudot's *conférences* were much more public events. In contrast to the universities' practices, they explicitly were conducted not in Latin but in French.[67] Ultimately, though (and as I showed in chapter 2), neither were the *conférences* open to 'just anyone': Renaudot admitted only *gens d'honneur* to the discussions at the bureau. Yet the printed *Conférences*, theoretically, could be accessed by anyone able to read French.[68] All in all, the explicit aim of Renaudot's discussion meetings was to disseminate knowledge, while the universities attempted to keep their knowledge in a circle of privileged scholars.[69]

When it comes to the roles participants took on in disputations and in the *conférences*, we see that the *conférences* were a much more symmetrical endeavour than disputations. *Conférenciers* did not have to attack or defend a position but could freely propose their own answers to a given question. The *conférences* even allowed speakers to propose their personal opinions, not merely stick to the arguments of authorities. This openness can be seen, for example, in the *ouverture* to the second volume, where Renaudot uses rhetorical appeals to summon the *conférenciers* and their muses: "Oui, venez hardiment les Muses & vous tous qui en faites profession. Venez ici apporter vos sentimens en toute liberté."[70] As Renaudot claims, all sentiments and opinions can be voiced at the Bureau d'Adresse in total liberty.

The *intendant* of the bureau deems it necessary to further insist on this – for him apparently fundamental – principle in the second volume of *Conférences*. Here, he

64 For a more elaborate analysis of this aspect, see chapter 5.
65 See Chang 2004, pp. 146–147.
66 See Lawn 1993, p. 16.
67 See vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 4.
68 Obviously, interested readers also needed the monetary means to buy the printed *Conférences*. Yet, like the *Gazette*, the less fortunate could probably access them at a kind of *cabinet de lecture*. Regarding this possibility in the case of the *Gazette*, see Solomon 1972, p. 120.
69 According to Traninger, the universities marked their difference through how they organised disputations. She speaks of a "quasi klandestine Organisationsstruktur, die durch den Gebrauch einer modifizierten Form der lateinischen Sprache, einen spezifischen Habitus, eine eigene Jurisdiktion und rituell organisierte Verhandlungs- und Expositionsprozesse von Wissen ihre Distinktion markiert" (Traninger 2007, p. 141).
70 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 3.

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invokes "[…] cette liberté publique donnée à tout homme d'honneur, de se produire & dire ce qu'il pense en ces Conférences reglées dans les bornes qu'elles se sont elles-mesmes prescrites […]."[71] Renaudot emphasises that participants should present what they *themselves* think.

In a disputation, on the other hand, there was no place for personal opinion, at least not on a functional level. While the arguments voiced could, accidentally, coincide with the disputant's personal beliefs,[72] disputation in itself was not focused on them. Regardless of personal convictions, everyone needed to stick to their assigned role. The *conférences*, in contrast, enabled a much more open exchange of ideas. The *conférenciers* no longer solely fulfilled a role in a highly formalised debate; they were supposed to personally identify with their position.[73] This structure meant that they should present their arguments in an assertive mode and no longer merely a disputative one.[74]

Yet this insistence on personal identification with the argument went hand in hand with a need to view it in an uninvolved manner. To prevent 'riots and pedantic insults', Renaudot wished to persuade the individual *conférencier* that he should be "nullement intéressé à soutenir ce qu'il avait mis en avant".[75] Indeed, he was in no way allowed to insist upon his opinion. Renaudot then proceeds to claim that "[…] l'avis une fois proposé était un fruit exposé à la Compagnie: de la propriété duquel aucun ne se devait plus piquer."[76] An opinion, once put forward, belonged to the company of *conférenciers*, and no one, from that moment on, could claim it as his property, defending it at all cost against other propositions.[77] Through this demand, Renaudot asked the *conférenciers* to adopt a disinterested stance vis-à-vis their contributions. The debates at the Bureau d'Adresse were not about winning an argument at all cost, as were disputations, but about proposing a variety of divergent opinions, which, in their comprehensive view, lead readers to the truth. All the *gens d'honneur* were invited to partake in this honourable task. Through the *conférenciers'* (supposed) abstention from Scholastic belligerence and the debates' lack of conclusion, the *conférences*, ultimately, aimed at enabling impartiality as a guiding principle.[78]

71 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 14.
72 For a discussion of this possibility see Mulsow 2007.
73 "It indicates a trend towards personally identifying with theses propounded, but then in turn exhibiting a disinterestedness that was interpreted as a sign of modest, civility, and openness for compromise" (Traninger 2014b, p. 59).
74 See Stader/Traninger 2016, p. 48.
75 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.
76 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.
77 See Traninger 2014b, p. 59.
78 See ibid., pp. 58–59. For an extensive study of the emergence of impartiality in a variety of fields and texts, see Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger's *The Emergence of Impartiality* (2014). On impartiality as a principle of journalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Berns 1976 and 2011.

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Yet even though they had the possibility to express personal opinions, the *conférenciers* often could not realise the potential for freedom that Renaudot facilitated. For example, the *Conférences* that pay particular attention to the roles of men and women show how firmly the *conférenciers* remained rooted in traditional modes of debate. These debates are inscribed into the tradition of *querelle des femmes* argumentation. Here, the participants make use of rhetorical arguments that, in their radicality, seem to have little to do with their personal beliefs. I focus on this more closely in the case study in chapter 6. What is important at this point, however, is the fact that the *conférenciers*, in theory, had the possibility to step outside their rhetorical or dialectical functions – but seemingly did not very often manage to do so. They appear to have held on to the modes of argumentation they knew from the system in which they were educated, and could not simply jettison them.

At a structural level, this recourse to traditional practices is particularly visible when looking at the way the *conférenciers* define and divide the terms of the question at discussion. Debaters often formulate precise definitions and establish complicated differentiations between various meanings of a single term. They aim at developing distinctions until the question can be solved. Similarly, the Scholastics often concerned themselves with matters of the logic of language,[79] which later brought accusations of being pedantic in their analysis of concepts (*Begriffsanalyse*).[80]

Like disputants, the *conférenciers* try to accurately define the terms they use in their argumentation. This can be seen in practically all questions they discussed, but let us take as an example their treatment of "Des causes de la contagion".[81] The third speaker introduces his argument with the following clear-cut definition: "La contagion est la communication d'une mesme maladie d'un corps en un autre […]."[82] Similarly, the first speaker in "Du sommeil, & quelle doit estre sa durée"[83] starts his argument with the statement: "Comme la nature est le principe du mouvement, elle l'est aussi du repos & du sommeil, qui est la cessation des actions de l'animal, auquel seul il a esté donné, pource qu'il n'y a que lui qui se lasse dans ses operations".[84] I could cite countless examples such as these. In fact, randomly flipping open a volume of *Conférences* and reading any few lines should soon uncover a definition. Through the practice of clearly defining their terms, the *conférenciers* aim to establish that they all speak about the same problem, thereby rendering their arguments comparable. This brings to mind the Scholastics' command to always stick to the *status controversiae*, the contentious point of a disputation.[85] In a disputation, *opponens* as well as *respondens* repeated the *status con-*

79 See Grabmann 1911, p. 27.
80 See Grabmann 1909, p. 29.
81 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 98.I, pp. 821–838.
82 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 98.I, p. 824.
83 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 101.I, pp. 1–9.
84 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 101.I, p. 1.
85 Regarding the importance of the *status controversiae*, see Marti 1994, p. 867.

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troversiae on various occasions,[86] thereby ensuring that they firmly sticked to the disputed thesis.[87]

To arrive at a conclusion for their individual arguments, the *conférenciers* also often employ distinctions. *Distinctio* as a method was an important tool in disputation and was frequently employed by the Scholastics (and their forefathers).[88] Examples for this in the *Conférences* are, again, manifold. The first speaker in the *Conférence* on "De la coustume",[89] for example, proposes a distinction between written law and customary law before making his case:

> Sur le second poinct, il fut dit: Que le droit se divise en escrit & non escrit: le premier sont les loix: le second est la coustume; laquelle est un droit usité de longue main, establi peu à peu du gré d'un chacun, & approuvé par un consentement tacite de tout le peuple.[90]

But the *conférenciers*' distinctions can also be more complex than that. Reading the *Conférences*, one sometimes encounters statements in which a speaker claims that a term must be divided into two, three, or more sub-parts. Concerning "Des Eunuques",[91] the debate starts with the distinction of three types of eunuchs: "Sur le second poinct, il fut dit, Que les Canons font de trois sortes d'Eunuques, qu'ils appellent de nature, de fait, ou de volonté […] dont les uns naissent tels, les autres le sont faits par les hommes. & les derniers se font Eunuques pour le Royaume des Cieux."[92] According to the speakers, these different 'sorts' of eunuchs cannot merely be lumped together – they must all be discussed individually.

Indeed, when speakers find that their peers are intermingling terms and definitions better treated separately, they occasionally request more thorough distinctions. Thus, the fourth speaker in the *Conférence* on "De l'apparition des esprits, ou phantosmes",[93] not content with the way those before him were arguing, claims "Qu'il falloit bien distinguer entre la vision & l'aparition, ou phantôme".[94]

Definitions naturally often go hand in hand with distinctions – as happens, for example, in the *Conférence* on "Pourquoy l'appetit sensitif domine sur la raison."[95] The first speaker covers all the bases from the beginning. He first defines 'appetite' and then distinguishes three different kinds thereof – one natural, one sensitive, and one reasonable:

86 See Gierl 2004, p. 424.
87 See Gierl 2001, p. 46.
88 See Weijers 2013, p. 144.
89 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 63.II, pp. 215–224.
90 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 63.II, p. 215.
91 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 99.II, pp. 817–824.
92 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 99.II, p. 817.
93 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 79.II, pp. 474–480.
94 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 79.II, p. 478.
95 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 78.I, pp. 449–459.

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> L'Appetit est une inclination de chaque chose à son bien. Il y en a de trois sortes dans l'homme. Le premier, naturel, qui se trouve non seulement és plantes & qui leur fait chercher leur nourriture: mais aussi és choses inanimées […]. Le second est sensitif, commun à l'homme & à la beste […]. Le troisiesme est raisonnable, & s'appelle volonté, qui a besoin des deux autres appetits dont elle est la maistresse […].[96]

All the foregoing shows that disputation and Scholastic ways of arguing, on the whole, remained an important infuence on the way knowledge was negotiated in the *conférences*. While the meetings of Renaudot's debating circle were certainly not organised in the manner of disputations, we can nevertheless observe frequent similarities in the way individual speakers argued. This style of debate suggests we cannot always equate the solutions the speakers propose with their personal opinions. It is doubtless possible that they voiced what they really thought on some occasions, especially as Renaudot explicitly called for them to do so, but this likely was not always the case. The disputation's standard of debate – the speaker's differentiation between his assigned position and his personal conviction – certainly remained firmly on the *conférenciers*' intellectual horizon.

4.2 Blurring the Boundaries between Orality and Print: Declamation

Another important backdrop against which the *conférences* constituted themselves is declamation. While it might not be immediately evident, it is in fact the *conférenciers* themselves who firmly place the *conférences* in the tradition of declamation. In one session treating the *conférences*'s use as a teaching method, one speaker claims they must be seen as an upgraded, contemporary equivalent to declamation. Like declamation, the *conférences* are placed between the lectern and the bar: "[…] entre lesquelles, la chaire ou le barreau, comme jadis les declamations, elle [i.e., la conférence] est aujourd'huy un moyen unissant agréablement ces deux extremitez ensemble […]."[97] He describes both declamation and the *conférences* as a useful intermediate between *theory*, embodied by the master's lectern, and *practice*, represented by the bar (at court). In the *conférences*, participants not only heard various opinions regarding a given question, they also learned how to present their own case in a civilised manner, like in declamation.[98] According to this *conférencier*, such a practice stands in sharp contrast to the rudeness of the terms used in the university debates. The speaker appears to display a humanistic preference for rhetoric (which he equates with declamation) over dialectic (wich he equates with disputation):

96 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 78.I, pp. 449–450.
97 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 839.
98 See vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 839–840.

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> […] ceux qui sortent fraischement des estudes se trouvans incapables de la frequentation de la Cour & des autres lieux ou ils doivent paroistre. Incapacité qui provient de la rudesse des termes de l'Escole & de l'hmeur [*sic*] opiniastre que les Escoliers contractent ordinairement par la dispute, où ils apprennent ne céder jamais: l'une des plus desobligeantes qualitez & la plus inepte en compagnie qu'un jeune homme y puisse apporter. Et il void icy au contraire que chacun y expose son advis en toutes douceur, se contentant d'accompagner ses raisons d'un ton de voix d'un geste convenable pour en remettre la decision aux suffrages muets de la compagnie.[99]

Young men at the schools learn the art – or, in the opinion of the speaker, get into the bad habit – of disputation. Through this method, they become incapable of arguing in a convincing but cultured manner. Only declamation and the *conférences* offer an antidote to the barbarity of disputation, he suggests. As we have seen above, this was not necessarily the case in practice, but the *conférencier* speaking here seems convinced enough.

Another speaker discusses the validity of speculative argumentation outside the sphere of the schools and their protective barriers. He claims two different kinds of truths exist: one demonstrative, and one merely probable. In his statement, he differentiates between ideas that can be verified and are unquestionably true and plausible opinions that can only ever be treated as probabilities, as it is impossible to prove them in a definite manner.

> Le second dit: Qu'y ayant deux sortes de veritez, l'une demonstrative, & l'autre probable: comme celuy là auroit grand tort qui revoqueroit en doute une demonstration; ainsi ne meriteroit pas peu de blasme celuy qui se voudroit faire croire magistralemen en une matiere problematique, telles que le sont la pluspart des propositions naturelles & morales […].[100]

The contribution does not encompass any further explanation of the terms used, but *vérité demonstrative* most certainly would be something such as the sum of angles in a triangle, which can be calculated and follows ever-unchanging rules.[101] In cases where a proposition's truth is demonstrable, any debate would be improper. Yet vast amounts of other questions, notably concerning natural and moral-philosophical topics, can and should be discussed at the Bureau d'Adresse, as the *conférencier* points out. In short, where there is evidence for *dubia*, the *conférenciers*'

99 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, pp. 839–840.
100 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 285, p. 835.
101 On the triangle's sum of angles (180°) as *the* criterion which identifies it as a triangle, see Schmitt 2003, pp. 407–415.

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speculation is appropriate.[102] Any question of theology, as I have already shown, is evidently exempt from discussion.[103] The truth of faith remains untouchable.

Crucially, the speaker's evoking of *vérité démonstrative* and *vérité probable* does not posit a differentiation between dialectical and rhetorical reasoning, as both dialectic and rhetoric deal with probable opinions.[104] Yet while dialectic is concerned with finding correct syllogisms, rhetoric simply tries to find the means to persuade.[105] Furthermore, while a rhetorical argument can emanate from any probable opinion which might convince the audience,[106] a dialectical argument must be based on the opinion of the greatest number of or the most important experts.[107]

The humanists, at any rate, preferred (classical) rhetoric over dialectic. They valued its (perceived) more civilised proceedings while condemning the rigid terms of the dialectical syllogism.[108] Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the humanists were in favour of the rhetorical genre of declamation, both for educational purposes and as a vessel for their own reasonings. Notably, humanist rhetoric in general, and declamation in particular, were no longer identical to what they had been in antiquity.[109] As society changed, the role eloquence could play in the everyday life of a citizen varied considerably between ancient Greece or Rome and Renaissance European states. While the courts and councils of antiquity actually employed judicial, deliberative, and demonstrative speech, the Renaissance no longer saw many such situations. Real public speaking – in the sense of an oral performance in front of an audience – was mostly limited to a small number of ceremonial occasions. Consequently, the importance of the *genus demonstrativum* and its speech of praise and blame increased, while the *genus iudicativum* (designed for

102 *Dubia* are "subjects on which the truth has not yet been indisputably established" (Van der Poel 2005a, p. 3).

103 See my discussion of the *conférences*' rules in chapter 3.

104 See Moos 2000, p. 150. According to Aristotle, dialectical reasoning is the ability to "reason from generally accepted opinions about any problem set before us" (Aristotle, *Top.* I. 100a18, transl. Tredennick and Foster 1960, p. 273).

105 "It is further evident that it belongs to Rhetoric to discover the real and apparent means of persuasion, just as it belongs to Dialectic to discover the real and apparent syllogism" (Aristotle, *Rhet.* I. 1355b14, transl. Freese 1926, p. 13).

106 See Traninger's discussion of rhetorical and dialectical proofs in Traninger 2012, p. 57.

107 "Reasoning is dialectical which reasons from generally accepted opinions. […] Generally accepted opinions, on the other hand, are those which commend themselves to all or to the majority or to the wise – that is, to all of the wise or to the majority or to the most famous and distinguished of them" (Aristotle, *Top.* I. 100a30–b25, transl. Tredennick and Foster 1960, p. 273).

108 See Hinz 2005, pp. 1,505 and 1,510. Or, as Chang (2004, p. 159) puts it: "For them [i.e., the humanists], classical rhetoric represented 'affective and civilizing persuasion', forming a contrast to the 'syllogistic and uncivil' debates characteristic of disputation."

109 Notably, humanist rhetoric, against the opinion of Boethius and following Cicero, can deal with both hypotheses and theses; it is not reduced to dealing with special cases. See Van der Poel 1989, p. 473, and 2005a, p. 4. For a more detailed analysis, see the discussion of thesis and hypothesis in Veit 2009.

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court) and the *genus deliberativum* (designed for councils) were less immediately relevant to Renaissance society.[110]

All in all, declamation (with the exception of the educational context) essentially lost its oral aspect in the Renaissance, evolving into a predominantly written genre.[111] The humanists used it as a way of publishing potentially polemical arguments, as is discussed in more detail in the ensuing paragraphs. In the humanists' conception of the genre, the writings of Cicero and Quintilian as well as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (falsely ascribed to Cicero) played an important role. These texts, many of which had been rediscovered in Quattrocento Italy,[112] argued for the decisive position that orators held in society as "responsible thinkers at the intellectual forefront of society".[113] This idea probably also appealed to the *conférencier* inscribing the *conférences* into the tradition of declamation without further explaining the reasons for this manoeuvre.

Yet declamation was influential not only when it comes to the question of how the *conférenciers* saw themselves but also at a structural level. The speakers often cast their arguments, as we will see, in a manner resembling little declamations. This approach reveals itself repeatedly when one inspects the questions discussed at the Bureau d'Adresse. Numerous questions were asked in a manner inciting the speakers to pick one of two possible sides.[114] They then needed to make their case so as to convince their audience, as my examples will show. But, first, it is crucial to summarise those aspects in the history of declamation important to our consideration of the *Conférences*. As we will see, it is not only Early Modern declamation, the more obvious candidate, but also antique declamation which plays its part in the following analysis of the *Conférences*.

In antiquity, declamation was an eminent genre of oral discourse. According to the classicist Robert Kaster, Roman declamation dates back to the early first century BC at least.[115] Its two sub-types, *controversia* and *suasoria*, played a crucial role in Roman education. *Controversiae* functioned like pleas in court, where the

110 See Van der Poel 2017, p. 273.

111 See Van der Poel's discussion of declamations written to be delivered and declamations solely written for print in ibid., pp. 274–286.

112 See ibid., p. 273. See also Van der Poel's explanations in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*: "Im 14. Jh. werden beträchtliche Teile von Ciceros Korrespondenz und einige seiner Reden wiedergefunden, 1421 werden in Lodi bei Mailand ein lückenloses Manuskript von 'De oratore' sowie sein 'Orator' und 'Brutus' wiederentdeckt. 1416 wird in St. Gallen der vollständige Text von Quintilians 'Institutio oratoria' wiedergefunden. Die Humanisten lesen und kommentieren diese Texte mit Begeisterung. Sie nehmen großen Einfluß auf ihr Denken über die Beredsamkeit. Neben den lateinischen Texten werden im Westen auch antike griechische Rhetorikschriften allmählich bekannt. Einflußreich werden darunter vor allem Aristoteles' 'Rhetorik' und die rhetorischen Abhandlungen des Hermogenes" (Van der Poel 2005b, p. 1,460).

113 Van der Poel 2005a, p. 1.

114 See chapter 3, pp. 72–73.

115 See Kaster 2001, p. 318. However, exercises resembling declamations were practised as early as the fifth century in Greece, as Anthony Corbeill argues. See Corbeill 2007, p. 71.

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student of declamation could choose which side of a case to argue.[116] *Suasoriae* were conceived of as made-up counselling speeches to famous historical figures, such as Hannibal or Alexander.[117] Both *controversia* and *suasoria* were fundamentally fictionalised and separated from the political reality of the Roman state.[118] Regarding *controversia*, even fictional laws were made up solely for the purposes of declamation.[119] One example is declamation's *lex raptarum*, which allowed a raped woman to choose between marrying her rapist without a dowry or condemning him to death, as Kaster shows. No equivalent to this rule can be found in actual Roman law.[120] This also explains the objections declamation often provoked: How were made-up situations and invented laws supposed to prepare future orators for their role in Roman politics?[121]

Nevertheless, and even if it might seem counterintuitive at first glance, declamations actually served as a means to rehearse Roman society's ethical values and to stabilise Roman identity.[122] As Roman literature and rhetoric scholar W. Martin Bloomer argues, declamation "allowed a treatment of themes and problems at the heart of what it was to be a roman citizen".[123] While the topics of declamation might seem eccentric – mostly concerned with pirates, tyrants, poisonous stepmothers, terrible conflicts between fathers and sons, and rape – the arguments used in these cases were completely conventional, as Kaster points out.[124] Ultimately, declamation aimed at getting its students accustomed to approved Roman values,[125] thereby fulfilling its goal of enabling social reproduction.[126] Crucially, declamation "naturalized the speaking rights of the freeborn male elite", as Bloomer puts it:[127] while the students learned to plead for slaves and women, those *others* did not have any right to speak for themselves.[128] Through the exercise of declamation, the social hierarchy was kept in place and even reinforced.[129]

Its direct link to social reproduction explains declamation's centrality in education. Yet it is nevertheless erroneous to believe that it functioned solely as a train-

116 See Kaster 2001, p. 319.
117 See Bloomer 2007, p. 298.
118 See Kaster 2001, p. 323. See also Bloomer 2007, p. 304.
119 See Kaster 2001, p. 319.
120 See ibid., pp. 328–329.
121 See ibid., p. 323.
122 See Traninger 2012, p. 119.
123 Bloomer 2007, p. 298. According to Gunderson, "we find in declamation a constant engagement with the 'rules' of Romanness, an endless tracing of the contours of the licit and the illicit" (Gunderson 2003, p. 6).
124 See Kaster 2001, pp. 323–325.
125 See ibid., p. 325.
126 See Corbeill 2007, p. 69.
127 Bloomer 1997, p. 58.
128 See ibid., p. 71.
129 Similarly, men speaking for women in the *querelle des femmes* in general, and in the *Conférences* treating *querelle* topics in particular, can be seen as reinforcing their social superiority. In the *Conférences*, women do not get their own say: it is men alone who decide their fate. See chapter 6.

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ing activity for schoolboys. Declamation, from a certain point on, was likewise practised by adults and formed a genre in its own right.[130]

As historian of rhetoric Marc van der Poel has shown, declamation underwent considerable modifications in the Early Modern period.[131] It was one of the humanists' preferred genres,[132] but they reconfigured it to such an extent that it effectively became a completely new genre.[133] While Roman declamation mostly revolved around providing advice for historical figures and examining fictional cases, Early Modern declamation shifted focus to other topics. There are declamations such as Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium* (1511), which praise rather unworthy subjects like folly.[134] Others, like Lorenzo Valla's *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione* (1440), engage with more serious topics. In his declamation resembling a *controversia*, Valla examines the Donation of Constantin and declares that it must be considered a fake.[135] This claim definitely had the potential to antagonise the Catholic Church, but no strong reaction seems to have come Valla's way.[136] With his declamations, Erasmus was not that lucky. In his *Encomium matrimonii* (1518)[137] – the praise of marriage, composed in the style of a *suasoria*[138] – he gives advice to a young man and urges him to marry.[139] This declamation was heavily criticised by other men of the church such as Jan Briart of Ath and Josse Clichthove,[140] who did not think it appropriate for a monk (or anyone else, for that matter) to impugn church dogmas. They accused Erasmus of heresy.[141] Similarly, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim was attacked for his *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium* (1530), in which he challenges the validity of the human sciences and arts.[142] In the conflict with Clichthove, Erasmus resorted to claiming that he was not arguing

130 See François 1963, p. 515.
131 See Van der Poel 2007, pp. 128–131.
132 See Van der Poel 1989, p. 472.
133 See Traninger 2012, p. 121.
134 For a modern edition of the text, see Erasmus 1979. This is not to say that there were no mock *encomia* in antiquity. For a detailed analysis of the origins of satirical eulogy, see Tomarken 2014, pp. 3–27.
135 Valla himself styled his text an *oratio*; the term *declamatio* was applied by Ulrich von Hutten in 1518. Nevertheless, Valla constituted *De falso credita* according to declamatory principles, as Traninger has pointed out; see Traninger 2010a, pp. 165–166. Regarding the similarities between Valla's text and ancient *controversiae*, see ibid., pp. 176–179.
136 See Traninger 2012, p. 124.
137 For a modern edition, see Erasmus 1975. The praise of marriage first was published in 1518 in Louvain by Thierry Martens d'Alost, together with three other declamations by Erasmus. See Jean-Claude Margolin's introduction to the *Encomium matrimonii* in ibid., pp. 335–382, p. 335. It is very likely that Erasmus had composed it many years earlier; see ibid., pp. 337–338.
138 In the first edition, the text now known as *Encomium matrimonii* was published under the title *Declamatio in genere suasorio, de laude matrimonii*. See ibid., p. 336.
139 For a summary of the arguments proposed by Erasmus in favour of marriage, see Van der Poel 2000, pp. 214–220.
140 For a more detailed analysis of the actors and arguments involved in this quarrel, see Margolin's introduction to Erasmus 1975, pp. 335–382, pp. 370–372.
141 See Van der Poel 2000, p. 221.
142 See Van der Poel 1990, p. 179.

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from the position of a man of the church but as a philosopher (and rhetorician).[143] In a similar manner, Agrippa claimed that his declamation must be read as a rhetorical, not as a theological text.[144] Many critics have interpreted the proclaimed rhetorical nature of these texts, as well as the apologies voiced by their authors, as a sign they must be read either as satirical (in the case of paradoxical *encomia* such as the *Moriae Encomium*) or as mere rhetorical exercises.[145] In any case, they are rarely qualified as serious contributions to a debate.[146] Van der Poel, however, is certain that some Early Modern declamations, such as those proposed by Agrippa (*De incertitudine*) and Erasmus (*Encomium matrimonii*), should be viewed as serious philosophical arguments, which were indeed aimed at persuading their readers.[147]

Anita Traninger comes to a somewhat different conclusion. She argues that while ancient, oral declamation was always identifiable as a genre of suspended validity, this was no longer true for Early Modern declamation in its written form.[148] This transformation can be seen in the attacks both Erasmus and Agrippa faced. Through his use of declamation, Erasmus tried to claim a new "freedom of thinking and arguing"[149] for the written declamation of the early sixteenth century. Previously, freedoms such as this had been reserved for Scholastic disputations, in their oral and institutionally secluded form.[150] According to Traninger, Erasmus's aim was to establish a written format for the negotiation of knowledge (functionally) equivalent to disputation.[151]

Clearly, this proposal could not easily be accepted by theologians, the guardians of the university's corporate rights. Significantly, the declamations fuelling the conflict between humanists and theologians, which are of concern here, were no longer oral but printed. They thus crossed over into a much larger public sphere, and the university's members were unable to closely monitor them. The fact that humanist authors examined *dubia* and debatable questions in their written declamations potentially, therefore, constituted a dangerous act of blurring

143 See Traninger 2012, pp. 171–172. See also Sloane 1993, pp. 163–164. Between 1519 and 1532, Erasmus composed three apologies for the *Encomium matrimonii*. For more information concerning these apologies, see Van der Poel 2000, p. 221.

144 See Van der Poel 2005a, p. 7.

145 See Van der Poel 1989, p. 472.

146 See Van der Poel 2000, p. 179.

147 "Accordingly, when a humanist takes up the pen to write a discourse advertised explicitly as rhetorical (an oratio, declamation, encomium or another type of rhetorical argument), chances are he is offering his opinion on a matter he sees as relevant to all of society and on which he is presenting his view with particular emphatic assertion and conviction" (Van der Poel 2005a, p. 2).

148 "Während die antike Deklamation durch ihren Performanzcharakter und die Ausarbeitung von Argumenten im Hinblick auf fiktive Gesetze oder (ebenfalls manchmal fiktive) historische Situationen immer schon als Genre suspendierter Geltung abgesichert war, sind solche Signale für die schriftliche Deklamation als Gattung des theoretischen Diskurses in der Frühen Neuzeit weitaus schwieriger zu kommunizieren" (Traninger 2012, p. 197).

149 Traninger calls them "Freiräume des Denkens und Argumentierens" (ibid., p. 172).

150 See ibid., p. 161.

151 See ibid., p. 174.

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the boundaries (*Entgrenzung*), to follow the terminology of Martin Mulsow.[152] Mulsow uses this term not in the context of declamation but concerning the problems that could arise regarding the opponent's role in a disputation. The opponent, the personification of dissent, remained innocuous only if he strictly adhered to the rules of disputation that bound him to the 'inside' of the university. Danger arose when debates moved from the university's Latin into the vernacular, when the borders between disciplines such as philosophy and theology become weakend, and when the university's private sphere and the public sphere no longer remain strictly separated:

> Gefährlich konnte es daher immer dann werden, wenn Entgrenzungen vorgenommen wurden: sprachliche Transgression vom Latein in die Volkssprache, Entgrenzungen der Disziplinbereiche etwa von Philosophie und Theologie, und vor allem die Entgrenzung der Differenz von universitärer Privatheit und Öffentlichkeit.[153]

Yet Mulsow's considerations are relevant not only for Early Modern disputation but also for declamation. Clichthove, in his critique of the *Encomium matrimonii*, certainly felt that Erasmus had trespassed into a theological area where public discussion was not appropriate. Erasmus, on the other hand, purposefully overstepped those boundaries, as he aimed at redrawing disputation's freedoms of debate and discussion, to follow Traninger's argument.[154] Through this, Erasmus claimed greater freedom for what topics could be discussed and what arguments put into question in declamation.

So why is all of this important when it comes to the *Conférences*? My discussion of antique declamation has shown that its rhetorical setting was totally evident: the cases discussed and positions taken can easily be identified as rhetorical. The focus lay on taking all kinds of different positions which, structurally, did not need to overlap with the declamator's personal opinion. Regarding Early Modern declamation, the case is much more complex, as some scholars describe it as a genre without consequence while others see it as a vehicle for thoroughly personal criticism. Yet neither position quite does Early Modern declamation justice. To get a better hold of it, I find Mulsow's idea of the delimited sphere of debate extremely useful. Applied to Early Modern declamations such as those discussed in the previous paragraphs, it highlights that their focus lay more on the possibilities for discussion itself and not so much on its content.[155] What was at stake was the redrawing of the bound-

152 Mulsow 2007, p. 207.

153 Ibid.

154 Van der Poel, in one of his articles, seems to come to a similar conclusion: "His [Erasmus's] point is that if it is permissible in theological *disputationes* to say controversial and heretical things because *disputationes* are only debates, then this must also be allowed in rhetorical exercises" (Van der Poel 2000, p. 225). However, in other articles, he insists that the humanists used declamation to present their personal opinion. See Van der Poel 2005a, p. 2.

155 Van der Poel differentiates between 'classicist' and 'modernist' rhetorical texts in the Renaissance. While some declamations must be considered "completely modern", in that they

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aries of what could be debated and what was considered heretic, moving certain topics from inside the university out into a larger public sphere.[156]

As a consequence of declamation's rhetorical nature, not all positions taken in declamations can be unequivocally attributed to their authors. Cases such as the *Moriae Encomium* intentionally defy any straightforward reading.[157] Other examples might be less treacherous, but they nevertheless remain inscribed in a rhetorical context. Yet this, in turn, does not mean that the argumentation found in declamation should not be taken seriously.[158] Declamations in the style of Erasmus's certainly raise points of serious criticism. Nevertheless, they take place in a paradoxical setting, or else in a situation of *in utramque partem* discussion, where two sides of a question are equally examined. In this context, it seems impossible to discern an author's 'real' opinion; yet what they truly think is probably not even that important. What is crucial is the freedom to argue about such questions in a more or less public environment, as was the case with printed declamations.

Moral-philosophical arguments in the *Conférences*, in my opinion, are similarly unattributable to their authors, especially when it comes to the discussion of *querelle des femmes* topics.[159] Furthermore, what is most interesting regarding the *Conférences* in general is not their content but their form.

In the *Conférences*, interesting structural similarities to declamation become more distinctly apparent when we analyse the contributions of individual speakers. In the case of moral-philosophical questions, it makes sense to read certain contributions to the *Conférences* as little declamations. In many cases, contributions to such questions effectively take the form of short speeches of praise or blame. Indeed, the structure of query for many moral-philosophical questions makes it almost impossible to answer in any other manner. Examples for such questions include "Quel est le plus necessaire à un Estat, la recompense, ou la peine"[160] and "Quel est le plus puissant de l'amour ou de la haine."[161] In such cases, the participants simply needed to decide which side they chose and then convince others with their little speech. Only on extremely rare occasions did they refuse to pick a side.[162]

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have "recovered, reshaped and reused the classical texts", others do not (Van der Poel 2007, pp. 119–129).

156 The use of Latin still predominantly governed this public sphere, so it evidently cannot be considered a public sphere in today's conception of the term.

157 See Relihan 2017, p. 340.

158 "Charakteristisch ist, dass unter diesem Gattungsvorzeichen Attacken und Polemiken vorgetragen werden, die zweifellos von gesellschafts- oder wissenschaftspolitischer Relevanz sind, ohne dass sie aber eine unmittelbare lebensweltliche Konsequenz hätten" (Traninger 2010b, p. 633).

159 See chapter 6.

160 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 13.II, pp. 229–236.

161 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 16.II, pp. 284–293.

162 See my discussion of the *noblesse* debate in chapter 6.

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Like Early Modern declamations in the style of Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium*, some of the *conférenciers* seem to praise paradoxical subjects. We can see this especially in the *Conférences* related to the *querelle des femmes*, where certain *conférenciers* defend the superiority of women with surprising fervour. Yet, as I argue in chapter 6 of this study, this stance cannot invariably stand as their personal opinion. Overall, speakers' contributions in the style of praise and blame follow patterns of rhetorical knowledge negotiation and must be viewed as *in utramque partem* argumentation. A good orator should be able to defend either side of a question. That evidently also includes the more improbable one.[163]

Another – and in a sense probably the most obvious – parallel between declamation and the *Conférences* at a textual level becomes visible when comparing the both of them with disputation. While disputation always sees the decision of the disputed topic through the *magister*'s *determinatio*, declamation does something else: it transfers the decision to the reader. The *Conférences* also work in this manner. There is no institution or institutionalised function deciding which opinion is the best one. The readers (or listeners) themselves need to reach a conclusion.

The *conférences* share certain characteristics not only with Early Modern declamation but also with its ancient predecessor. Like in ancient declamation, the *conférenciers*' opinions were originally voiced orally. Participants went to the Bureau d'Adresse and presented what they had devised since the last meeting. These contributions were written down and later printed by Renaudot and his clerks, who thereby transformed the oral contributions into writing. It is likely that certain *conférenciers* did in fact prepare their speeches in writing before giving them;[164] nevertheless, these speeches were devised for a situation of oral communication. Early Modern declamation, on the other hand, was a written genre from the very beginning. It almost entirely lacked the possibility for oral delivery.[165]

While similiarities exist, the correspondence between declamation and the *conférences* only goes so far. In declamation, one author or speaker tries to convince the public of his case; the *conférences* assembled a variety of such cases. Altogether, the *conférences* – a potpourri of opinions – resembled a sort of dialogical interaction. Participants regularly referred to the contributions made before them and often refuted them to strengthen their own arguments.[166] While authors of declamations often aim at refuting objections they anticipate straight away, only one

163 This is not applicable to medical discussions (see chapter 7). *In utramque partem* debate was forbidden to Early Modern physicians. See Maclean 2002, p. 104.

164 See chapter 5.

165 See Van der Poel 2007, p. 128. This characteristic, again, does not apply to school declamation, which retained its oral part. A number of speeches of praise were certainly presented orally, which does not preclude declamation from becoming transformed into a fundamentally written genre in the Early Modern period.

166 One notable exception to this rule are contributions to the *Conférences* sent in via letter. See chapter 5.

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voice is heard in their texts. Declamation, quite contrary to the *conférences*, is a fundamentally monological genre.[167]

Overall, I have shown that not only Renaudot in his introductions, but also the *conférenciers* themselves, seemed to have been concerned with a search for origins and predecessors for the *conférences.* In comparing them with already established forms of knowledge negotiation, they presented their endeavour as a legitimate method in the search for truth. The paragraphs I have analysed above suggest that speaking at the *conférences* was conceived as a practice that paralleled declaiming.

The printed *Conférences* also share a number of characteristics with declamation at a structural level. In both, judgement transfers to the reader and no longer belongs to an institutionalised function, as it does in disputation. The way questions are posed often forces the *conférenciers* to pick one side and to argue their part in a convincing manner – a way of arguing that sits at the heart of declamation. Similar to certain ancient and Early Modern declamations, the *Conférences*, in some cases, see the speakers praise rather unlikely subjects. Yet in contrast to declamations in general – in its completely monological format – the *Conférences* are a dialogical compilation of various opinions. It is individual contributions and not the *Conférences* as a whole that, in certain cases, resemble short declamations in the mode of praise and blame. My analysis highlights that the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse did not solely aim at providing information. Rather, their link to declamation put focus on the activity of the *conférenciers* and the form their debates took, not merely on the arguments' content.

4.3 A Plurivocal Imagination: Dialogue

Between disputation, declamation, and dialogue, the latter's connection to the *conférences* appears to be the most obvious. Just as with any other form of co-present negotiation of knowledge at academies, societies, or the like, the *conférences* functioned dialogically: they were an interplay between various speakers and their divergent opinions. In 1549, the printer and lexicographer Robert Estienne, in his *Dictionnaire francois-latin*, described dialogue as a "livre ou plusieurs devisent ensemble",[168] a definition which could readily apply to the *comptes rendus* of Renaudot's circle. After all, the printed *Conférences* are books that literally hold together opinions that the various *conférenciers* exchanged at the Bureau d'Adresse. In a similar manner, the praise of dialogue the humanist Leonardo Bruni has one of the characters declare in his *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* (1405–1406) would not seem inaccurate in describing the *conférences*:

> Nam quid est, per deos immortales, quod ad res subtiles cognoscendas atque discutiendas plus valere possit quam disputatio, ubi rem in medio positam ve-

167 See Traninger 2012, p. 198.
168 Estienne 1549, "Dialogue", p. 189.

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> lut oculi plures undique speculantur, ut in ea nihil sit quod subterfugere, nihil quod latere, nihil quod valeat omnium frustrari intuitum?[169]

In her translation, Virginia Cox, a scholar of Early Modern Italian literature, culture, and history, renders the Latin passage in the following manner:

> By the immortal gods, what is there more valuable than disputation in helping us to grasp and examine difficult ideas? It is as if an object were placed centre stage and observed by many eyes, so that no aspect of it can escape them, or hide from them, or deceive the gaze of all.[170]

Cox's very literal translation of this passage – proposing 'disputation' for the Latin 'disputatio'– potentially obscures what Bruni wishes to express (especially in light of my analysis of disputation above). Crucially, Bruni does not refer here to Scholastic disputation but to a less formalised form of dialogic enquiry. Cox is obviously aware of overlaps in the use of the terms 'disputation', 'discussion', and 'debate' in the Renaissance and Early Modern period but does not comment on it. In his translation of the same passage, the classicist David Marsh renders 'disputatio' as 'discussion'.[171] Moreover, he explicitly states that Bruni "invokes the Ciceronian notion of disputation as a free discussion rather than a Scholastic dispute."[172]

The problematic translation of this passage leads to an important observation: both dialogue and disputation are based on dialectics.[173] Dialogue, then, also provides a rhetorical elaboration of the materials discussed and furthermore encompasses a poetic element. In the words of the humanist Carlo Sigonio, in his *De dialogo liber* (1562), dialogue is equally shaped by the three arts of poetry, rhetoric, and dialectics: "Tres enim sunt artes quarum praeceptis ac institutis dialogus informatur, nemqe poetarum, oratorum et dialecticorum."[174] Disputation, in its Scholastic implementation, depends on dialectics and rhetoric,[175] yet it relies on a highly formalised and rigid language that certainly does not aim at poetic expression.[176]

169 Bruni 1994 [1405–06], pp. 237–238.
170 Cox 2017, p. 301.
171 Marsh's full translation reads: "What, by the immortal gods, could be of greater value than discussion in examining and investigating subtle questions? For in discussion, the topic is placed in the open and every aspect of it examined as if visually, so that nothing can escape our notice, nothing pass unseen, nothing deceive the gaze of all" (Marsh 1980, p. 24).
172 Ibid., p. 5.
173 Dialectical arguing between proponent and opponent figures as a basis for the writing of dialogues, as Hempfer argues: "Zu einer der zentralen Grundlagen des 'dialogum scribere' wird hier ganz explizit das dialektische Gespräch, der argumentative Agon zwischen Proponent und Opponent" (Hempfer 2013, p. 506). For a discussion of dialogue's dialectical origins, see Hempfer 2004, especially pp. 67–74.
174 Sigonio 1993 [1562], p. 15. For an analysis of Sigonio's theory of dialogue, see Gilman 1993, pp. 29–54.
175 See the first part of this chapter.
176 As Marti points out, disputation could – language-wise – theoretically also proceed in a less rigid manner. Yet, at least in Scholasticism, it did not. See Marti 1994, p. 868.

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Leaving behind the subtleties of translation, what is compelling about Bruni's characterisation of dialogue is the image of various eyes intensively examining the same object placed in their midst. The *conférenciers*' practice – their collective examinations of the questions posed at their meetings – seems very similar. Ultimately, the *conférenciers* provide a multiplicity of points of view regarding the same matter. However, and regardless of various cogent parallels between them, dialogue as a literary genre and the printed *Conférences* really do function differently, as I will show in the following passages.

Historically, dialogue – an exceedingly multifaceted genre in the times of Renaudot[177] – dates back to precursors in antiquity such as Plato, Cicero, and Lucian.[178] Lucian served as a forefather for comic, obviously fantastical dialogue. Plato and Cicero (and those who later adhered to their model), on the other hand, placed greater value on sustaining the fiction of dialogue – the fantasy that it is merely a record of a real conversation. Therefore, the settings for their dialogues aim at evoking authenticity, and real historical people often appear as speakers in them.[179] Yet whereas Cicero provides scrupulous descriptions of his dialogues' historical settings, Plato "throws us airily *in medias res*", as Cox argues.[180] Whereas Greek dialogue is more interested in the opposition of doctrines, Roman dialogue opposes great men and their authority to each other.[181]

It is a well-known, yet oversimplified, commonplace to invoke the dogmatic, 'monological' Middle Ages in comparison to the more open and 'dialogical' Renaissance.[182] That said, it is also now commonplace to refute this notion.[183] Yet mentioning it allows me to point out that this chapter's focus on the models of dialogue developed in antiquity and their later implementations is not meant to imply that dialogue as a literary form of expression was discontinued in the Middle Ages. What did happen, though, is that the increased interest in antique sources in the Renaissance made the aforementioned texts of Plato, Lucian, and others accessible as examples for contemporary authors and enhanced the commitment to dialogue as a literary form.[184] Consequently, we can indeed characterise the

177 For an analysis of dialogue in the seventeenth century, see Cazanave 2007. I also discuss this in more detail in the ensuing paragraphs.
178 See Heitsch 2016, p. IX. See also Cox 1992, p. 10.
179 See Cox 1992, pp. 10–12.
180 Ibid., p. 12.
181 Pierre Grimal in ibid., p. 12.
182 This characterisation originates from Rudolf Hirzel: "Die geschlossene Weltanschauung des Mittelalters musste gebrochen werden damit auch in weiteren Kreisen des Volkes das Reden und Denken der Einzelnen sich wieder frei bewegen lernte, eine edlere höheren Interessen dienende Geselligkeit musste sich bilden, wenn der Boden da sein sollte auf dem allein der Dialog gedeihen konnte. Diese neue Zeit brach mit der Renaissance an, die den Dialog wieder aus dem Poetenhimmel auf die Erde, aus der Rüstkammer der Rhetorik an die frische Luft des Lebens brachte" (Hirzel 1895, vol. 2, p. 385).
183 For a discussion of this dichotomy, see, for example, Cox 2017, p. 290, or Häsner 2002, pp. 118–119.
184 See Cox 2017, pp. 289–290.

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Renaissance as a time of revival and re-evaluation of antique dialogue, and a time when elaborated theorisations of the genre were presented.[185] This practice continued in the seventeenth century, where a '*mondanisation*' of dialogue took place, as Claire Cazanave points out – but more on this below.[186]

Renaissance dialogue was highly versatile and written in many languages. Originating in Latin,[187] it was soon also practised in Italian,[188] French, German, English, and many other tongues by acclaimed authors such as Petrarch, Valla, Erasmus, Machiavelli, Bembo, Sperone, More, and Elyot – to name only a few.[189]

Characters appearing in Renaissance dialogue include gods, heroes, famous men, animals, and personifications.[190] In many cases, living or recently deceased people whom the author knew take part in them, which means that most of the "famous figures of the Renaissance" can be encountered in the dialogues of their times.[191] Having well-known contemporaries perform as interlocutors certainly supports the fiction of a real conversation taking place behind the text. It also illustrates the manner in which dialogue could be used as a tool of "public relations".[192] Cox argues that "a mention in dialogue was a valuable token in the flourishing contemporary commerce in honour", as dialogue became the "ideal encomiastic genre" of the Renaissance.[193] Moreover, Bernd Häsner suggests that Renaissance dialogue explicitly performed a function of *community fashioning*.[194]

Similar to the various possibilities for its speakers, Renaissance dialogues were set in a variety of places. According to Ruxandra Vulcan, they frequently take place in a scene of promenade or travel, at an inn or in some dwelling where a group of friends meet to converse.[195] The setting mostly resembles a kind of *locus amoenus*, not clearly defined, which might be situated in the interior or the exterior of a lodging. In many cases, the setting is again designed to support the fiction of a real conversation that the dialogue pretends to merely render in writing.[196]

Overall, the forms of Renaissance dialogue are manifold, making it notoriously hard to characterise. It is a 'hybrid' genre, as Donald Gilman asserts.[197] Conse-

185 See Häsner 2004, p. 13.
186 See Cazanave 2007, p. 77.
187 See Cox 2017, p. 289.
188 According to Cox, Alberti's *Della famiglia* – the first dialogue in the Italian language – was composed as early as 1433–34. See ibid., p. 289.
189 See Burke 1989, p. 3.
190 See Cox 2017, p. 290.
191 Burke 1989, p. 4.
192 Cox 1992, p. 36.
193 Ibid.
194 See Häsner 2004, pp. 48–52. Häsner argues that Renaissance dialogues could be used by their authors to intervene in "Verteilungskämpfen um Einflußsphären, Diskurshoheiten und gesellschaftliche Rangpositionen […] indem sie individuelle und vor allem kollektive Identitäten inszenieren, konstruieren oder auch dekonstruieren" (ibid., p. 50).
195 See Vulcan 1996, pp. 63–66.
196 See Kushner 2004, pp. 134–135.
197 See Gilman 1993, p. 8.

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quently, critics have tried to approach it in a variety of ways. In his analysis of Italian Quattrocento dialogue, Marsh, for example, arranges his primary sources into four categories based on antique authors and their treatment of dialogue. The model exercising the most influence on the Italian humanists was Ciceronian dialogue, which puts much emphasis on narration and displays rhetorical arguments *in utramque partem*. Then there are those following the ideal of Plato's Socratic dialogues, with their dramatic, rather than narrative, structure. Furthermore, Marsh asserts the existence of convivial or symposaic dialogue, based on the model of Xenophon's *Symposium* and presenting learned discussions at a banquet or another festive occasion. The last form influencing the Quattrocento is Lucianic dialogue, with its comical and satirical elements. Heavily relying on invented speakers stemming from mythology or fables, it is the most dramatic and fantastic of the models described by Marsh.[198]

Peter Burke arranges his sources in a different manner. He divides Renaissance dialogues into the following four sub-types: "the catechism, the drama, the disputation, and the conversation."[199] For Burke, the 'catechism' is a type of dialogue where a teacher figure explains a topic to a student, who in turn contributes little other than a few questions and occasional acclamation. The 'drama' dialogue, on the other hand, concentrates not only on the spoken word but elaborately describes the surrounding situation. The 'disputation' is a type of dialogue where different speakers voice contrasting points of view, but one of them gains the upper hand, whereas the 'conversation' is less conclusive: various voices interact to form the meaning of the dialogue, which often is not easily discernible.[200]

Many of the characteristics mentioned above also remain valid for the dialogue in its seventeenth-century (French) form. It also frequently takes place in a *locus amoenus* setting and is often concerned with classical topics such as friendship, as Agnès Cousson explains.[201] Like earlier forms of dialogue, the seventeenth-century variant "puise sa source dans les dialogues de l'antiquité, essentiellement chez Platon, Cicéron et Lucien".[202] A new development was the emerging focus on *honnêteté*, which coincided with general developments in society, especially in the second half of the century.[203]

In her seminal study, *Le Dialogue à l'âge classique. Étude de la literature dialogique en France au XVII^e siècle* (2007), Cazanave – similar to Burke – detects four major types of dialogues for the seventeenth century: the '*catéchisme*', the '*dialogue lettré*',

198 See Marsh 1980, pp. 5–8.
199 Burke 1989, p. 3.
200 Ibid., pp. 3–4.
201 The model here is Cicero's *De Amicitia*; see Cousson 2018, p. 17.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.

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the '*conversation*', and the '*entretien*'.[204] While the *catéchisme* remained more or less stable, the other types changed and evolved in the time frame she studies.[205]

On many grounds, Cazanave's characterisation of the *catéchisme* corresponds to Burke's views as discussed above: it is a didactical form of dialogue[206] with a clear hierarchy between one participant in a position of authority and a student figure.[207] In most cases, it is concerned with the teaching of Christian doctrine and constitutes, according to Cazanave, the largest segment of dialogues published in the seventeenth century.[208]

The *dialogue lettré*, especially sought after in the middle decades of the century (approximately 1640–1660),[209] is much less dogmatic and allows a group of *hommes de lettres* to discuss various philosophical questions. It possesses an agonistic structure and opposes divergent opinions to each other.[210] Cazanave argues that the *dialogue lettré* directly connects to the academic movement. Like the academies' publications, these dialogues often decry the 'pedantic' practices of the universities.[211] This is an interesting parallel to Renaudot's earlier proclamations in the "Avis au lecteur" in the first volume of *Conférences*.[212] Cazanave even mentions Renaudot and the *Conférences* as an example of how the "professionnels des Lettres honnêtes gens" aim at demarcating their identities from those of the university members: the latter cannot claim for themselves the *ethos* of the new *hommes de lettres* as established in the academies.[213]

The preoccupation with *etiquette* and *honnêteté* is even more pronounced in the *conversation*, the third type of text studied in *Le Dialogue à l'âge classique*.[214] While the *conversation* as a form of dialogue was developed from the 1650s onwards, its "autonomie générique" must be situated in the period between 1670 and 1680.[215] In contrast to the *dialogue lettré*, a rather masculine affair, the *conversation* brings to-

204 For a detailed analysis, see Cazanave's four chapters on these four types in Cazanave 2007, pp. 97–451. She sets up her characterisation against Bernard Beugnot's assertion that all dialogues in the seventeenth century can be designated as *entretiens*. See Beugnot 1994, p. 143, cited in Cazanave 2007, p. 20. See also Beugnot 1976, p. 40.

205 According to Cazanave, the catechism "se maintient tout au long du XVII[e] siècle jusqu'aux Lumières" (2007, p. 121.).

206 See ibid., p. 97.

207 See ibid., p. 497.

208 See ibid., p. 107: "Sous le seul titre de 'catéchisme', environ quatre cents ouvrages sont recensés sur le catalogue informatique des imprimés de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France pour la période 1600–1699."

209 See ibid., p. 245.

210 See ibid., p. 498.

211 See ibid., pp. 168–182.

212 See vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

213 Cazanave 2007, p. 172.

214 As Cazanave bases her differentiation on contemporary denominations of texts, she observes that not all *conversations* necessarily are dialogues (this also counts for the *entretien*). The *conversation* "peut accueillir des récits, mais aussi des lettres ou des poèmes. Ses frontières avec la nouvelle, notamment, sont ambiguës" (2007, p. 255).

215 Ibid., p. 357.

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gether a mixed group of men and women *du monde*.[216] Together they discuss – and thereby establish – rules of conduct for polite society.[217] Their gallant exchanges are presented as "enjoué et naturel" and no longer bear any similarity to academic disputations.[218] Topics like geometry, jurisprudence, and anything else too serious (and therefore potentially pedantic) are excluded from the exchanges.[219] The knowledge debated in the *conversations* "ne se construit plus à l'aide d'autorités savantes et de références livresques, qui ne sont convoquées que de manière exceptionelle […]". Rather, the *conversation* is based on the "expérience individuelle à caractère mondaine" of the participants, as Cazanave explains.[220]

The fourth and last type of dialogue is the *entretien*. It evolved from the *conversation* and emerged as a genre between 1670 and 1680.[221] Other than the *conversation* and the *dialogue lettré*, both group endeavours amid which collective identities are formed, the *entretien* involves only two (male) participants, who have a relation of friendship.[222] Nevertheless, one of them often takes up a position of authority.[223] In a didactic manner,[224] the *entretien* appropriates topics forbidden in the *conversation* (sciences, etc.).[225] As Agnès Cousson puts it, the *entretien* combines "l'art de plaire et l'art de persuader".[226] According to Cazanave, it forms the endpoint of the developments that dialogue underwent in the long seventeenth century, "la forme qui marque l'aboutissement de l'évolution du genre du dialogue à l'âge classique".[227]

While certain overlaps exist between all the different characterisations of dialogue, Burke's and Cazanave's concepts possess the advantage of putting the focus less on the model a dialogue supposedly follows and more on the manner in which the interaction presented in it functions. Still, many dialogues oscillate between different forms – a reality that proves problematic for too rigid a characterisation.

Yet, as Klaus W. Hempfer emphasises, the frequent apologetic insistence on the 'hybridity' of dialogue in secondary literature results from the fact that the notion of 'dialogue' suffers from ambiguity. Hempfer therefore insists on the necessity to strictly distinguish between dialogue as a '*Redeform*', as a way of speaking (in literature), and dialogue as a literary genre.[228] Hempfer's assessment does not mean that the genre of dialogue must exclusively use the dialogical way of speaking

216 See ibid., p. 247.
217 According to Cazanave, the *conversation*'s "fonction sociale propre est d'instituer des modèles de comportement et de langage" (ibid., p. 498).
218 See ibid., p. 357.
219 See ibid., pp. 144–145.
220 Ibid., p. 281.
221 See ibid., p. 500.
222 See ibid., pp. 361–362.
223 See Cousson 2018, p. 24. One of the best known examples of this type of dialogue is Dominique Bouhours's *Les entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (1671).
224 See Cazanave 2007, p. 389.
225 See ibid., pp. 405–406.
226 Cousson 2018, p. 25.
227 Cazanave 2007, p. 450.
228 Hempfer 2010a, p. 9.

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without ever resorting to narrative, or that scenes of dialogue cannot be part of narrative genres.[229] The distinction emphasises the fact that not every text with dialogical elements should be considered to belong to the genre of dialogue. In a similar manner, but perhaps less emphatically, Gilman implies that dialogue is a genre but also a technique: a mode of presenting arguments in a text.[230]

In her study, Cox argues that Renaissance dialogue evolved from an originally 'dialogic' genre to a more 'monologic' one.[231] While earlier dialogues were discussions between equal speakers, the latter half of the Cinquecento increasingly saw a magisterial form of dialogue emerge, where one speaker figured as a teacher.[232] While Cox's study concentrates on the Italian Renaissance, Eva Kushner confirms her assessment for French dialogues dating from the same period.[233] Likewise following Cox, Véronique Montagne detects a "genre qui passe progressivement à un modèle monologique, fermé, lequel correspond […] à la logique ramiste".[234] With recourse to Walter J. Ong, Montagne ties this evolution back to developments in the conception of logic: Ong, in *Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* (1958), argues that Ramist logic resembles a monologue, whereas Agricola's earlier logic is closer to the dialogic form.[235] A monologic dialogue, for Michel Le Guern, is a dialogue that ends with a synthesis to which all its participants can agree, while an open or dialogic dialogue is one where the participants insist on their opinions and do not reach a conclusion.[236] Describing a dialogue as monologic or dialogic therefore refers to the degree of plurality in the opinions of the various characters participating in it, but it also alludes to the question of balance between the contributors.[237]

This characterisation of dialogue ultimately stems from Mikhail Bakhtin's differentiation between literary genres that are more 'monological' and those that are more 'dialogical'. In Bakhtin's opinion, only prose unfolds its full dialogic potential, whereas more poetic genres do not.[238] Yet, according to Hempfer, Bakhtin's concept of dialogism ultimately cannot be qualified as a productive tool for differentiating literary genres, as Bakhtin understands language as inherently dialogical:

> Eben dadurch, also, daß Bachtins 'Dialogizität' als generelle Eigenschaft von Sprache, ja als das Wesen der Sprache bestimmt, können hiermit nicht spezifische Erscheinungsweisen von Sprache – Gattungen, Textsorten, Diskurstypen usw. – ausdifferenziert werden.[239]

229 See ibid., p. 10.
230 See Gilman 1993, p. 14.
231 Cox 1992, p. 60.
232 See ibid., pp. 66–68.
233 See Kushner 2004, p. 14.
234 Montagne 2011, p. 803.
235 See ibid., p. 793.
236 Le Guern 1981, p. 144.
237 See Cox 1992, p. 66.
238 Bakhtin 1979, pp. 176–177.
239 Hempfer 2002, p. 13.

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As Hempfer shows, Bakhtin succeds in applying his concept to literary genres only because he is willing to accept that the notions of 'dialogical' and 'monological' become normatively charged.[240]

Moreover, the differentiation between 'dialogic' and 'monologic' dialogue should not detract from the fact that dialogue, in its essence, is always already a monologic genre. Dialogue had never featured any "pluralité réelle des voix", a characteristic which Montagne wishes to ascribe to it before it became more monological.[241] 'Real' plurality of voices is impossible, as dialogue can only ever simulate it. This is the case because dialogue merely *feigns* a situation of oral communication, as Hempfer stresses.[242] When Montagne argues that in the first kind of dialogue of her typology, which she describes as open and dialogic, "le dialogiste laisse parler les personnages, n'intervient pas […]",[243] she seems to pretend that the characters say what they want to say without the dialogue's author interfering.

With this kind of remark, she obscures the fact that, behind the dialogue, no actual oral interaction took place, which the dialogue's author has merely recorded in writing.[244] From the beginning, dialogue only ever *stages* oral communication.[245] It is the written orchestration of a plurality of views,[246] assembled by a single person. Overall, I therefore find it useful to stick to Cox's terms for analysing the problem discussed by Kushner and Montagne. Cox uses 'open' and 'closed' dialogue,[247] thereby bypassing complications resulting from characterising dialogue as 'dialogical' or 'monological'.

Despite the obvious parallels between them, this underlying monological nature clearly distinguishes dialogue from the *Conférences*. While Renaudot assembled the *Conférences*, they present an actual oral situation of communication, as Renaudot renders the speakers' voices in print more or less reliably.[248] Literary dialogue, on the other hand, creates such speakers at a textual level. Even though they appear similar when we merely look at their printed surfaces, the *Conférences* are actually much closer to oral communication than dialogue, which only presents a fiction of orality.

To feign orality and convince readers of the legitimacy of the various speakers' arguments, literary dialogue needs to resort to a more or less sophisticated

240 See ibid. For the whole discussion, see ibid., pp. 10–18.
241 Montagne 2011, p. 793.
242 See Hempfer 2010a, p. 11.
243 Montagne 2011, p. 803.
244 See Traninger 2012, p. 263.
245 See Hempfer 2010b, p. 77.
246 See Traninger 2012, p. 263.
247 See Cox 2017, p. 291. In an earlier monograph, Cox distinguishes between 'true' and 'false' dialogue – a differentiation that, evidently, also is problematic; see Cox 1992, p. 2. Le Guern also proposes a differentiation between 'closed' and 'open' dialogues; see Le Guern 1981, p. 144.
248 See my discussion of the editing process the *Conférences* underwent before being published and the possibility to send in written contributions in the next chapter.

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decorum.[249] This does not apply to dialogues following the Lucianic model, which do not pretend any verisimilitude.[250] Many non-satirical dialogues, however, start with a detailed description of a specific scene. In Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1528), for example, members of the Duke of Urbino's court assemble to discuss the perfect courtier. The author introduces the speakers' characters and their customs to substantiate their discussion. The first conversation in Dominique Bouhours's *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugene* (1671) begins with a description of the beach in Flanders where two friends are meeting to discuss their questions,[251] and later pays much attention to their relation to and friendship with each other.[252] The *Conférences*, on the other hand, abstain from any description of speakers or their surroundings. A close effigy of real oral communication, the *Conférences* do not wish to resort to any means other than reason to convince.[253] For us looking at the printed pages, the speakers' background, therefore, is mostly invisible, although it did exist once. Literary dialogue, on the other hand, invents its own context in order to appear plausible (if it wishes to do so).

Furthermore, what greatly differs between dialogue and the *Conférences* is the poetic element mentioned above, which is often decisive in dialogue. Torquato Tasso, in *Dell'arte del dialogo* (1585), portrays the author of Renaissance dialogue as being "quasi mezzo fra 'l poeta e 'l dialettico".[254] With a similar idea in mind, Carlo Sigonio in his *De dialogo liber* (1562) describes "dialogue as a poetic expression of dialectical discourse".[255] The *conférenciers*' contributions, while relying on dialectical and rhetorical argumentation, cannot precisely be called poetic.

At the same time, certain forms of dialogue and the *Conférences* share a similar goal. Both can showcase plurality without the obligation of reaching a conclusion. As Hempfer argues, Renaissance dialogue, from a structural perspective, proves to be nearly ideally suited to illustrate plurality.[256] It permits the voicing of a variety of opinions regarding the topic in question, and it does not require these opinions to be brought back together to reach common ground or unanimous assent.[257] That the *Conférences* share this ambition of enabling real plurality is especially visible in the debates concerning medical questions. They present a variety of opinions diametrically opposed to Renaudot's own views and his actual medical practice,

249 See Montagne 2011, p. 807. As Cox shows, the degree of emphasis put on decorum varies regarding the three types (Lucianic, Platonic, and Ciceronian) of dialogue; see Cox 1992, pp. 10–13.
250 A need for decorum also does not apply to the formulaic "katechistisches Lehrgespräch" (Häsner 2002, p. 116).
251 See Bouhours 1671, pp. 1–2.
252 See, for example, Cazanave 2007, p. 367.
253 There are also other reasons for this anonymisation, as chapter 5 will show.
254 Tasso 1998 [1585], p. 55.
255 Gilman 1992, p. 29.
256 See Hempfer 2010b, p. 77.
257 See ibid., p. 79.

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as I discuss in more detail in chapter 7. Nevertheless, Renaudot prints all of them: all are equally important contributions in the search for truth.

As we have seen, there are of course dialogues that lead to a conclusion. At the same time, numerous others do not at all aim to provide one. Again, this is reminiscent of what Renaudot writes in the introduction to the second volume of *Conférences*, where he discusses aspects of the *conférences*' workings that their participants had criticised. Some critics would have preferred for the debate meetings and their printed records to showcase only two opinions, one pro and one contra, Renaudot states. A third speaker should then reconcile them, therefore providing a kind of conclusion for every session. However, this is not what the discussions are about, according to the *gazetier*.[258] Similar to the kind of dialogue that provides no conclusion, the *Conférences* leave judgement with the readers, who can choose themselves which argument they favour.

The public that was theoretically able to draw conclusions on the questions discussed in the printed *Conférences*, as well as in dialogue of the vernacular kind, was considerably larger than the one capable of following Latin dialogue, disputation, or declamation. Like the *Conférences*, vernacular dialogues explicitly aimed at engaging a public hitherto prevented from participating in debates.[259] In this, both the *Conférences* and vernacular dialogue differ greatly from Scholastic disputation and declamations in the Latin language. The use of Latin in scholarly debates and literature securely confined debate to a realm inhabited by the few educated enough to be able to unerstand it. The *Conférences*' proceedings and vernacular dialogue, on the other hand, could be followed by many more readers. As I have argued before, most of the *conférenciers* actively participating in the Renaudot's debate meetings seem to have been comparatively highly educated, evidened by their way of arguing and use of authorities to support their claims. Yet passive participation – that is to say, the reading of the *comptes rendus* and the (possible) formation of an opinion on their basis – could theoretically be accomplished by anyone able to read French. The fact that the *Conférences* were immediately printed on Renaudot's own printing presses and broadly distributed, like the *Gazette*, furthermore illustrates that Renaudot explicitly aimed at reaching as large a public as possible with the printed versions.[260]

As the various opinions in Renaissance dialogue and in the *Conférences* often find support from arguments taken from authorities, readers cannot reach a decision easily. According to Hempfer, it is precisely the adherence to 'authority' in the dialogue that, through a pluralisation of authors and opinions, eventually leads to a pluralisation of authority itself. Ultimately, this engenders a relativisa-

258 See vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, pp. 14–15.

259 "When considering the appeal of the dialogue form in the sixteenth century, it is as well to consider that the vernacular dialogue was addressed, for the most part, to a newly literate public: a public of 'idioti', who, had they been born a century, even half a century earlier, would have been effectively excluded from the world of learning" (Cox 1992, p. 44).

260 See chapter 1.

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tion of what can be considered 'truth'.[261] Admittedly, doubt about which authority is right was also the original starting point for disputation. If there was no conflict between authoritative arguments that seemed probable to a similar degree, there would be no dispute. In contrast to disputation, however, dialogue often does not dissolve such disaccord between different arguments and authorities. Such conflict invariably could be resolved, as dialogues' authors reigned supreme over their texts and could come to whatever decision they favoured. Yet, in many cases, they seemingly wished to keep ambiguity.

In the dialogue in its seventeenth-century form, and especially with regard to *conversation* and *entretien*, this ambiguity does not necessarily stem from a will to showcase plurality for its own sake. It equally results from the *mondanisation* of dialogue as diagnosed by Cazanave:[262] the ideals of *honnêteté* and *politesse* do not permit the *gens du monde* depicted in the dialogues to pedantically insist on their opinion in a debate. The deeply agonistic way the speakers in the *Conférences* argue certainly cannot in any way compete against the discussions *enjouées* of the later literary *conversations*. Yet the *Conférences*' conclusion-less form prevents the interaction from resulting in the triumph of a single opinion. Similar to the later *conversations*, setting a standard for real-life polite conversation, the *Conférences* wish to 'train' speakers to adhere to a disinterested way of arguing; they aim to persuade "[…] un chacun qu'il n'estoit nullement interessé à soustenir ce qu'il avaoit mis en avant".[263] The *Conférences* are therefore infused with values similar to those that would come to full bloom in the literary *conversations* and *entretiens* of the 1670s. With the *Conférences* overall form, Renaudot and his associates took a decision that mirrors a trend towards ideals that came to decidedly mark literary expression in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Without a conclusion, truth becomes less straightforward and less easily discernible. In dialogues without a conclusion, plurality becomes something that does not require resolution as it does in disputations – at least not at a textual level. What goes on in the readers' minds remains outside the scope of the printed word. The *Conférences* operate in a similar fashion. In most cases, the *conférenciers* base their contributions on the authority that best fits their argument. Because every one of them does so, all the opinions in their variety appear somehow probable. In most cases, no one necessarily gains the upper hand and readers are left in potentially productive, if frustrating, uncertainty.

Here, the complex speaking situation of literary dialogue and the *Conférences* comes into play. In dialogues such as *De avaritia*, written by Poggio Bracciolini in 1428, the speakers – historically identifiable persons – take positions that obviously do not coincide with what they were known to stand for.[264] As his first

261 See Hempfer 2010b, p. 90.
262 See Cazanave 2007, p. 67.
263 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.
264 As Häsner points out, the dialogues' authors can, as they integrate people from their own real-life environment into a text, fashion these characters to their own liking. See Häsner

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speaker, Poggio originally selected Cincio, notorious for his avarice, whom he later substituted with Bartolomeo.[265] Antonio, famous for his magnanimity, argues for parsimony. In the dialogue, the speakers explicitly take up positions contrary to what they actually represented, thereby emphasising the fact that their debate is a rhetorical one that functions in the mode of *in utramque partem disserere*.[266]

Cox, too, pinpoints this complexity in her discussion of the *ductus simplex* and *ductus obliquus* in Thomas More's *Utopia*. The terms, stemming from a relatively unknown treatise on rhetoric written by George of Trebizond, describe two modes of arguing contrarily opposed to each other.[267] While the *ductus simplex* is a straightforward way of arguing – the speakers directly assert what they want to convince the public of – the *ductus obliquus* represents a more opaque strategy. Speakers using it might, for example, argue for the opposite of what they want the public to believe, using camouflage to reach their goal.[268] As modern readers, we need to keep this in mind when reading dialogues, Cox argues. Crucially, I would add that, to a certain degree, the same counts for the *Conférences*:

> Where the modern reader often subconsciously takes a *ductus simplex* as the default mode, and approaches works of moral philosophical reflection with the expectation of learning 'the author's views', the rhetorically informed readership of humanism was more nuanced in its approach and more alert to dissimulatory tactics of argument.[269]

Given the fact that we know little regarding the context of the *conférences* or about the speakers who took part in them, it is difficult to evaluate which arguments can be classified as straightforward and which arguments are meant to convince in a rhetorical way but might not coincide with the speaker's personal beliefs. At any rate, my discussion of *De Avaritia* and the *ductus simplex* and *obliquus* illustrates that direct immutability is a difficult matter regarding the *Conférences* as well as literary dialogue. Concerning such texts, especially when they treat moral-philosophical topics, the rhetoricity of arguments must always be considered.

Overall, my analysis of dialogue as a genre sheds light on a number of interesting phenomena taking place in the *Conférences*. Both in the *Conférences* and in (open-ended) dialogue, a plurality of opinions regarding a given question is possible, and this plurality does not need to be dissolved into consensus. The way authorities are used in both kinds of texts leads to an understanding of truth no longer solely based on unity. Yet while the *Conférences*, in their written form, really result

2004, p. 50. Consequently, they can have them voice positions they might not take in reality, as in the example discussed above.

265 See Marsh 1980, p. 60.

266 See ibid., pp. 38–41.

267 Trebizond discusses ductus theory in his *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (1538), written in the 1430s, and in *De artificio Ciceronianae orationis pro Q. Ligario* (1535), which he composed circa 1438–39. See Cox 2003, p. 664.

268 See Cox 2017, pp. 304–306.

269 Ibid., p. 306.

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from a situation of oral communication – where a number of speakers interacted and argued – literary dialogue merely feigns orality. Behind it, only one author's pen is at work, not the voices and opinions of different participants.[270] To convince their audience, many dialogues rely on a more or less elaborate *decorum*, which renders the (pretend) speaking situation plausible. The *Conférences*, for their part, aim at eliminating all information that could divert from the speakers' reasonings.

In this chapter, I have shown how disputation, declamation, and dialogue are connected to the *Conférences*. Disputation – even though Scholasticism figured as *the* stereotypical enemy for the *conférenciers* – remained an important practice of knowledge negotiation in the times of Renaudot. While the *conférenciers* were certainly always eager to distance themselves from the preeminent practice of disputation, they nevertheless remained heavily influenced by the Schoolmen's way of arguing, as my analysis has shown.

In contrast to their treatment of disputation, the *conférenciers* openly embraced the influence of declamation. They emphatically claimed it as a model for their debates. Yet whereas declamation, in its essence, is a completely monological genre, the *Conférences* – as a potpourri of various opinions voiced by different speakers – function dialogically. Therefore, it is the individual speakers' contributions in themselves, outside the larger scope of the *Conférences* as a whole, that can be described as little declamations in the mode of praise and blame in certain instances. In the *Conférences*, declamation especially seems to exert its influence over discussions of moral-philosophical questions.

Like declamation, dialogue is also a fundamentally monological genre, even though it does not seem so at first glance. While it presents diverging opinions introduced by a variety of speakers, it is erroneous to understand dialogue as a protocol of a real discussion. It remains fundamentally an invention of the dialogue's sole writer, no matter how much verisimilitude is offered regarding decorum and characters. Nevertheless, Renaissance dialogue, in its inconclusive form, showcases and enables plurality in a similar manner to the *Conférences*. In both cases, speakers' positions, lined with the opinions of authorities, are left next to each other without conclusion. This practice was diametrically opposed to the reigning mode of disputation and rendered possible a fundamentally new approach to the question what truth is.

270 By this, I do not want to suggest that a dialogue's meaning is straightforward in any way, only that the plurality of opinions in it is the creation of one person alone.

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5

Un divertissement honnête: The *Conférences*' Purpose and Format, between Orality and Print

Given the *Conférences* rhetorical and dialectical antecedents and the common debating practices of the time, the decision to have them forgo a conclusion appears somewhat peculiar. A variety of factors influenced the choice to leave them open-ended – the analysis of which forms the core of this chapter. The *conférences* were inscribed in Renaudot's project to 'vulgarise' knowledge and his wish to make information accessible to as large a public as possible, and this goal had consequences for the printed *Conférences*' form. As becomes clear in the following pages, the purpose and format of the *Conférences* are closely intertwined and cannot be analysed entirely separately.

This chapter starts with an observation of pivotal importance: the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse operated on two discrete levels, which must be distinguished in any analysis concerned with them. Firstly, the *conférences* were in-person discussion meetings that took place at the Maison du Grand-Coq in the heart of Paris in the seventeenth century. Secondly, those debates were transformed into the printed *Conférences*, forming the basis of scholarly study today.[1] It is imperative to consider these two levels separately, as they do not necessarily always coincide – a fact left out of many scientific texts concerned with the debate meetings at Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse and the publications that resulted from them.[2] Firstly, Renaudot edited the *conférenciers*' contributions to a certain degree. Moreover, participation via letter was also possible. The printed *Conférences* are, therefore, composed of statements that were originally both spoken and written, thereby surpassing the originally co-present context of the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse.

In the second part of the chapter, I focus on the *Conférences*' lack of conclusion. I argue that leaving the *Conférences* without closure could be considered an effective safeguarding mechanism. On the one hand, it prevented conflict between the *conférenciers* and protected them from prosecution. At the same time, it shielded Renaudot, the editor of the *Conférences*, who treated the various opinions present-

1 See also the introduction, where I propose a conceptual distinction between these two levels.

2 See, for example, Wellman 2003, p. 15. Howard Solomon, in his chapter concerned with the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse, also does not differentiate between the *conférences* as co-present debates and the printed *Conférences*. See Solomon 1972, pp. 60–99.

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ed at the Bureau d'Adresse in the impartial manner of an Early Modern '*Zeitunger*'.[3] In their printed form, the *Conférences* were accessible to a far greater public than the discussions of private academies, which largely kept to themselves and therefore enjoyed a relatively robust freedom of expression.[4] The fact that they were only accessible to a small circle of people provided participants with a kind of security that Renaudot's debating circle, in its goal to reach as many people as possible, did not possess. Without claiming any sovereignty of interpretation over the materials they discussed – and thereby, as it were, handing the master's chair to the public – Renaudot and the *conférenciers* anticipated ideals of impartial debate that would later spread through the Republic of Letters.[5] Without decisions and dogmatic conclusions, the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse were, furthermore, able to inscribe themselves into an ideal of *honnêteté* and politeness that began to impose itself around the time of the first *conférences* in the 1630s.[6]

But it wasn't only Renaudot's relation to the public that potentially influenced the structure of the *Conférences*. Equally, the *gazetier*'s allegiance to those in power could have affected the choice to leave the *Conférences* without closure. Renaudot's relation to Cardinal Richelieu was only too well known. His *Gazette*, for example, was effectively seen as the official mouthpiece of the government.[7] Consequently, it seems highly plausible that Renaudot was eager to avoid providing categorical answers to sensitive topics, as this could have led to trouble with or for his patron. Refusing to provide answers to the questions asked at the Bureau d'Adresse therefore allowed Renaudot to satisfy the *conférenciers*, his public, and his patrons and enabled the *gazetier* to spread the printed *Conférences* far beyond their original context.

3 See Berns 1976, p. 207.

4 See Mazauric 2017, pp. 63–64.

5 For a detailed analysis of the concept of Early Modern impartiality, see Kathryn Murphy and Anita Traninger's *The Emergence of Impartiality* (2014).

6 See Bury 1996, pp. 177–179. As the previous chapters have shown, there is often quite some difference between the goals of politeness that Renaudot sets out and the way the *conférenciers* actually present their arguments.

7 See Spriet 2012, p. 198. For a discussion of how Renaudot's readers viewed the *Gazette*, see Feyel 2000, pp. 253–263. As Feyel points out in this chapter, "[p]our beaucoup, la *Gazette* était suspecte d'inexactitude, voire de mensonge, car personne n'ignorait ses liens avec le pouvoir" (p. 254). This negative opinion, however, did not keep Renaudot's readers from awaiting the *Gazette* with impatience: "Ses lecteurs pouvaient bien se méfier de la *Gazette*, voire affecter les esprits forts face à son contenu, ils n'en attendaient pas moins avec beaucoup d'impatience chacun de ses numéros" (p. 255).

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5.1 Orality, Print, and the Intentional Construction of Debates

At first glance, the *Conférences* in their printed form appear to be faithful depictions of the debates that took place at the Bureau d'Adresse. In her study *Making Science Social: The Conferences of Théophraste Renaudot 1633–1642* (2003), historian Kathleen Wellman in effect argues that the printed *Conférences* are "essentially minutes of the meetings".[8] According to Wellman, the circumstances of their publication suggest that Renaudot did not (substantially) alter the *Conférences* before issuing them. Firstly, the *Conférences* were published with great speed – in the same week the corresponding meeting had taken place, as Wellman states.[9] Secondly, she explains, the length of the individual printed *Conférences* suggests that delivering them orally would have taken one hour, which is exactly the time frame Renaudot set for the discussion of every question.[10]

However, it does not inevitably follow that Renaudot's fast publication cycle meant he did not alter the materials in his possession before printing them. What is undoubtedly certain is that he (and his assistants and printers) worked extremely fast. Also, it appears that Wellman manages to fit *Conférences* of variable length into one hour of reading aloud. The question treated in the 248th *Conférence*, "De la Licorne",[11] for example, comprises sixteen printed pages. The second question asked at the thirty-sixth *Conférence*, "Quel est le plus grand de tous les vices",[12] covers a mere four. These are extreme examples – generally the answers to individual questions cover between seven and ten pages – but I nevertheless wish to stress that the printed *Conférences* do differ considerably in length. This probably results from the fact that the different questions provoked varying degrees of interest. However, it also indicates that Renaudot possibly edited and altered the *conférenciers*' contributions before sending them to the printing presses, as I will show in the following passages.

In the last paragraph of the *Conférence* on vices, for example, one encounters a distinct clue that Renaudot has made editorial alterations. After two unremarkable paragraphs, the reader discovers the following passage:

> De ceux qui parlent en suite, l'un dist qu'il alloit distinguer le vice d'avec le peché & la malice. Le premier estant l'habitude au mal: le second, l'acte d'icelui: & le troisiesme, la difformité qui les suit to [*sic*] deux. Un autre soûtient que c'estoit l'Atheïsme. D'autres dirent que c'estoit le peché contre nature. Quelqu'un l'attribua à la Philautie […].[13]

8 Wellman 2003, p. 15.
9 The *comptes rendus* of one meeting were actually printed exactly one week after the discussion meetings they were based on had taken place. See chapter 1, p. 31.
10 See ibid.
11 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 248, pp. 489–504.
12 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 36.II, pp. 613–617.
13 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 36.II, p. 616.

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After rendering the contributions of the first speakers in the usual form – giving each opinion at least one paragraph – Renaudot (or one of his associates) here briefly summarises what several further participants contributed. Passages of this kind reveal that faith in the total correspondence between the oral discussions and printed *comptes rendus* cannot be upheld.

Consequently, we must challenge the idea that any of the discussions were originally voiced in the exact structures we perceive when reading the *Conférences* today. Renaudot did not necessarily aim at reproducing the *conférences* exactly as they originally occurred, and other passages offer further hints of his editorial interventions. In the introduction to the first volume of *Conférences*, for instance, Renaudot writes that, after holding almost a year's worth of discussion meetings without publishing anything, he decided to print what had been most interesting in them: "[…] après avoir durés près d'un an sans rien publier de ce qu'on y traittoit, & imprimé l'année suivante ce qui s'y est passé de plus remarquable […]."[14]

In the first part of the first printed *Conférence*, "De la Methode",[15] Renaudot again summarises that the *conférenciers*, at their preceding (undocumented) meeting, had decided to henceforth publish the matters they discussed. Also, those opinions that merited it would be printed: "[…] il fut rapporté que la resolution de la derniere Conference avoit esté d'imprimer desormais les matieres qui seroient proposées & les avis sur icelles qui le meriteroient […]."[16] On another occasion, Renaudot similarly claims that he publishes what is 'worth publishing' with great eagerness: "[…] avec le mesme zele que j'employe à publier tout ce qui le merite."[17] These citations are highly significant, because they prove that Renaudot and the *conférenciers*' goal had never been to publish everything, but only the statements deemed so interesting that they deserved to be committed to print.[18]

This sums up the theoretical programme, but the five volumes of *Conférences* also include several descriptions of situations where the speakers' contributions were heard but not (fully) transformed into print. In a section concerning the inventions discussed in the sixth *conférence*, we learn, for example: "Et pource qu'une grande partie de l'heure destinée aux inventions se trouva escoulée par la reciprocation des autres raisons faisans pour et contre cet advis. On effleura seulement quelques curiositez dont l'examen fut remis à la prochaine Conference."[19] Because such a large number of participants engaged in the argument about the "esprit universel" – in addition to the contributions we see in print today – the *conférenciers*, in the end, did not have enough time to discuss the inventions scheduled for

14 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 2.
15 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 1.I, pp. 6–10.
16 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 1.I, p. 6.
17 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 11.
18 Simone Mazauric, also arguing that not all interventions were automatically printed, mentions many of the passages cited here in her study of Renaudot's circle. See Mazauric 1997, pp. 91–92.
19 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 6.II, p. 108.

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this day. Moreover, the question "S'il faut joindre les armes aux lettres"[20] seemingly resulted in such a tumult that not every opinion in favour of the letters could be captured in its entirety: "La multitude & la vehemence de ceux qui soustinrent puissamment le parti des lettres empescha qu'on ne pust distinctement recueillir toutes leurs raisons, mais elles se rapportent à cecy."[21] For this reason, Renaudot tries to summarise them in one short paragraph. We discover here, firstly, that the meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse were sometimes not so far removed from the quarrelsome schools so criticised by Renaudot and the *conférenciers*. Secondly, the passage confirms that that not every statement was reproduced in print exactly as it had been voiced at the meetings.

Further evidence for Renaudot's omissions can even be found outside the *Conférences*. In the *Gazette*, Renaudot again alludes to the fact that he printed only the contributions found to be interesting enough and approved by the *compagnie* of *conférenciers*: "[…] je ne feray pas seulement voir le monde à leurs avis approuvez par la compagnie […]".[22] Taken all together, the preceding examples illustrate that the printed *Conférences* were not mere reproductions of every statement uttered at the debate meetings; rather, they were edited to a degree that we can hardly ascertain today. This also counts for the individual contributions themselves: they might have been edited or rearranged, but if this is indeed the case, no particular pattern seems to be discernible.[23]

Aside from the fact that Renaudot did not automatically print all statements, it was also possible to partake in the debates without physically attending the weekly meetings. As already mentioned, Renaudot specifically encouraged his readers to contribute to the discussions via letter.[24] Not only does Renaudot invite potential participants to send in their opinions in the preface to the first *Centurie* of *Conférences*,[25] but in order to reach as large an audience as possible, he also extends this invitation in the *Gazette*: "Ayant naguéres averti ceux qui voudront faire l'honneur à nostre Conference du permier Lundi d'apres la Saint Martin, d'y contribuer leurs avis en personne, ou leurs ecrits de loing, que la question qu'on traittera ce jou-là est […]."[26] In this *Gazette* article, Renaudot reveals the question for the upcoming *conférence* and urges people to come share their views in person. For those not in Paris at the time of the meeting, he encourages them to send in their opinions in

20 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 5.II, pp. 82–90.
21 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 5.II, p. 88.
22 Renaudot, *Recueil des Nouvelles Ordinaires et Extraordinaires* 1638 [1639], Gazette N°143, p. 604. Mazauric also stresses this point in her analysis; see Mazauric 1997, p. 91.
23 According to Renaudot, he did not, for example, arrange the contributions to a topic in a pro-contra-synthesis structure. See vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, pp. 14–15.
24 See Mazauric 1991, p. 91.
25 "[…] afin que ceux qui en sont éloignez puissent nous envoyer leurs sentimens sur chacune matiere […]" (Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 5).
26 Renaudot, *Recueil des Nouvelles Ordinaires et Extraordinaires* 1638 [1639], Extraordinaire N°152, p. 640.

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writing. On another occasion Renaudot writes, also in the *Gazette*: "[…] & à fin que les absens de cette ville, & qui par consequent ne pourront y venir eux-mesmes donner leur avis de bouche, le puissent faire par escrit, qui sera par ce moyen faire un auditoire & une seule eschole de toute la France […]."[27] Renaudot, through this practice, ambitiously aims to build one auditorium and one school of the whole of France.[28]

In the debates' printed form, seldom does anything betray whether a contribution was originally voiced in the discussion meetings or sent to Renaudot by letter. Sometimes, though, certain clues surface. In the debate concerning the question of "Du mouvement",[29] the third speaker deliberates on what he thinks movement is and is not. He finishes his argument with a significant statement: "Le mouvement est donc le passage d'un terme à l'autre. Ainsi, non seulement lors que ma main coule d'un costé de ce papier à l'autre, mais lors que de chaude elle devient froide, il se fait un mouvement."[30] In explaining movement using the example of his hand across the paper, he thereby indicates that his contribution is written.

In most other cases, one can only make assumptions based on references (or lack thereof) to arguments of preceding speakers. Some arguments, by the vehemence with which the speaker refutes what the preceding participant said, appear to be spontaneous verbalised reactions. These are rather short and obtain their starting point from other contributions. In the 67th *Conférence*, on the topic of death, the first speaker declares: "Et toutesfois, qui considera de prés cette mort, trouvera que n'estant qu'une privation, elle n'est rien: & que ce que nous craignons tant n'est que l'acheminement à cette mort […]."[31] For him, death should be qualified as the ultimate privation, and, therefore, it is nothing. What humans are afraid of is merely the road leading towards it. And, again, "[…] elle [i.e., la mort] est un pur rien, qui n'a par consequent aucun fondement que dans l'imagination troublée […]."[32] Death is pure nothingness, which, outside of troubled imaginations, has no foundation. Clearly, the second speaker is outraged by this argument. He counters:

> Soustenir que la mort n'est rien, c'est accuser non seulement tous les hommes de folie, en ce qu'ils craindroient ce qui ne seroit point […] mais accuser la nature d'imprudence d'avoir imprimé cette apprehension dans tous les animaux pour leur conservation.[33]

27 Renaudot, *Recueil des Nouvelles Ordinaires et Extraordinaires* 1638 [1639], Gazette N°143, p. 604.
28 In chapter 6, I argue that women most likely did not take part in the meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse. However, they might have taken up the possibility to participate via letter. This was the case in the prize questions of later academies. The academies did not especially aim at having women partake, but as answers to prize questions were sent in anonymously, nobody could prevent them. A number of women went on to win the contests. See Urmann 2016, p. 112.
29 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 63.I, pp. 209–215.
30 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 63.I, p. 215.
31 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 67.I, p. 274.
32 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 67.I, p. 275.
33 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 67.I, p. 275.

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First, to say that death is nothing is to accuse all men of folly, he claims. Then he suggests it would also mean that Nature must be reproached for her imprudence, because, to guarantee their preservation, she has impressed all animals with a great fear of death. As both statements are totally implausible, the second speaker continues, it makes no sense at all to qualify death as nothingness.

While the *Conférences* frequently see speakers propose diametrically opposed arguments, *conférenciers* who so directly reply to their predecessors are a rarer encounter. In the above case, a speaker, disgruntled by what he perceived as a nonsensical argument by another participant, appears to have given his reply in the spur of the moment. For this to be possible, both speakers must have attended the discussion meeting at the Bureau d'Adresse.[34]

Other contributions seem to have been formulated in writing before being presented in person at the debates. They are too well structured to be spontaneous, and their length alone indicates preparation beforehand. One such example comes from the 274th *Conférence* on "De la Licorne".[35] The first speaker, whose contribution spans eight pages, makes his case by arguing that the unicorn must be considered an "erreur populaire".[36] To demonstrate this, he cites multiple authors and their varying descriptions of unicorns.[37] He then examines the divergent opinions about how unicorns – given their large horns – are supposed to survive.[38] Thereafter, the *conférencier* cites discrepancies in unicorn horns on display in numerous countries and again references a number of authorities.[39] Eventually, he concludes that unicorns must be considered a fiction.[40] As we have already seen in chapter 3, references to authoritative texts are not exceptional in and of themselves. But what is notable here is their sheer mass regarding such a specific topic as the unicorn, which, in combination with the length of the contribution, suggests that this *conférencier* presented a pre-written statement.

Answers such as this possibly could have been sent to Renaudot in writing. Then again, they could simply be written dissertations prepared in advance and

34 Another possibility would be that the first contribution discussed here was sent to Renaudot in writing and then read aloud by one of the present *conférenciers*. That such a procedure was frequently followed seems rather improbable: a person not able to attend the *conférences* would first have to see the announcement for the next question to be discussed; then, they would have to compose their contribution and send it to the Bureau d'Adresse by post. For anyone outside Paris, the speed of postal services would have meant that their contribution would have reached Renaudot too late to be read at the debate meeting. For the inclusion in the printed *Conférences*, there was a bit more time, but it was most probably also not sufficient for those farther away from the French capital. Regarding the postal service delays in France at the time (in the context of the distribution of the *Gazette*), see Haffemayer 2002, pp. 255–264.

35 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 247, pp. 489–504.

36 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 247, p. 489.

37 In this part of his argument, the speaker cites Philostrates, Cardano (after Plinius), Garcias, Vartoman, Scherer, and Venetus. See vol. 4, *Conférence* 247, pp. 489–490.

38 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 247, p. 491.

39 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 247, pp. 491–492.

40 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 247, p. 497.

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then presented in person at the Bureau d'Adresse (and this also counts for the hand example cited above). Renaudot's custom of pre-announcing the questions certainly allowed the *conférenciers* time to do their research and prepare their contributions in textual form. Supporting this view, one *conférencier* in effect argues that he would never have known anything about the topic in question – the Rosicrucians – had he not been selected to speak at a discussion meeting concerned with them: "Quant à moy qui n'avoit jamais rien sceu d'eux, sinon depuis qu'on m'imposa dans cette compagnie necessité d'en parler […]."[41] This suggests that he conducted research into the Rosicrucians in advance of the *conférence* he was scheduled to speak at. Perhaps more interestingly, his comment also indicates that the *conférenciers* who spoke on a given topic were designated beforehand, at least in some instances. Overall, what is clear is that certain contributions seem to have been spontaneous reactions to something said beforehand, and other, more complex contributions probably were 'commissioned' by the *compagnie* of *conférenciers*.

But back to the debate about the unicorn: it is the second speaker who betrays that the first's argument, full of references to authorities, was indeed presented at the Bureau d'Adresse. The second *conférencier* makes his argument mostly by contradicting what was said by the first, who thereby considerably facilitated the second speaker's task. In contrast to the first speaker, he is certain that unicorns exist and that their horn is a potent remedy.[42] The second contribution, almost eight pages long, would not take the form it does if it wasn't replying to what had been voiced beforehand. Consequently, the first speaker's opinion cannot possibly have been sent in via letter – or else it would have had to reached the Bureau d'Adresse in time to be read aloud to the *conférenciers* on the day of their discussion, a feat not easily achieved by the postal service.[43]

What is certain is that through his practice of (at least theoretically) allowing participation via letter, Renaudot blurred the borders between oral and written contributions. This results in a possible delimitation of the sphere of communication which bears remarkable similarities to the French academies' later focus on long-distance communication, illustrated by their practice of publishing prize questions, which reached a public from all over France and Europe. In permitting written contributions, and through Renaudot's publication strategy, his academy surpassed its original, co-present framework and gained an influence which largely exceeded the *conférences*' initial framework.[44] In this sense, Renaudot's academy was a manifestation of important structural changes that took place in the Early Modern period, according to the historian Rudolf Schlögl: going from a

41 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 199, pp. 105–106.
42 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 247, p. 504.
43 See note 34 above.
44 As Schlögl (2008, p. 222) puts it: "Schriftlichkeit stützt eine Pluralisierung der Möglichkeiten des Sozialen".

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society solely based on face-to-face interaction to a society based on written and printed communication.[45]

5.2 Power to the Public

Renaudot and the *conférenciers* – like many of their contemporaries – believed that truth reveals itself primarily by opposing contraries: "[…] la verité […] paroist principalement en l'opposition des contraires."[46] As I showed in the previous chapter, their debates were determined to a certain extent by the fact that knowledge negotiation in oral-aural and residually oral societies remains based on an agonistic principle.[47] Yet if the *conférenciers* intended to discover the truth, why then did their debates possess no hint of a conclusion?

While the universities aimed at finding dogmatic answers to the questions asked in disputations and the later academies crowned the most excellent contributions in their *concours académique*, at the Bureau d'Adresse any decision about which answer was the best one was refused. All speakers' opinions were left standing next to each other, without judgement. Considering the fact that the academies' prize contests, after long selecting a single best answer to the questions asked, began to decorate two (sometimes more) opposed arguments only about a century later, the *Conférences*' form seems unusual.[48] Already in 1634, the *Conférences* presented a multitude of equal expositions, which Renaudot describes as a collection of flowers, all of different colour and scent, which together form a bouquet: "un bouquet varié de plusieurs fleurs de couleur & odeur differentes."[49]

Some *conférenciers* seemingly were not too happy with this eclectic bouquet and would have preferred if only one single rose of truth for each question had been presented to them in the form of a conclusion. Renaudot explicitly refused this outcome, claiming that imperatively imposing a pro-contra structure resolved by

45 See ibid.

46 Vol. 1, "Avis au lecteur", n. p.

47 Regarding agonistic structures in oral-aural and residually oral societies, see Ong 1967, especially p. 217.

48 The two most famous examples for this practice are the 1750 question of the Dijon Academy and the "Volksbetrugsfrage" of the Berlin Academy from 1780. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was crowned at Dijon, answered the question "Si le réetablissement des Sciences et des Arts a contribué à épurer les moeurs" in the negative. The same counts for Pierre-Jean Grosley, who finished in second place. But the Abbé Talbert, who was awarded third place, presented a case diametrically opposed to Rousseau's. See Caradonna 2012, pp. 125–126. In the Berlin Academy's (Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres) famous "Volksbetrugsfrage" ("Est-il utile au Peuple d'être trompé") from 1780, two submissions arguing for opposed solutions were awarded joint first place. A number of others were furthermore given the *Akzessit*, the academy's recommendation. For an overview of the Berlin case, see the introduction to Adler 2007, pp. XIII–LXX. Regarding the emerging practice of giving the *Akzessit* to various contributions, see Urmann 2016, pp. 126–127.

49 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 15.

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a synthesis would interfere greatly with the *conférences*' freedoms.[50] However, two other important factors also influenced the debates' form. As we have seen, the first is the public and its potential negative reaction to including conclusions in the printed *Conférences*. The second is Renaudot's close relation to Cardinal Richelieu, which I discuss in more detail in the third part of the chapter. Crucially, the reactions of public and power became important in the first place only because of Renaudot's publication strategy. His wish to reach as many readers as possible with the printed *Conférences* allowed him to disseminate knowledge and thereby contributing to its 'vulgarisation'. At the same time, it also catapulted the debates into a much larger public sphere than their original in-person context, which largely increased the potential for conflict.

The lack of conclusions for the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse puzzles not only today's readers of the *Conférences*; seemingly, Renaudot's contemporaries also had their reservations. It appears several participants wished for the debate meetings to cast aside their argumentative diversity and take on a more coherent form. This can be seen in the introduction to the second volume of *Conférences*, where Renaudot addresses criticism voiced about the proceedings at his meetings. It appears certain participants found the many presented opinions tiring. They would have preferred to hear two speakers arguing for and against a proposition, with another speaker assigned to consolidate the arguments in a third and final opinion. This approach would have considerably facilitated the public's task of taking sides:

> Il s'en trouve depuis quelques-uns qui eussent desire qu'on fist parler que deux personnes, l'une pour l'affirmative, l'autre pour la negative de la proposition, & qu'en tout cas un troisiesme fust venu à consilier leurs avis differens és choses où une troisiesme opinion peut avoir lieu, afin que les auditeurs n'eussent plus qu'à se ranger à celuy des avis qui leur eust semblé le meilleur: Mais comme cela s'est fait quelquesfois & se peut continüer és matiéres qui y sont disposées: Ainsi semble-t'il injuste à d'autres […].[51]

Renaudot's statement seems to betray some *conférenciers*' desire for the debates to take a form more similar to older models of knowledge negotiation, especially disputation, which always ended with a dogmatic decision of the question that was asked.[52] Apparently, they were unable to cope with the large variety of possibilities produced by the open-ended format.

Interestingly, one of Renaudot's successors in the sphere of public knowledge exchange chose to give his debate meetings (and the publications resulting from them) precisely the form requested by the critical *conférenciers*. Jean Richesource's *conférences académiques et oratoires* began in 1653 and focused mostly on rhetorical topics, as evidenced in *La premiere partie des conferences academiques et oratoires, ac-*

50 See vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, pp. 14–15.
51 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, pp. 14–15.
52 See, for example, Bazàn 1985, p. 62.

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compagnees de leurs resolutions. Dans lesquelles on voit le plus bel usage des maxims de la Philosophie & des preceptes de l'eloquence (1661). Therein, Richesource's speakers present two (or more) contrasting opinions regarding a given topic, followed by a conclusion – a much more pedagogical endeavour.[53]

In the eyes of historian Gilles Feyel, Richesource's format qualifies as a step backwards. In contrast to Renaudot's *conférences*, which truly aimed at free expression and the exercise of reason, Richesource, in his school rather than academy, merely moderated the *beaux esprits* and trained the young in rhetoric:

> Richesource peut bien revendiquer l'héritage de Renaudot. Son école de rhétorique s'efforce d'abord de former de jeunes talents, de modérer de beaux esprits. Les *Conférences* de Renaudot avaient une tout autre ambition: permettre la libre expression des opinions de tous ceux qui voulaient bien y participer, leur offrir un espace de communication où leur raison pourrait s'exprimer pour mieux connaître le monde.[54]

Richesource made the "resolution de l'academie" the central outcome of his debate meetings, while Renaudot merely argued that, in some *conférences*, a pro-contra-synthesis structure occurred, so to speak, naturally. We can see this in the last part of the passage cited above – "mais comme cela s'est fait quelquesfois & peut continuer és matiéres qui sont disposée".[55] Renaudot further argues that while some questions are well disposed to such a structure, it does not do justice to many others. Overall, statements resembling a conclusion are found only rarely in the *Conférences* and mostly occur in the debates concerning moral-philosophical topics.[56] These topics stem from a long tradition of rhetorical debates and arguably betray what remained in the *conférences* of the Scholastics' desire to provide a dogmatic answer.[57] Other topics, such as medical questions, are less prone to finishing with a definite answer.

As we have seen through the example of Early Modern declamation in the previous chapter, a multiplicity of complications arise when originally oral formats of

53 For example, regarding the question "Si la Gloire qui accompagne la vie est preferable à celle qui la suit?", there are four *discours*. In the *premier discours*, it is argued that the glory that accompanies this life is in effect preferable. The speaker of the second *discours*, however, favours the glory that follows one's death. In the third it is again argued that "[…] il est beau de s'entendre loüer, il est beau de vivre après la mort […] mais le premier est plus souhaitable […]" (p. 28). The fourth *discours* concludes that "[…] la goire qu'on nous donne apres nostre mort […] est toujours veritable & sans comparaison plus solide & plus asseurée que celle que nous avons Durant nostre vie" (p. 30). In the "resolution de l'academie", Richesource argues that depending on how one formulates the question – from the point of view of the glorified person or from civil society – either the first or the second solution is the right one (p. 30). See Richesource 1661, pp. 23–30.

54 Feyel 2000, pp. 107–108.

55 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 15.

56 See chapter 6, p. 152.

57 Ian Maclean calls this their "desire for synthesis"; however, it is not a synthesis the Scholastics really seek but a decision. See Maclean 1981, p. 69.

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knowledge negotiation such as the *conférenciers*' debates suddenly appear as printed texts. In that chapter, I discussed how markers of suspended validity were always firmly attached to disputation and ancient, oral declamation.[58] The freedoms those oral – and therefore spatially restricted – forms of knowledge negotiation enjoyed did not simply transfer to arguments diffused in a printed, and consequently much farther reaching, medium. In the words of the social and cultural historian Antoine Lilti, a *controverse* changes its form the moment it circulates in print and becomes accessible to other actors. An originally learned controversy might thereby develop into a political *controverse*, a polemic, or a quarrel:

> La controverse change de forme à partir du moment où les énoncés circulent dans d'autres arènes. Ici le rôle de la publication imprimée est bien souvent primordial puisqu'elle entraîne des phénomènes de dissémination et de prolifération de la controverse, qui permettent à d'autres acteurs d'intervenir et qui mobilisent parfois des groupes sociaux plus larges dont les intérêts sont en jeu. On sort alors du registre de la controverse érudite pour entrer dans le cadre de la controverse publique, de la polémique et de la querelle.[59]

This transformation of the scope of a debate is highly relevant for the *conférences*, which, in the beginning, were mere discussion meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse. The moment the *conférenciers* decided to print the *comptes rendus* of their meetings, their debates became accessible to a much larger public, thereby increasing the potential for conflict.

Renaudot's initial statements regarding the matter indicate that the *conférenciers* left the decision about the questions asked at their meetings to the readers out of deference:

> […] on a trouve plus d'inconveniens à faire une conclusion sur chaque point, que de la laisser recueillir au Lecteur […] Au lieu qu'en vous estallant les avis d'un chacun & vous en laissant le chois, la Conference fait voir combien elle défere au jugement de son Lecteur, puis qu'elle a meilleure opinion de lui que d'elle-mesme.[60]

Yet this high opinion of the readers certainly was not the only motive Renaudot and the *conférenciers* had. Another important reason was, quite simply, the need for protection from the same public Renaudot just praised so highly:

> Joignez à cela que celui qui vous eust donné quelque conclusion se fust necessairement fait la butte d'une infinité d'esprits que la demangeaison d'escrire & de se faire paroistre dans leur estude, n'ayans osé parler en public, eust porté

58 See Traninger 2012, p. 197.
59 Lilti 2007, p. 18.
60 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

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> à la contredire. Ce qu'ils ne peuvent faire à present, non plus que d'actionner quelqu'un pour un fait dont il n'est pas garent […].[61]

Thus, leaving the conclusion to the reader was supposed to protect the *conférenciers* from attacks, be it from the public or potentially even the government or other corporations such as the universities. This notably facilitated speculative argumentation, as speakers who had no proof for their arguments could still voice them without fear of repercussion.[62]

Given the printed *Conférences*' enlarged public, Renaudot's wish for protective measures seems understandable. For other early academies, such as the Cercle Conrart before it became officialised as the Académie française[63] and the academy of the *frères* Dupuy, debates always remained in a relatively closed circle of acquaintances. This is illustrated by what Paul Pellisson recounts concerning the Cercle Conrart's early years in his *Histoire de l'Académie françoise* (1729 [1653]):

> Environ l'année 1629, quelques particuliers logez en divers endroits de Paris, ne trouvant rien de plus incommode dans cette grande ville, que d'aller fort souvent se chercher les uns les autres sans se trouver, résolurent de se voir un jour de la semaine chez l'un d'eux. Ils étoient tous gens de lettres, & d'un mérite fort au dessous du commun […]. Ils s'assembloient chez M. Conrart, qui s'étoit trouvé le plus commodément logé pour les recevoir, & au cœur de la Ville, d'où tous les autres étoient presque également éloignez. Là ils s'entretenoient familiérement […].[64]

Their discussions – led in French – were not bound by any rules other than those of friendship: "sans autres loix que celles de l'amitié".[65] To keep the academy's activities confined to its members, they decided not to speak about the enterprise to anyone.[66] Thereby, they protected the freedom of expression enjoyed in a close circle of acquaintances; the members of the Cercle Conrart were not interested in releasing anything to the outside world.[67] As soon as their secret was compromised – an event which led to the academy becoming officialised under the patronage of Richelieu – their freedoms were restricted to a certain degree. For example, their first official statutes record that the Académie française could admit new members only after Richelieu had agreed to them.[68]

61 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.
62 As discussed in chapter 3, the 'proof' the *conférenciers* cite to support their argument mostly consists of authorities' opinions.
63 Regarding the Cercle Conrart, see Schapira 2003, pp. 74–81.
64 Pellisson 1729, p. 5.
65 Ibid., p. 6.
66 "Ils avoient arrêté de n'en parler à personne; & cela fut observé fort exactement pendant ce temps-là" (ibid.).
67 For a critical discussion of Pellisson's somewhat idealised account, see Schapira 2003, pp. 74–81.
68 See Pellisson 1729, p. 66. "Son Eminence, par ordre particulier, a voulu être consulté sur tous les prétendants afin de fermer la porte à toute brigue et ne souffrir dans son assemblée que

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The cabinet of the *frères* Dupuy, "a regular association of learned men which met for private, informal discussion",[69] was not accessible to outsiders and must be considered a bastion of the intellectual elite.[70] Daring arguments, for example regarding religious questions, were voiced *chez les* Dupuy;[71] this kind of freedom of expression certainly would not have been possible had their circle been less exclusive.

Other academies, founded at a later point in time, were also eager to keep their knowledge to themselves. The early Académie royale des sciences purposely established that nothing its members discussed should pass to the outside – a rule sometimes broken: "Il fut resolu aussi que l'on ne reveleroit rien de ce qui se diroit dans l'Académie, à moins que la Compagnie n'y consentît."[72]

In comparison to the Cercle Conrart, the cabinet Dupuy, or the Académie royale des sciences, access to Renaudot's *conférences* was far less restricted. This already was true of the actual discussion meetings, where as many *gens d'honneur* as could fit into the *grande salle* of the Bureau d'Adresse were allowed to partake.[73] It becomes even more apparent given that the *Conférences* were eventually printed. They were distributed to anyone who could read, pay the price asked for the brochures (or for access to reading cabinets), and had interest in the *conférenciers'* discussions. Through their publication, the *Conférences* were destined for a much larger public than the in-person debates of other academies. Given their publicness, the *conférences* could not operate in a manner analogous to the private academies.

However, why would the lack of conclusion be necessary as a protective measure, as the printed *Conférences* already anonymised the speakers' names, making it impossible to know who exactly voiced what opinion? The passage cited above, which stems from the "Avis au Lecteur", offers some explanation. Presumably, Renaudot feared that passive participants, merely listening to the *conférences* without participating in the discussions – "n'ayans osé parler en public"[74] – would have resorted to contradicting the conclusions provided there in other printed publications – "que la demangeaison d'escrire & de se faire paroistre dans leur estude […] eust porté à la [i.e., la conclusion] contredire".[75] If there had been a conclusion, the authors of such contradictions obviously would have been able to name the person who provided it, because they would have witnessed first-hand who said what. Moreover, if the *Conférences* were to be printed anonymously but with conclusions,

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des gens qu'il connaisse, ses serviteurs" (Chapelain in Picard 1994, p. 120). According to Schapira, the officialisation of the academy did not lead to a great loss of autonomy for its members, as most were already in the service of the cardinal. See Schapira 2009, p. 108.

69 Urquhart 1985, p. 57.

70 See Belo 2016, p. 382.

71 Mazauric 2017, pp. 63–64.

72 *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences* 1733, p. 15.

73 See chapter 2, where I examine who was allowed to take part in the discussions at the Bureau d'Adresse.

74 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

75 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

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Renaudot invariably would have figured as a target for his readers' ire. The problem was even more virulent, as Renaudot reserved the *conférenciers* the right to argue against the opinions of the schools.[76]

Without a conclusion, without a dogmatic answer, the incentive to go against the individual contributors or against Renaudot was lessened. In themselves, the various answers to the questions asked at the *conférences* could not claim any final validity. No institution stood behind them, and as for the printed and anonymised *Conférences*, there is not even a name to which the opinions could be attached.

Through this practice, Renaudot had the *Conférences* function according to principles similar to those of Early Modern journalism. Through printing all kinds of arguments without favouring any particular one,[77] Renaudot approaches the Early Modern '*Zeitunger*',[78] who left a variety of reports next to each other without judgement.[79] This means he printed them in an impartial manner. As Daniel Stader and Anita Traninger have shown, 'impartiality', in the literal sense – which dominated its meaning at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century – referred to the conduct of a third party confronted with partial argumentations.[80] Editors of Early Modern newspapers, without being able to judge the truthfulness of the reports they were sent, printed them next to each other without commenting on them. Joan Raymond asserts concerning Early Modern news production: "impartiality […] seems to be achieved through presenting a variety of inevitably partial sources, from which the truth can be extracted."[81] Renaudot probably imported this attitude from the *Gazette*, where he assembled reports from all corners of the world without the ability to verify them.[82]

But the *Conférences* enable 'impartiality' in a second sense as well. Through the participants' anonymisation, not only were speakers protected but Renaudot also ensured readers could reach their own conclusion unaffected by outside influences. The fact that the *conférenciers* were supposed to abstain from citing authorities also trends in this direction (even if they did not really adhere to this principle).[83]

76 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.

77 This lack of conclusion is especially remarkable in the case of the medical debates; see chapter 7.

78 A *Zeitunger* is a newspaper maker; he simultaneously collects the news and fulfils the roles of editor, printer, and publisher. See Berns 1976, p. 207.

79 See ibid., pp. 209–210. As Jörg Jochen Berns puts it: "Unparteylichkeit stellte er [i.e., der Zeitunger] demnach am ehesten her, wenn er eine möglichst große, kontrastreiche Pluralität perspektivengebundener – und in dieser Bindung authentischer – Nachrichten in seinem Blatt versammelte" (ibid.).

80 See Stader and Traninger 2016, p. 60. In his discussion of the function of impartiality, Rainer Godel views it as a quality (exclusively) belonging to the public. See Godel 2014.

81 Raymond 2014, p. 157.

82 Berns points out that the *Zeitunger* was not concerned with impartiality when the interests of the government were in question. See Berns 1976, p. 212. This evidently also counts for Renaudot, who was decidedly partial when it came to the interests of the French state. See chapter 1, pp. 30–31.

83 See chapter 3.

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If readers do not know who proposed what argument and from which authority it potentially stems, they cannot be affected by the status or notoriety of the person (or people) behind a contribution. Thereby, liberty of judgement is granted to them. The *Conférences* leave "[…] libre à un chacun le jugement de leurs opinions, que la connoissance des personnes préoccupe volontiers […]".[84] In the Republic of Letters, even if it was always already a fiction,[85] all participants were supposed to be equal.[86] It is the participants' anonymity as well as the concealment of the *conférenciers*' sources that is supposed to enable a differentiation between person and matter (*Trennung zwischen Person und Sache*),[87] thereby guaranteeing that judgement can unfold in an impartial process.[88]

Renaudot also advised the participants themselves to present their arguments in an impartial manner,[89] showing that they were "nullement intéressé" in the opinions they presented at the *conférences*.[90] Renaudot's call for this impartial attitude bears remarkable similarities to later learned journals and their publishing practices. As the philosopher and lexicographer Pierre Bayle argues in the preface to the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* in 1684:

> Car nous déclarons premiérement, que nous ne prétendons pas établir aucun préjugé ou pour, ou contre les Auteurs: il faudroit avoir une vanité ridicule pour prétendre à une autorité si sublime. Si nous approuvons, ou si nous réfutons quelque chose, ce sera sans consequence, nous n'aurons pour but que de fournir aux Savans de nouvelles occasions de perfectionner l'instruction publique. Nous déclarons au second lieu, que nous soûmettons, ou plutôt que nous abandonnons nos sentimens à la censure de tout le monde.[91]

In cases where he argues for or against a certain author, Bayle does not claim the authority of a supreme judge for himself.[92] His approval or his refutation must be seen as "sans conséquence". Ultimately, Bayle submits his opinions to the judgement of the readers. Just as with the *Conférences*, it is for the public to decide what to do with the opinions presented to them.

84 Vol. 1, "Avis au lecteur", n. p.
85 Gábor Almási argues that the Republic of Letters is only a fiction (Almási 2009, p 80). Herbert Jaumann qualifies it as a normative idea or ideal (Jaumann 2001, p. 16), thereby emphasising the "merely regulative nature of the concept" (p. 17), or as a "historisch überlieferte Metapher" (Jaumann 2014, p. 17).
86 See Pierre Bayle's characterisaton of the Republic of Letters in the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*: "Cette République est un Etat extrêmement libre. On n'y reconnoit que l'empire de la vérité et de la raison; et sous leur auspices on fait la guerre innocemment à qui que ce soit. Les amis s'y doivent tenir en garde contre leurs amis, les pères contre leurs enfans, les beaux-pères contre leurs gendres […]" (Bayle 1734, vol. 2, "Catius", pp. 363–366, p. 364).
87 Stader and Traninger 2016, p. 76.
88 See ibid., p. 75.
89 See Traninger 2014, p. 59.
90 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.
91 Bayle 1684, col. A4.
92 See Abrosimov 2014, p. 192.

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The instruction not to insist on one's own opinion also accords with the principles of polite conversation and *honnêteté*, which began to play an ever-greater role in seventeenth-century society.[93] While the *conférences* were obviously not conversations but rather learned debates, bickering about which opinion was the best one sat too close to the universities practices, so heavily criticised by Renaudot.[94] The *gazetier* probably thought that the absence of a conclusion would guard the *conférences* against accusations of dogmatism and pedantry.[95] Also, not having to reach a conclusion could prevent conflict between the speakers, as there would be no incentive to insist on their opinion. Overall, stripping the debates of any conclusion made it possible to define them as a "divertissement honnête"[96] that created no conflicts between the debates' participants or in the outside world. Simultaneously, this honest diversion made possible a huge potential for freedom of expression.

Regarding the *divertissement honnête* of the *conférences*, the philosopher Simone Mazauric comes to a more pessimistic point of view and reduces Renaudot's debate meetings to an agreeable pastime. She argues they were less about finding new answers or producing new knowledge than about distributing knowledge which already existed. While other academies saw themselves as "lieux destinés à favoriser la construction de nouveaux savoirs voués à se substituer aux savoirs anciens", the *conférenciers* "se proposaient plus modestement de remplir une fonction de divulgation des savoirs déjà constitués, tout en fournissant aux auditeurs venus les écouter débattre sur les sujets les plus variés un passe-temps agréable."[97] Early Modern historian Sebastian Kühn's research concerning academies further qualifies Mazauric's idea, as he has pointed out that academies in general were not necessarily where new knowledge was generated. Like the *conférences*, they focused on social interaction and debate.[98] Moreover, Mazauric's focus on the content of the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse obstructs the view of the structural possibilities for open debate that they enacted – even in the difficult position between public and power in which the *conférences* found themselves.

To be able to disseminate knowledge to the biggest possible public, the *Conférences* were supposed to avoid creating conflicts or soliciting challenges from other corporations. Overall, Renaudot's strategy was rather effective, which becomes even more apparent when we consider what finally led to his downfall fol-

93 See Wild 2020, p. 264.

94 For further detail on this matter, see chapter 3.

95 According to Claire Cazanave, Renaudot puts the focus on the "'grace' du langage et le 'plaisir' de l'échange": "Cette politesse apparaît comme la garantie d'une liberté de propos. Renaudot affirme sa confiance dans un savoir tout à la fois non contraint et non contraignant" (Cazanave 2007, p. 170).

96 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 3.

97 Mazauric 2017, p. 53.

98 See Kühn 2011. Kühn explains that the academies were "ähnlich den naturgeschichtlichen Sammlungen, weniger ein zentraler Ort von Experiment und Beobachtung, sondern boten den Rahmen für vielfältige Begegnungen, Diskussionen, Austausch und die Inszenierung von gelehrtem Selbstverständnis" (p. 24).

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lowing the death of his protectors, Richelieu and Louis XIII. Crucially, his demise stemmed not from the variety of points of views expressed in the printed *Conférences* but from what he did in his medical *consultations charitables* and with his chemical *fourneaux*, as I show in more detail in chapter 7. The Parisian Faculty of Medicine, fighting vehemently to retain its power over the Parisian medical scene, could not tolerate a dissident like Renaudot practising what he preached. But the *Conférences* are of a completely different nature. Without imposing a verdict, they left it to the readers to decide which reasoning persuaded them. On the one hand, we can perceive this strategy as a device to prevent quarrels and accusations of pedantry while meeting the ideals of impartiality, *honnêteté*, and *politesse*. On the other hand, it was also a way to prevent conflict with Renaudot's patrons, as we will see in the following pages.

5.3 The *Conférences* and Political Power

In Renaudot's description, the *conférences* were an honest diversion where the young could polish their education, the old refresh their memory, the erudite bask in admiration, and all the others learn: "Le jeune s'y façonne, le vieil y rafraischit sa memoire, le docte s'y fait admirer, les autres y apprennent, & tous y rencontrent un divertissement honneste."[99] The *gazetier* was very eager to proclaim the complete innocence of this exercise: "L'innocence de cet exercise est sur tout remarquable."[100]

It is Renaudot's close association to Richelieu that makes these affirmations ring rather hollow. For the kind of protection he received from the cardinal, Renaudot had to pay a certain price. In the following passages, I argue that the *gazetier*'s relation to Richelieu not only influenced the discussion meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse with regard to content (political and religious topics being strictly forbidden) but also determined the *Conférences*' inconclusive form to a certain extent. In short, publishing 'dogmatic' answers to certain questions could have led to difficulties for Renaudot and his patrons. By refusing to provide any decision, Renaudot could wash his hands of responsibility and continue his ventures undisturbed while at the same time guaranteeing a remarkable amount of *liberté de raisonnement* for the speakers at the Bureau d'Adresse.

Renaudot placed the *Conférences* at Richelieu's feet, as confirmed by a dedicatory letter in the early editions of the first *Centurie*. Additional evidence, such as a text written by Marie de' Medici's chaplain Mathieu de Morgues, likewise illustrates how closely Renaudot's academy was linked to France's principal minister. The cardinal used other institutions, such as the Académie française, to advance the goals of the developing absolutist French state. In a drafted letter possibly later sent to Richelieu, someone even proposes plans for a universal French acade-

99 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 3.
100 Vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 3–4.

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my, which might have roused the cardinal's interest.[101] Richelieu did not live long enough to realise such a plan (if it ever reached him), but the idea was later taken up by his successor, Jean-Baptiste Colbert. While Colbert's plan to install a universal academy failed, various specialised academies performed the task of government agencies that the unknown letter writer had anticipated. Renaudot's other 'innocent' inventions (excepting the *Gazette*), on the other hand, did not survive long after the deaths of Louis XIII and Richelieu. Without the king's and the cardinal's constant protection, Renaudot was unable to successfully conduct any of his projects; it was in his own best interest not to cause those in power any difficulties.

Renaudot's *Gazette* was so closely linked to the cardinal that most saw it as the government's mouthpiece.[102] The historian Georges Minois qualifies it as "bulletin officiel sous la dépendance exclusive de Richelieu".[103] This certainly had consequences for the *Conférences*. If the Bureau d'Adresse had printed definite decisions about the questions discussed therein, it probably would have been seen as advertising official answers sanctioned by the French state. Therefore, it was safest for Renaudot to simply not provide them.

In a similar fashion, a number of other academies also withheld from providing answers which could potentially be problematic for their patrons. The Accademia del Cimento in Florence, for example, mostly printed descriptions of its members' experiments in their *Saggi di naturali esperienze* (1667). In most cases, the members refrained from providing any interpretation of their findings. As historian of Early Modern science Mario Biagioli points out, the academy acted in this manner because it had to prevent its patron, Prince Leopoldo de' Medici, from becoming implicated in any kind of scientific dispute. Leopoldo worked closely together with his academicians and could not have his status tainted by quarrels.[104]

Leopoldo, as it were, had much closer involvement with the Accademia del Cimento than Richelieu did with the *conférences*. According to Biagioli, the prince even took part in the academy's experiments. This fact could, of course, not be shared in the *Saggi*, where he was presented as a more remote sponsor.[105] The cardinal, on the other hand, did not participate in any capacity in the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse. He did not even officially espouse Renaudot's academy. Yet the close relation of Renaudot and Richelieu was more than evident to their contemporaries. Renaudot was effectively seen as Richelieu's *créature*.[106] Interesting

101 I discuss this letter in detail later on.
102 See Spriet 2012, p. 198.
103 Minois 1995, p. 100.
104 See Biagioli 1996, pp. 212–214.
105 See ibid., pp. 215–216.
106 Renaudot and Richelieu's relation was one of clientage. As Arlette Jouanna defines it: "La relation de clientèle est un lien de réciprocité librement choisi et moralement contraignant unissant deux personnes dont l'une occupe une position sociale supérieure à l'autre. La première offre sa protection et l'autre son service. […] L'obligation qui lie les partenaires pèse de manière inégale sur chacun d'entre eux; l'inférieur est placé dans une dépendance dont le degré varie selon ses atouts personnels, fortune, réputation, statut social. Le vocabulaire

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findings first announced at the *conférences*, such as a new method for calculating longitudes, soon found their way to the king and other government officials.[107]

In some cases, the printed *Conférences* indeed had the potential to put Richelieu in an awkward position. The discussion of "Du mouvement ou repos de la Terre",[108] for example, saw a *conférencier* voice an opinion in accordance with Galileo's heliocentric model.[109] After it became public that the Catholic Church had pronounced Galileo's ideas heretical, Renaudot publicly backtracked.[110] He printed the whole of Galileo's condemnation in a "Relation des nouvelles du monde" in December 1633.[111]

Regarding this episode, science historian Geoffrey Sutton notes in a somewhat astonished manner that the speakers at the Bureau d'Adresse could "blaspheme with impunity, it seems; the Church never felt particularly challenged or threatened".[112] Yet the Church, as can be seen in Galileo's case, did not feel threatened by the mere existence of arguments that went against its teachings; rather, it took issue with the insistence that these ideas were right (without definite proof).[113] It was Galileo's way of arguing in the *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi* (1632) that brought him so much trouble.[114] Renaudot, on the other hand, had merely printed

traduit cette dépendance; on parle des 'créatures' d'un seigneur" (Jouanna 1998, "Clientèles", pp. 806–808, p. 806).

107 See chapter 2, pp. 45–46.

108 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 10.I, pp. 163–170.

109 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 10.I, pp. 167–170.

110 See Solomon 1972, pp. 73–74.

111 See Renaudot, *Recueil des Gazettes, Nouvelles, et Relations de toute l'Année 1633* [1634], Relation N°122, pp. 525–532, pp. 531–532.

112 Sutton 1995, p. 41.

113 This outlook is confirmed in Cardinal Bellarmine's letter to Paolo Antonio Foscarini (a follower of Copernicus) from 12 April 1615, which is "generally considered to represent the position of the official church in the affair" (Segre 1997, p. 488) that would unfold later: "I say that it seems to me that Your Paternity and Mr. Galileo are proceeding prudently by limiting yourselves to speaking suppositionally and not absolutely [ex supposition e non assolutamente], as I have always believed that Copernicus spoke. For there is no danger of saying that, by assuming the earth moves and the sun stands still, one saves all the appearances better than by postulating eccentrics and epicycles; and that is sufficient for the mathematician. However, it is different to want to affirm that in reality the sun is at the center of the world and only turns on itself without moving from east to west, and the earth is in the third heaven and revolves with great speed around the sun; this is a very dangerous thing, likely not only to irritate all scholastic philosophers and theologians, but also to harm the Holy Faith by rendering Holy Scripture false" (Bellarmine in Segre 1997, p. 491). For the original Italian version, see Galileo, *Opere* 1902, vol. 12, p. 171.

114 William A. Wallace argues that Galileo usually made clear that he was reasoning '*ex suppositione*' but failed to do so in the *Dialogue*: "In all of Galileo's serious scientific writings up to, but not including, the *Dialogue*, he is at pains to identify and verify the suppositions on which his reasoning is based to justify his claims for strict proof" (1983, p. 161). As William E. Carroll explains, Galileo was well aware of the fact that he had no definite proof for his arguments in the *Dialogue*, and that he therefore could state in good faith before the inquisition in 1633 that he indeed did not believe that Earth moved around the sun. See Carroll 1990, p. 192.

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some opinion in favour of Galileo, alongside others. When the situation escalated, he was able to simply excuse himself and print the Church's verdict against Galileo.

One can only imagine how much more difficult this would have been had Renaudot not only printed one opinion in favour of Galileo but provided the verdict that Galileo was right. This would have associated Richelieu, a cardinal of the Catholic Church, with heretical ideas. If the *Conférences* had provided conclusions, therefore, the authorities certainly would have found it necessary to more closely supervise what Renaudot published there.[115]

One particular text – which can be easily overlooked in the chaos of the different versions and prints of the first volume of *Conférences* – indeed suggests that the cardinal played a crucial role in the decision to leave conclusions out of the *Conférences* . The first *Centurie*, in its earliest version from 1634, was – rather unsurprisingly – dedicated to Richelieu. A slightly different edition of the first *Centurie* from 1635 and reprints of the 1634 variant from 1636 and 1638 all bear this dedication and are prefaced by a dedicatory letter to the cardinal. Most interestingly, later reprints erased this dedication while also eschewing the dedicatory letter that originally appeared at the very start of the first editions of the *Première Centurie*.[116] It is this letter to Richelieu that potentially sheds some light on the inconclusive form of the *Conférences*. In it, Renaudot proclaims:

> Ce n'est donc pas sans cause que tant de bons esprits qui se sont trouvez à diverses fois en nos assemblées n'ont rien decidé sur les questions mises en avant. Sans doute que leurs genies adorans la puissance du vostre, auquel cet ouvrage devoit estre dédié, luy en ont voulu laisser le jugement tout entier, & l'establissement de la paix en l'escole comme en l'estat […].[117]

According to Renaudot, the *bons esprits* at the *conférences* resolved to not decide anything about the questions they discussed because they explicitly wished to leave any judgement to Richelieu. Such a statement suggests that the *Conférences*' inconclusiveness must be seen as an act of complete submission to the authority of the cardinal.[118] However, at the same time, one must bear in mind that Renaudot's comment appears in a dedicatory letter to an all-powerful patron. As this letter is panegyric in character, it is necessary to weigh what in it is substance and what mere hyperbole.

115 For an overview of how closely Richelieu and the king monitored what was printed in the *Gazette*, see chapter 1, pp. 30–31. As the cardinal observed: "La Gazette fera son devoir ou Renaudot sera privé des pensions dont il a joui jusqu'à présent" (Lettre au marquis de Sourdis du 8 ou 9 juin 1635, in Avenel 1863, vol. 5, p. 51).

116 After Renaudot's death and with the migration of the *Conférences* to other printers, the dedication and letter appear to have been suppressed.

117 Here I cite from the first ever printed edition of the first *Centurie* from 1634. "A monseigneur l'eminentissime Cardinal Duc de Richelieu, Pair de France", in *Premiere centurie des questions traitees ez Conférences du Bureau d'Adresse* (1634), n. p. See Sources, pp. 19–20.

118 On Richelieu's obsession with courtesy and the connection of *honnêteté* and state building, see Ranum 1980 and especially pp. 430–436.

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Strikingly, Renaudot's dedicatory letter stands in contrast to his explanations in the "Avis au Lecteur" of the first volume of *Conférences*. There, Renaudot explains that the *conférenciers* decided to leave any decision about the best answer to the readers, as "[…] la Conference fait voir combien elle défere au jugement de son Lecteur, puis qu'elle a meilleure opinion de lui que d'elle-mesme".[119] It would appear that Renaudot tried to use the *Conférences*' inconclusiveness to flatter both his public and his patron. Presumably, he was indeed eager to prevent repercussions from either.

Nevertheless, the claim that it was for Richelieu to establish peace in the schools and in the state seems not too far removed from Richelieu's actual intentions: to bring various academies and scientific circles, potentially critical of the absolutist French state, under his patronage.[120] I do not want to suggest that Richelieu was eager to absolutely control everything the academies and the academicians did; rather, his goal was to acquire their loyalty.[121] The *conférences* possibly helped him bring a number of citizens intrigued by science into his proximity and stopped them from forming other circles far from the centre of power.

Richelieu's wish to bring the Cercle Conrart under his authority helps confirm that this sort of 'centralisation' was in his interest. While a mere circle of friends meeting privately from around 1630 onwards,[122] the Cercle Conrart nevertheless attracted Richelieu's attention and he proposed official patronage.[123] Through its *lettres patents* from 1634, the circle – now the Académie française – gained a powerful protector, but it also lost its autonomy and was henceforward seen as Richelieu's creation: "[…] on la [i.e., l'académie] regardoit comme l'ouvrage de ce Ministre."[124]

Medieval and Early Modern historian Nicolas Schapira has shown that Pellisson's narrative of the Cercle Conrart and the Académie française must be taken *cum grano salis*.[125] Most of the circle's members were already associated with Richelieu before the official birth of the Académie française, and this association was clearly to their own advantage.[126] According to Schapira, the academy's offi-

119 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n. p.

120 For an examination of Richelieu's state-building tendencies, see Church 2015, pp. 173–236.

121 Concerning theatre in France in the first half of the seventeenth century, Déborah Blocker has argued that "le pouvoir monarchique affirmait sa puissance en offrant une insertion sociale, une légitimité politique et même une prospérité économique aux individus et aux institutions qu'il favorisait. Mais de telles actions n'avaient pas pour seul but de manifester un pouvoir, elles étaient aussi en elles-mêmes des entreprises de gouvernement, en ce qu'elles cherchaient en retour à s'attirer la loyauté et même l'obéissance des individus ou des groupes qu'elles promouvaient et/ou instituaient" (Blocker 2009, p. 14).

122 See Pellisson 1729, p. 4.

123 See ibid., p. 8.

124 Ibid., p. 45.

125 Pellisson is the sole source fixing the image of Conrart's academy. Moreover, he was "fortement engagé lui-même dans l'institution dont il prétend faire l'histoire" (Schapira 2003, p. 74). The fact that he composed the history of the Académie française enabled him to become a member of the academy himself. See ibid.

126 See ibid., p. 80.

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cialisation therefore must be seen less as Richelieu's attempt to control a dangerously independent circle than as a bid to establish a new rapport between political power and literature.[127] In any case, Richelieu decidedly showed great interest in acquiring the loyalty and obedience of men of letters.

Both the Académie française and Renaudot's academy had such close links with Richelieu that seemingly some degree of confusion arose concerning their separate identities. This is illustrated by Pellisson's description of the case of Mathieu de Morgues:

> Le premier qui écrivit contre l'Académie, fut l'Abbé de Saint-Germain, qui éstoit alors à Bruxelles, accompagnant la Reine-Mere Marie de Médicis dans son exil. Comme il déchiroit sans cesse par ses écrits, & avec une animosité étrange, toutes les actions du Cardinal de Richelieu, il ne manqua pas de parler fort injurieusement de l'Académie Françoise, qu'il confondoit même avec cette autre Académie, que le Gazetier Renaudot avoit établie au Bureau d'Adresse; soit qu'il voulût ainsi se méprendre, soit qu'en effet il ne fût pas bien informé de ce qui se passoit à Paris.[128]

A known opponent of Richelieu, Morgues relentlessly criticised all the cardinal's actions. He therefore also did not miss the opportunity to insult the Académie française, which he, to the dismay of Pellisson, seemingly did not distinguish from Renaudot's academy.

Morgues's original comments can be found in his *Jugement sur la Preface et diverses pieces que le Cardinal de Richelieu pretend de faire servir a l'histoire de son credit* (1635). He first speaks of an academy in the house of the *gazetier*.[129] Then, prepped with a large number of insults, he claims that the head of this academy is a certain Hay[130] – that is to say, Paul Hay, sieur du Castelet, one of the founding members of the Académie française.[131] The chaplain's remarks prove two points: firstly and unsurprisingly, that Richelieu, after the Day of the Dupes, was not exactly well liked by the camp of the exiled queen mother.[132] Secondly, that the Académie française and Renaudot's *conférences* were so thoroughly seen as the cardinal's projects as to become indistinguishable – at least for Morgues, though he was admittedly far away in Brussels.

A curious document, which I found in a moment of pure serendipity in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Richelieu) in Paris, sheds further light on the en-

127 See ibid., p. 81.

128 Pellisson 1729, pp. 52–53.

129 "[…] il [i.e., Richelieu] a dressé une escole, ou plustost une voliere de Psaphon, l'Academie qui est en la maison du Gazetier […]" (Morgues 1635, p. 6).

130 "Le chef de la bande infame est un homme qui est d'autant plus meschant qu'il est rebelle à la lumiere […]. Son nom d'Hay me fait souvenir […]" (ibid., p. 7).

131 See Pellisson 1729, p. 193.

132 For a discussion of the Day of the Dupes, the culmination of the power struggle between the cardinal and the queen mother, which led to the consolidation of Richelieu's authority and the exile of Marie de' Medici, see Rathbun 2019, pp. 167–170.

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deavour to transform French academies into institutions of state control over the arts and sciences.[133] The document in question – the letter first mentioned earlier in this section – is undated and unsigned and bears no seal, subscription, or signature.[134] Therefore, the letter appears to be a draft (one correction is visible) or a personal copy kept for filing.[135] It stems from a collection of documents belonging to the chancellor Pierre Séguier and must have been written between 1632 – when the *conférences* began – and Richelieu's death in 1642. I cannot be sure if it ever reached Richelieu; my interpretation of the document and its importance therefore remains speculative.

In the letter, an unknown person proposes the establishment of a sort of academy for *beaux esprits* from all kinds of disciplines. Members of the public would be able to consult them, and they would also figure as a kind of censorship board, supervising the '*affiches de science*' that seemingly emerged all over the city. Unregulated, those could, in the mind of the letter writer, dangerously pervert the impressionable minds of the young: "[…] ils penetrent aisément les Jeunes esprits mols, qui pour n'estre encore asservis à la trempe de la Vertu, sont susceptibles d'opinions Judaïques, d'Heresies & de Libertinage."[136] But to counter the (perceived) dangerous spread of Jewish, heretic, and libertine ideas, a new academy would be the ideal remedy, the letter writer is certain:

> Le moyen de remedier auxdits Abus formellement au grand profit du public & des particuliers de cette ville de Paris […] C'est d'establir un lieu où bureau d'occurence & de refuge des beaux Esprits: où ceux qui en ont besoin pourront s'adresser avec circonspetion & cognoissance de la vie, religion, moeurs, & doctrine d'Icieux on aura esgard aux professions des Theologiens, Praedicateurs, Jurisconsultes, tant canoniques que civils, les Medecins tant ordinaires que chymistes, les Philosophes, Mathematiciens, Historiens, Cosmographes & autres Tels; Les beneficiers y traiterront canoniquement de leurs benefices Esloigné de l'Infame bureau d'adresse qu n'est que pour les Laquais & Valletaielle Toutes choses y seront traittes avec honneur & esprit de Charité. Sur quoy l'on obtiendra defence qu'aucune affiche de science, qui soit ne se publie tant en la Ville qu'aux faux-bourgs qu'elle ne soit veuë & examiné par ceux que seront depuséz en la ditte occurence.[137]

133 I quote from the original manuscript: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (hereafter BNF), français (hereafter F) 18599–18600 (papiers du chancelier Séguier 1539–1654), cote II, pp. 489–490.

134 On epistolary ceremonial in the seventeenth century, see Sternberg 2009. He explains various subscription formulae and their meaning. See ibid., pp. 54–60. On the marks indicating that a letter was sent (or the lack thereof), see Daybell 2012, pp. 6–7, and pp. 24–25.

135 On the second page of the letter, a few words are crossed out. See BNF F 18599–18600 (papiers du chancelier Séguier 1539–1654), cote II, pp. 489–490, p. 490.

136 Ibid., p. 489.

137 Ibid., p. 490.

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This academy is to be something very different to the one at the Bureau d'Adresse, which the writer qualifies as "infame" – merely good enough for valets and lackeys. Such a characterisation exposes the contempt with which certain members of the higher spheres of society viewed Renaudot and his circle. The scholars of the proposed academy would benefit from a pension and therefore willingly surrender their genius to the objectives of the state, that is to say, the cardinal:[138]

> Ceux que la fortune y jettera rencontreront en ce climat un benin aspect de ce Soleil que leur fera produire leurs bons fruits, d'autant plus agreables, que pour n'estre point à charge, Ils rejettent tout autre pain & gain que celuy que leur art & capacité leur permet de gaigner: & ne pretendre y vivre sans contribuer au bien & service de cest estat.[139]

The letter writer did not have a high opinion of the *conférences* or the Bureau d'Adresse, yet his comments prove the great importance Renaudot and his academy had acquired. They were the model against which a new academy would have to position itself. The letter writer lobbies for a high-class version of Renaudot's circle of *conférenciers*, which, through its financial dependence, would be entirely in the service of the state. The *beaux esprits*, like plants in a greenhouse, would grow their glorious fruit under the sun of Richelieu. Again, I do not know if this letter was ever actually sent to Richelieu. Regardless, the ideas expressed in it likely would not have displeased the cardinal, the architect of the absolutist French state.

While no academy of this sort emerged during Richelieu's lifetime, the idea presented in the letter did live on. Under King Louis XIV, Colbert later tried to found a general academy covering all disciplines, designed to do the absolutist state's bidding and which resembled the academy described in the letter.[140] This project failed – due, among other things, to the Académie française's opposition to the plans. Yet the Académie royale des sciences, established in 1666, would indeed perform some of the duties described above. It was meant to promote the king's vision of the sciences, their advancement, and their public utility. One of its more concrete goals was to find practical solutions to certain military and economic problems.[141] Still, the Académie royale des sciences' overarching objective was to spread the king's glory. The academy had to enable "[…] le dessein qu'avoit le Roi d'avancer, & de favoriser les Sciences, & ce qu'il attendoit d'eux pour l'utilité pub-

138 After the party of the queen mother, Marie de' Medici, went into exile after the Day of the Dupes, Richelieu, according to some historians, could be qualified as the de facto ruler of France; see Rathbun 2019, p. 170. Others, while acknowledging Richelieu's dominant position, still stress the importance of several other councillors; see Ranum 1963, pp. 2–4. As Ranum points out, the king's great involvement in every detail of government should not be forgotten. Richelieu could grow so powerful only because he was able to retain the king's favour; see ibid., pp. 12–26.

139 BNF F 18599–18600 (papiers du chancelier Séguier 1539–1654), cote II, pp. 489–490, p. 489.

140 For a discussion of Colbert's academy, see Hahn 1971, pp. 9–14.

141 See Goldgar 1995, p. 233.

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lique, & pour la gloire de son Regne".[142] Science historian Roger Hann qualifies the relation of the Académie royale des sciences to the king in a similar manner: "Science, as much as literature and the arts, was meant to bring brilliance to the Crown as well as to bask in the dazzling glory of the Roi Soleil."[143] Moreover, the academy was also meant to figure as a kind of counterbalance to the Sorbonne, which had acquired too much power in the eyes of the Crown.[144]

The officialised French academies all performed specialised duties in the service of the king.[145] The Académie française watched over the French language and literary production. The Académie royale des sciences figured as a kind of "consultative assembly designed to answer the Crown's queries on technological problems".[146] Given their official functions, they less resembled the private circles they had often emerged from and evolved more and more into government agencies.

Renaudot's *conférences* were not institutionalised in this manner. Yet their founder's close relationship with Richelieu and the king was nevertheless evident. This relation influenced all of Renaudot's decisions. As I have shown in this last part of the chapter, it stands to reason that it also influenced the *Conférences*' form, even though other factors, such as Renaudot's perspective on the public and the ideal of polite, impartial discussions played an equally important role.

The printed *Conférences* find themselves at a curious crossroads between orality and print, as they cannot be considered mere transcripts of the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse. My analysis has shown that Renaudot did not faithfully render every contribution but reserved the right to publish only a selection of the most interesting arguments. Besides, what is printed in the *Conférences* is not limited to the arguments the *conférenciers* presented at the Bureau d'Adresse: people interested in answering the questions proposed but unable to attend the meetings could contribute via letter, a mode of participation which Renaudot accepted and even explicitly solicited. It is difficult to say how many people seized his offer, as the *Conférences* do not indicate if a contribution was presented verbally or rather posted on a sheet of paper. This confirms that we cannot treat the printed *Conférences* as exact renderings of what happened in the discussion meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse.

Renaudot's publishing practice also had consequences for the form the debates took. The printed *Conférences* reached a far greater public than any other form of originally in-person debate had ever envisaged. This format bore certain risks for the participants of the *conférences* as well as Renaudot himself, as they became potential targets for disagreeing audiences. To prevent quarrels and endless disputes, it was easier to eschew any kind of conclusion, a quality which aligns the

142 *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences* 1733, p. 14.
143 Hahn 1971, p. 9.
144 See Wear 1982, p. 120.
145 See Hahn 1971, p. 47.
146 Ibid., p. 14.

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Conférences with the impartiality practised by Early Modern newspaper editors. Leaving the decision about which opinion to favour to the readers also satisfied the ideals of *honnêteté* and *politesse*, which demanded that no *conférencier* insist too much on their opinion.

Yet the focus on the ideal of disengaged civility – intended to reign the *conférenciers*' conclusion-less discussions – also has something to do with Renaudot's proximity to Richelieu and the French state. The cardinal probably would not have granted the *conférenciers* such great freedom of discussion had they produced definite answers to the questions asked at the Bureau d'Adresse. If Renaudot wished to retain the 'innocence' of his academy and its liberty of discussion, conclusions could not be provided.

The *Conférences* – in their goal of vulgarising knowledge – can probably best be viewed as an exercise in judgement for their readers. No official institution or body stipulates which answer is the best one; the readers make their choice themselves. The reasoning behind this setup may be varied, but the outcome remains the same: the power of decision is given to the public and no longer belongs to a single authority. In this way, the *Conférences* ultimately enable a plural vision of what knowledge and truth is.

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Part III –
Two Case Studies

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6

Degrees of Perfection: The *Conférences* and the *Querelle des Femmes*

> *Car les hommes non contens de les avoir réduïtes par ces loix en perpétüelle tutelle, qui est une veritable servitude, de les avoir si mal partagées aux successions, de s'estre rendus maistres de leurs biens sous le nom de maris: les privent encor injustement du plus grand de tous les biens, qui est celuy de l'esprit: dont la science est le plus bel ornement, puisqu'elle est le souverain bien de ce monde & de l'autre.*[1]
>
> *Aussi lisons-nous bien que nostre premier pere Adam a esté sçavant, mais non pas Eve; au contraire, le seul desir qu'elle a eu de devenir sçavante en mangeant le fruit de l'arbre, a ruïné tout le monde.*[2]

It is 17 March 1636, and an animated debate concerning the ability and appropriateness of women to acquire scientific knowledge is taking place at the Parisian Bureau d'Adresse on the rue de la Calandre. On this particular day, the attendees are discussing the question "S'il est expedient aux femmes d'estre scavantes",[3] a topic rooted in the tradition of *querelle des femmes* debates about the value and merit of women vis-à-vis men and their respective positions in society.[4] In 1636, this controversy is already centuries old. Further questions linked to the *querelle* were discussed at the Maison du Grand-Coq on other occasions, and some of the arguments scattered between the pages of the *Conférences* reveal their astonishing nature upon closer inspection. Theoretically, these debates could have had the potential to challenge the traditional order of society in the Paris of the 1630s and '40s. My aim in this chapter is to determine the nature of these *Conférences* – that is to say, to reveal how they should be read and to examine what consequences they eventually brought about. This enables an explanation of the radicality of certain statements proposed in the *Conférences* concerning men and women.

This chapter begins with an examination of the *querelle des femmes* in general. An analysis of the *Conférence* "Quel est le plus noble de l'homme ou de la femme"[5]

1 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, p. 91.
2 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, p. 93.
3 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, pp. 90–96.
4 Concerning the *querelle*, see, for example, Bock and Zimmermann 1997, p. 16.
5 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 446–456.

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reveals the similarities between the *querelle* and certain *Conférences* concerned with gender order. Overall, these questions fall into three categories: firstly, those where the *conférenciers* discuss questions that have nothing to do with the *querelle* but where they nevertheless engage in arguments concerned with the superiority or inferiority of men or women; secondly, those concerned with questions relevant to the *querelle* but which do not discuss men and women at all; and, finally, those directly linked to the *querelle*, such as the *noblesse* and the *savantes* debate.

Even though these discussions may make it seem as if women themselves were defending their cause against their male counterparts, my examination in the second part of the chapter reveals that the exact opposite is the case. It is most unlikely that women were present at Renaudot's discussion meetings. A close reading of the *Conférences* in question demonstrates that they are by no means actual debates between men and women but rather discussions men led about women. It becomes apparent that these debates are highly rhetorical. They predominantly take up the same *loci communes* also used in the *inventio* of other *querelle des femmes* texts. Be they in favour of women or against them, the *conférenciers*' contributions must be read as rhetorical arguments *in utramque partem*. This means that they do not necessarily reveal what the speakers really believe and, consequently, cannot simply be sorted into the categories of feminist or anti-feminist. Moreover, the majority of arguments in the *Conférences* that cover men and women – and this also counts for those arguments superficially in favour of women – demonstrate a "conservative desire to maintain the fabric of society".[6]

In this rhetorical debate, certain *conférenciers* most interestingly refuse to take a side. I will examine this refusal more closely in one particular contribution to the *noblesse* debate, in the third part of this chapter. The speaker here argues for the individual consideration of men and women and refuses to accept the dominance of one of the concerned parties over the other. This *conférencier*'s contribution resembles the arguments presented by the contemporary writer Marie de Gournay and then by François Poulain de la Barre, who were no longer interested in debating the superiority or inferiority of men and women, arguing for equality instead. Arguments of this kind were a potential way to disengage from the rhetorical nature of the debate and were vital in preparing the grounds for later feminist claims of freedom and equality.

6 Maclean 1981, p. 56.

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6.1 *Querelle* in the *Conférences*: „Ce combat icy de la noblesse & dignité de l'un au dessus de l'autre"

In "Quel est le plus noble de l'homme ou de la femme",[7] the *conférenciers* debate the question of who between man and woman must be considered more noble and therefore superior to the other. Thereby, they focus on a topic embedded in the tradition of the *querelle des femmes* – a controversy surrounding the nature and status of women. The *querelle des femmes* was a written debate that, after originating in France in the thirteenth century, spread quickly across Europe. Contrary to what its name suggests, it not only deals with the notion of women but also explores men's role in society. It is, as historian Gisela Bock and literary scholar Margarete Zimmermann have argued, an all-encompassing debate about gender (*ein umfassender Geschlechterstreit*).[8]

The question regarding when exactly the *querelle* begins and ends provokes considerable discord in the secondary literature. Helen Swift in *Gender, Writing, and Performance: Men Defending Women in Late Medieval France (1440–1538)* (2008) argues that the earliest text that should be ascribed to the *querelle* is the *Roman de la Rose*,[9] which Guillaume de Lorris began writing around 1235 and Jean de Meun finished in the 1270s.[10] Others, such as Zimmermann, see the starting point of the *querelle* with Christine de Pizan's reactions to especially the second part of the *Roman de la Rose* around 1400.[11] Ian Maclean situates the *querelle*'s end in the first part of the seventeenth century, where the 'traditional' debate in its rhetoricity concludes.[12] Other researchers, on the contrary, are convinced that it continued until the end of the French Revolution or even beyond.[13] Éliane Viennot indeed argues that the *querelle* lasted until the first decades of the twentieth century.[14]

It is equally impossible to define the *querelle* by way of establishing formal characteristics, as contributions to it appear in manifold forms. They can be set in "verse and in prose, in dialogue form and as discursive arguments".[15] Consequently, Maclean points out that the genre can be defined only with regard to content.[16]

All these difficulties in defining the *querelle* arise, as Marie-Frédérique Pellegrin explains, because the term '*querelle des femmes*' is a "catégorie rétrospective", forged

7 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 446–456.
8 Bock and Zimmermann 1997, p. 16. See also Cescutti 2001, p. 11, and Warner 2011, pp. 1–8. As Joan Kelly explains, (female) participants in the *querelle* "focused on what we would now call gender. That is, they had a sure sense that the sexes are culturally, and not just biologically, formed" (1982, p. 7).
9 Swift provides an informative chronology of the various primary texts she ascribes to the *querelle*. See Swift 2008, p. 247.
10 For more detail on the *Roman*'s history of origins, see Zimmermann 1993, pp. 4–14.
11 See ibid., p. 3. See also Bock and Zimmermann 1995, p. 20, and Kelly 1982, p. 15.
12 See Maclean 1977, p. 63. I will explore this point in more depth later in this chapter.
13 For an overview of these debates, see Pellegrin 2013, p. 71. See also Winn 2002, p. 7.
14 See Viennot 2012, p. 7.
15 Maclean 1977, pp. 26–27. See also Bock and Zimmermann 1995, p. 24.
16 Maclean 1977, pp. 26–27.

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at the turn of the twentieth century and retroactively applied to an ill-defined number of texts.[17] Contemporary writers had no awareness of contributing to a unified debate. Therefore, the *querelle*, as we see it today, must be defined as a "unification a posteriori" of multiform contributions.[18]

What is undoubtedly certain, however, is that *querelle* texts discuss the nature of men and women and their position in society, often focusing on the debate of 'who is more noble, man or woman', or directly arguing in favour of or against women's faculties for learning. The poet and philosopher Christine de Pizan was the first woman to actively take part in the *querelle*, skilfully defending women in her *Epistre au Dieu d'amours* (1399)[19] against attacks diffused in the *Roman de la Rose*.[20] Yet besides Lucrezia Marinella in *La nobiltà et l'eccellenza delle donne, co'difetti et mancamenti de gli huomini* (1601) and Moderata Fonte in *Il merito delle donne* (1600) – to name the most famous authors – few women writers engaged in *querelle* discussions about their own worth and abilities.[21] In many cases, the defence of women is performed by male authors,[22] such as Giovanni Boccaccio in *De mulieribus claris* (1361–62)[23] and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim in his declamation *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* (1529).[24]

Most interestingly, authors such as Boccaccio not only argue in favour of women but also produced texts attacking them, as can be seen in the example of his *Il Corbaccio o Laberinto d'Amore* (ca. 1360). Arguments for and against women are also sometimes presented in one and the same text. Fonte divides the ladies debating the question of women in *Il merito delle donne* into two parties: the first group defends women and the second attacks them.[25] Similarly, the characters in Hélisenne de Crenne's text argue both pro and contra women.[26] This illustrates the rhetorical character of the *querelle* and shows that we cannot easily attribute particular arguments to the personal belief of their authors – but more on that later.[27]

17 Pellegrin 2013, p. 71. See also Viennot 2012, p. 9.
18 Pellegrin 2013, p. 71.
19 This also counts for other texts written by Christine de Pizan, such as *La Cité des dames* (1404–1405). See Swift 2008, p. 4.
20 See Cerquiglini-Toulet 1993, p. 52. See also Zimmermann 1993.
21 Typically the women who took part in the *querelle* were highly educated and belonged to the nobility. See Opitz 1995, p. 18. For an overview of women writers and their relation to the literary canon in France, Italy, and England, see Benson and Kirkham 2005.
22 See Bock and Zimmermann 1995, p. 20.
23 *De mulieribus claris* provides examples of virtuous women but also includes "wicked heroines" (McLeod 1991, p. 69). As Glenda McLeod points out, 'claris' stands for both 'famous' and 'infamous' (ibid., p. 77). Boccaccio also compiled a catalogue of illustrious men, *De casibus virorum illustrium* (ca. 1355–1374), which contains some examples of women. See McLeod 1991, p. 77.
24 Originally a lecture, Agrippa's text was printed twenty years after its originally presentation. See Warner 2011, p. 94.
25 See Zimmermann 1992, pp. 261–262.
26 See Warner 2011, p. 7.
27 See Opitz 1995, p. 16. For a comprehensive analysis of this aspect, see Traninger 2008.

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Nevertheless, certain scholars, such as Ian Maclean in *Women Triumphant – Feminism in French Literature, 1610–1652* (1977) and Constance Jordan in *Renaissance Feminism*: *Literary Texts and Political Models* (1990), insist on labelling defences of women in the *querelle* as feminist.[28] Joan Kelly opposes a misogynist to a feminist side in the debate.[29] This practice is disputed by others, such as Linda Woodbridge and Lyndan Warner.[30] Given the rhetorical conventions of the Renaissance, Warner insists that invariably describing the champions of women in the *querelle* as early feminists is as reductive as classifying all of their opponents as misogynists.[31] Certain researchers therefore argue that it is more appropriate to use other terms: Swift proposes 'pro-feminine',[32] whereas Meredith K. Ray, in *Daughters of Alchemy: Women and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (2015), prefers 'pro-women'.[33] I will return to this debate with regard to the *Conférences* on *querelle* topics in the course of this chapter.

In the *Conférences*, debates concerned with the relationship of men and women as well as with their particular abilities divide into three distinct groups.[34] It is important to note that the *Conférences* I cite to illustrate these groups are only examples. The lists provided in the footnotes are not exhaustive; instead, they aim to provide a general idea about *querelle*-related questions discussed by the *conférenciers*.

First of all, *querelle* topics arise from the sidelines of a great number of *Conférences* which otherwise have little to do with the matter. This first group includes questions such as "Pourquoy tous ayment-ils mieux commander qu'obeir?",[35] "S'il est plus mal-aisé d'acquerir que de conserver?",[36] and "Lequel est le plus porté au vice, de l'ignorant ou du scavant".[37] Regarding the first question, for example, the debate turns to women's need to obey their husbands and masters with the eighth speaker. This speaker claims that, in nature, the more noble inevitably commands the less noble and the most powerful quality dominates the others. In the household, the male – as the most perfect – commands the female: "[…] dans toute la na-

28 Colette H. Winn also detects the "expression d'une pensée proprement féministe" in a number of *querelle* texts written by women between 1597 and 1694 (Winn 2002, p. 29).

29 See Kelly 1982, p. 12 (for example). Kelly also aims at establishing Christine de Pizan as the first feminist thinker (ibid., p. 5).

30 See Woodbridge 1984, p. 3, and Warner 2011, p. 7.

31 Ibid., pp. 96–97.

32 Swift 2008.

33 Bock also discusses this question and proposes a number of German-language alternatives. Nevertheless, she does see certain texts as the manifestation of "Renaissance feminism". See Bock 1997, pp. 353–356.

34 Mazauric also proposes three categories in her analysis of the *Conférences* concerned with men and women. According to her, there are those questions directly addressing gender order (the *savantes* and *noblesse* debates, for example). Another group comprises questions dealing with the common existence of men and women in society ("Du cocuage", for instance). Then, there are questions that treat other topics but in which speakers nevertheless voice arguments about women. See Mazauric 1997, pp. 346–347.

35 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 40.II, pp. 673–681.

36 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 45.II, pp. 753–758.

37 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 249, pp. 505–512.

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ture, le plus noble commande à ce qui l'est moins, la plus puissante qualité predomine aux autres. […] dans l'œconomie, le masle, comme le plus parfait, commande à la femelle […]".[38] This illustrates how the speakers often base their arguments on the *noblesse* of men and women, even when they debate questions that, from the outset, have little to do with the *querelle*.

There is also a multiplicity of questions that deal with topics verging on issues of the *querelle des femmes*. Yet in many cases, answers belonging to this second group do not concentrate on gender order but rather diverge in more general directions. Regarding questions such as "S'il peut avoir un amour des-interesse"[39] and "Si le mary et la femme doivent estre de mesme humeur",[40] debates about the relationship of men and women and their respective virtue hardly play a role. That women are not treated separately is especially surprising in the debate concerning "De la Chasteté".[41] Given the perceived centrality of the virtue of chastity for women,[42] it is astonishing that this *Conférence* discusses its importance only for humans in general, without focusing on women in any way. Similarly, in "Si la possession diminue l'amour",[43] "Si l'inconstance en amour est vicieuse",[44] and "Si la beauté du corps est indice de la bonté et beauté de l'esprit",[45] the *conférenciers* debate only in general terms.

Furthermore, a number of topics in the third group – most prominently "Quel est le plus noble de l'homme ou de la femme",[46] "S'il est expedient aux femmes d'estre scavantes",[47] and "Si la conversation des femmes est utile aux hommes"[48] – refer directly to core matters of the *querelle*. Other questions in this group include the following. Apart from the *noblesse* debate, speakers discuss topics such as "Quel est le plus enclin à l'amour, l'homme ou la femme"[49] and "Du caprice des femmes" [50] in the first volume of *Conférences*. The second volume covers topics like "Si la femme a plus d'amour envers son mary, que le mary envers sa femme"[51] and "Des Hermaphrodites".[52] The third volume encompasses the *savantes* debate, but it also includes questions such as "S'il vaut mieux que les hommes ayent plusieurs femmes, ou les femmes plusieurs maris",[53] "Lequel vaut mieux se marier, ou ne

38 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 40.II, pp. 680–681.
39 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 12.II, pp. 210–219.
40 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 65.II, pp. 250–256.
41 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 71.II, pp. 345–352.
42 See, for example, King and Rabil 1999, p. XXI.
43 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 174, pp. 781–788.
44 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 200, pp. 121–128.
45 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 293, pp. 897–904.
46 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 446–456.
47 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, pp. 90–96.
48 Vol. 5, *Conférence* 307, pp. 89–96.
49 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 14.II, pp. 248–252.
50 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 46.II, pp. 766–774.
51 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 83.II, pp. 539–544.
52 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 100.II, pp. 831–868.
53 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 130, pp. 389–398.

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se marier point",[54] "Si la sterilité vient plus communément du costé des hommes que des femmes, et au contraire",[55] and "Comment s'engendrent les malles et les femelles".[56] The fourth volume presents "Auquel on est plus obligé au pere ou à la mere"[57] and "Duquel l'enfant tient-il le plus, du pere ou de la mere".[58] Finally, the fifth volume asks questions such as "Lequel aime le plus ses Enfans, le Pere ou la Mere"[59] and "Du Menage".[60]

While I also occasionally touch upon questions from the other groups, this last group is the focus of this chapter. To illustrate the relation of the *Conférences* to the larger *querelle des femmes*, I propose a close reading of "Quel est le plus noble de l'homme ou de la femme".[61] Fundamentally, the question of 'nobility' aims at determining whether it is man or woman who should be considered the pride of creation – the most perfect being living on God's earth. This is a topic the *querelle* is extensively concerned with.[62] My discussion of the *noblesse* debate shows that the *Conférences*, given their form, figure as a kind of micro *querelle*, or a *querelle* in highly contracted form, in which many of the conventional arguments about men and women are represented.

As the first speaker considering the question "Quel est le plus noble de l'homme ou de la femme" explains, the debate is essentially a fight over the nobility and dignity of one sex over the other: it is a combat "de la noblesse & dignité de l'un au dessus de l'autre".[63] This suggests that the *conférenciers*, here, are not concerned with finding a compromise between men and women; rather, they are supposed to pick one side and to defend it at all costs. The fundamentally agonistic nature of this debate is represented by the way the question is posed: 'Who is more noble, man or woman.' Decide, and uphold your point.[64]

One major difficulty arises concerning the need to pick a side, however. There is no uninvolved party in this debate, the first speaker discloses: "[…] il ne se trouve point de Juge qui n'ait interest en la cause."[65] At the end of his statement, the *conférencier* therefore claims that, in order to prevent bad blood between men and women, he does not wish to voice a definite opinion: "En examinant les raisons de part et d'autre, je trouve plus de seureté à suspendre mon jugement, pour ne trahier point mon party, & n'irriter pas l'autre, qu'on dit ne se reconcilier pas si

54 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 141, pp. 497–508.
55 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 177, pp. 805–820.
56 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 185, pp. 897–904.
57 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 197, pp. 89–96.
58 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 287, pp. 844–856.
59 Vol. 5, *Conférence* 332, pp. 321–330.
60 Vol. 5, *Conférence* 346, pp. 469–478.
61 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 446–456.
62 See Maclean 1977, p. 35.
63 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 447.
64 Regarding the agonistic nature of Early Modern debates, see also chapter 4.
65 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 447.

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aisément comme on l'offence."[66] Nevertheless, the position he takes is transparent enough. He suggests that women – the vain, frail, and feeble sex (characteristics traditionally ascribed to women in the *querelle*)[67] – are less noble than men. The speaker only suspends his judgement "par complaisance à ce sexe qui veut estré loüé, & par compassion de sa fragilité & foiblesse […]".[68]

The second speaker sees no need to refrain from overtly picking a side. He argues that women are nobler, as they are always pursued by men, which would not be the case if men were the more perfect sex: "Le deuxiesme dist, Que les hommes recherchans les femmes, comme ils font, montrent assez sans parler l'estime en laquelle ils les ont: pource qu'on ne recherche pas une chose qu'on mesprise."[69] Moreover, women's greater noblesse stems from the place, matter, and order of their creation. In contrast to Adam, Eve was created in an earthly paradise, and she is not made of mud but of Adam's flesh. It is also evident that God started his creation with abject matters and only later created that which is nobler. Woman, as the last of his creations, must therefore be the epitome of perfection:

> Mais leur noblesse par dessus celle des hommes se tire principalement du lieu, de la matiere et de l'ordre de leur creation. Car l'homme n'a pas eu cet avantage d'avoir esté crée dans le Paradis terrestre comme la femme, qui a esté produite d'une matiere bien plus noble que lui: puis qu'il a esté fait de terre, & elle d'une des costes de l'homme […]. Et quant à l'ordre de la creation, Dieu en la production des corps mixtes a commancé par les choses les plus abjectes, & a fini aux plus nobles […] il a crée l'homme comme le maistre de toutes ces choses-là; & enfin la femme comme un chef-d'œuvre de la nature & modelle de toute perfection, maistresse de l'homme […].[70]

The speaker here refers to an argument that frequently appears in the *querelle des femmes*.[71] It is voiced, for example, by Agrippa in his influential *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* (1529).[72] The arguments *e loco*, *e materia*, and *ex ordine* can, however, also be turned on their heads by those insisting on women's inferior status.[73] I will come back to this in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

The second *conférencier* then enumerates virtues commonly ascribed to women: their greater chastity, their capacity for compassion and fidelity, their charity and

66 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 448.
67 See Hassauer 1994, p. 25.
68 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 448.
69 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 448. A speaker voices a similar argument while debating the question "S'il peut avoir un amour des-interesse": "[…] il est plus noble d'estre aimé que d'aimer, comme plus excellent d'estre recherché que de rechercher autrui […]" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 12.II, p. 211). According to Prudence Allen, this is an argument falsely ascribed to Aristotle. See Allen 1985, p. 450.
70 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 449.
71 See Opitz 1995, pp. 16–17.
72 See Maclean 1977, p. 26.
73 See Opitz 1995, pp. 16–17.

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devotion, and their patience.[74] He also produces a list of virtuous women comprising historical examples but also contemporaries such as Marie de Gournay.[75] These examples stand in the tradition of the manifold catalogues of exemplary women produced in the *querelle*.[76]

The third speaker refutes the arguments of the second. He is certain that women are completely subordinate to men, as it is stated in the Bible: "[…] Dieu en a donné l'Arrest en ces mots, *La femme sera sujette à l'homme*".[77] Also drawing his arguments from the book of Genesis, this speaker asserts that God only managed to marry Adam and Eve because he first rendered Adam asleep. Otherwise, he never would have succeeded: "Et pour marier Adam il ne trouva rien de plus expedient que de l'endormir: sans doute, pource qu'estant eveillé il dust beaucoup travaillé à s'y resoudre."[78] Moreover, he asserts women are merely a necessary evil for the conservation of the human race. Men apply themselves to women only for the common good. According to the third speaker, Aristotle even goes so far as to call women 'monsters', while others, more generous, only proclaim them an 'error of nature'. They must be considered an "erreur de la nature" because nature, always striving to create the most perfect being – man – sometimes produces woman because of a lack of heat.[79] As Maclean explains, this does not mean that those arguing in the Aristotelian tradition understand women as "against the intention of nature", as both men and women are needed for procreation; yet, at the level of the individual, "females are the result of a generative event not carried through to its final conclusion".[80] After enumerating a number of other conventional arguments about the deficiency and baseness of women, the speaker concludes with a citation from the Bible: "[…] la malice de l'homme vaut mieux que la bonté de la femme."[81] Even man's malice is better than woman's goodness.[82]

The last person to voice an opinion, however, steps out of line. In refusing to pick a side, the fourth speaker deviates from the course predetermined by the structure of the *noblesse* question. He argues that qualities such as *noblesse* cannot be attributed to the sex of a person and concludes that the question cannot be de-

74 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 450.
75 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 450–451.
76 Glenda McLeod (1991) devotes her book to analysing the catalogues of women from antiquity to the Renaissance.
77 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 452.
78 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 452–453.
79 "De sorte que ceux lesquels considerans d'un costé l'utilité de ce sexe pour la conservation de l'espece des hommes, & par l'autre les maux dont il est cause, n'ont pas mal rencontré, qui ont appelle la femme un mal necessaire, auquel les hommes s'appliquent par un instinct naturel, pour le bien commun, au prejudice du particulier […]. C'est un animal tellement imparfait, que Platon a douté s'il le mettoit parmi les irraisonnables: & qu'Aristote l'appelle monstre: ceux qui les traitent plus doucement, un simple erreur de la nature, laquelle par defaut de chaleur n'a pû parvenir à faire un masle" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 453).
80 Maclean 1977, p. 8. See also Lloyd 1966, p. 25.
81 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 454.
82 Ecclesiasticus 42:14.

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cided in general terms: "[…] chacun desquels [i.e., de l'homme et de la femme] pris en general n'a rien en soy qui ne soit tres-beau, tres-bon et tres-parfaict, & conséquemment tres-noble […]. S'il y a du défaut, il vient de l'individu, & ne se doit pas plustost attribüer au sexe qu'à l'espece."[83]

As can be seen, the *noblesse* debate follows a particular structure. Something similar to an introduction is proposed in the first statement, followed by a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Notably, a similar structure also appears in other moral-philosophical debates, such as "Lequel est à préferer, la compagnie ou la solitude"[84] and "Lequel est le plus propre à l'estude, le soir ou le matin".[85] This raises the question of whether Renaudot deliberately edited these debates to make them appear in this manner. As I showed in chapter 5, it was not Renaudot's aim to print every argument uttered at the Bureau d'Adresse's discussion meetings; rather, he printed only those opinions that 'merited' it.[86] Thus, he may also have rearranged statements in the printed *Conférences* and presented them in a different order than that in which they had been originally voiced at the in-person *conférences*.

It could be the case that Renaudot, in the particular case of the *noblesse* debate, arranged the statements in a way his readers would find more appealing. According to him, some of the participants yearned for exactly this and wished the *Conférences* to always be presented in an affirmative-negative-conclusion ordering. However, Renaudot argues that it would be reductive to force all debates into such a form. Some topics are suited to it, others are not, he claims. Moral-philosophical topics appear to belong to the former group.[87]

According to Renaudot, this structure appeared automatically in certain cases. This suggests that the speakers themselves proposed the arguments in this manner and that Renaudot did not rearrange them. For the *noblesse* debate, this could mean that Renaudot did not alter its structure after all. It potentially arose organically, given the fact that, as a moral-philosophical topic, it was suitable for such composition.

Either way, the *noblesse Conférence* contains many arguments that also surface in the larger *querelle* debate. It sees one *conférencier* fervently defend the superiority of women, one attack them by claiming their inferiority, and two refuse to pass judgement for very different reasons. Altogether, the *noblesse Conférence* appears like a contracted *querelle* in in its own right.

83 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 456.
84 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 166, pp. 717–724.
85 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 191, pp. 41–48.
86 See vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 11.
87 "Il s'en trouve depuis quelques-uns qui eussent desire qu'on fist parler que deux personnes, l'une pour l'affirmative, l'autre pour la negative de la proposition, & qu'en tout cas un troisiesme fust venu à consilier leurs avis differens és choses où une troisiesme opinion peut avoir lieu, afin que les auditeurs n'eussent plus qu'à se ranger à celuy des avis qui leur eust semblé le meilleur: Mais comme cela s'est fait quelquesfois & peut continuer és matiéres qui y sont disposée: Ainsi semble-t'il injuste à d'autres […]" (Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, pp. 14–15).

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6.2 The Presence or Absence of Women at the Debate Meetings and the Rhetorical Nature of the *Querelle*

The *Conférence* on *noblesse* astonishes today's readers with an intervention containing a number of radical arguments for women's superiority. As we have seen, the debate's third speaker reasons that women are – given the place, matter, and order of their creation – nobler than men. Woman is a masterpiece of nature, a model of perfection, and the *maîtresse* of man.[88] Regarding the structure of society in the seventeenth century and the general position of women within it, this view in the *Conférences* seems somewhat surprising. At first glance, it appears to resemble writer Lucrezia Marinella's fervent defence of women in *La nobiltà et l'eccellenza delle donne* (1601). Marinella's text can be read as a polemic answer to Giuseppe Passi's "diatribe about women's alleged defects",[89] *Dei donneschi difetti* (1599).[90] Similar to Marinella's refutation of Passi's arguments, the intervention at the *conférence* appears like a direct plea in favour of women, by a woman. The multiperspectival form of the printed *Conférences* suggests to the reader an ardent discussion between men and women about their respective positions in society. However, despite the fact that a number of scholars have suggested that women participated in the *conférences*, I argue that their presence was very much unlikely.

Moreover, whether women did or did not take part in *querelle* discussions does not influence the character of the pro-women arguments presented in them: women do not automatically argue 'sincerely' while men make only 'rhetorical' contributions.[91] Indeed, all *querelle* texts are determined by rhetoric.[92] Scholars have frequently noted that arguments in the *querelle* appear quite static. The reason for this is that their *inventio* functions according to rhetorical *topoi* and *loci communes*. Because *querelle* texts operate according to the rhetorical principle of *in utramque partem*, it does not make sense to ascribe any kind of feminist values to pro-woman arguments in them. Positions defended in the *querelle* might – but do not necessarily have to – coincide with their author's personal convictions, and they are not connected with any political demands for equality between men and women. It becomes apparent that *querelle* arguments, even ones that claim women's superiority, do not aim at changing women's position in society. The underlying concept of gender polarity, stating that the female is inferior to the male, remains untouched.

According to Eva Jellinek, the question of whether women participated in the *conférences* has to be answered in the affirmative, as she asserts in "La présence féminine dans les conférences du Bureau d'adresse de Th. Renaudot (1633–1642)"

88 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 449.
89 This is explained by Letizia Panizza, who provides the introduction to Anne Dunhill's English translation of Marinella's text. See Panizza 1999, p. 2.
90 Passi's text first saw the light of day in the context of a learned academy, the Accademia dei Ricovrati, founded in 1599 in Padua. See the title page of the 1618 edition.
91 This has been pointed out by Warner (2011, p. 5) and Swift (2008, p. 5), for example.
92 See Traninger 2008, p. 183.

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(1987). Yet the evidence she cites to support her argument is not entirely convincing. She begins by alluding to a speaker in the first *conférence* who claims to be able to teach whomever, man or woman, perfect logic in only eight hours:[93] "J'offre de faire comprendre en 8. heures (à scavoir une par jour, pour éviter la fatigue des esprits) à qui que ce soit, homme ou femme d'âge competent, une parfait Logique […]."[94] Contrary to Jellinek's assumption, this speaker's conviction of his ability to teach "homme ou femme" does not mean that women were actually present. The context of his comment is crucial to understanding this fact: as the *conférencier* is speaking at the *heure des inventions*, he is presenting his invention to an assembly supposed to judge it. What the logician is saying merely means that – theoretically – he would be able to teach men and (even) women logic with the new method introduced at the Bureau d'Adresse. It does not mean, as Jellinek suggests, that he was already teaching logic to men and women present at this particular meeting.

Jellinek also argues that the *conférenciers* often discuss questions which concern women directly and which would not be of interest without their presence.[95] In this view, she follows French literature scholar Gustave Reynier, who had already asserted in 1929 that the questions discussed at the Bureau d'Adresse contained "plusieurs sujets très évidemment choisis pour elles [i.e., les femmes] et qui auraient perdu tout leur intérêt si elles n'avaient pas été là".[96] By way of example, Jellinek cites the second part of the 103rd *Conférence*, "Des fards".[97] According to her, this *Conférence* is a mere deliberation on cosmetics, a topic which could only be of significance to women.

It is true, as Jellinek claims, that the first speaker provides solutions to certain cosmetic problems. Yet he is even more interested in exploring the connection of beauty and virtue.[98] Beauty is so central for women because their authority and force over men depends on it, he argues. Therefore, they are often inclined to use *fards* to overpower nature or to preserve their beauty from the injuries of time.[99] The second speaker elaborates that using make-up is in no way morally reprehensible, as nothing pleases us without artifice. This can be seen in architecture, music, and many other arts.[100] The third speaker is certain that the face is the mir-

93 See Jellinek 1987, p. 180.
94 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 1.II, p. 14.
95 See Jellinek 1987, p. 186.
96 Reynier 1929, p. 147.
97 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 103.II, pp. 41–48.
98 As he explains, "[…] la beauté est la plus excellente qualité du corps, & la marque plus sensible de la beauté & bonté de lame [*sic*] […]" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 103.II, p. 41).
99 See vol. 3, *Conférence* 103.II, p. 41.
100 See vol. 3, *Conférence* 103.II, pp. 44–45.

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ror of the soul and that *fards* illicitly disguise it.[101] In contrast, the fourth speaker asserts that the face as the mirror of divinity must be carefully embellished.[102]

All in all, the *conférenciers* are more concerned with establishing whether it is morally acceptable to alter nature than with listing beauty potions. In the Early Modern period, cosmetics were indeed frequently discussed with reference to questions of authenticity and dissimulation.[103] In any case, the *Conférence* on *fards* is not at all like "une émission de radio destinée aux dames d'aujourd'hui, de plus en plus curieuses de recettes maison et de produits naturels",[104] as Jellinek alleges. Overall, her evidence for the participation of women in the *conférences* is not convincing, as she takes her examples out of their original context and does not sufficiently consider their background.

The fact that women were not allowed to use the Bureau d'Adresse's recruitment services suggests that women were also not present at the debate meetings.[105] As I argued in chapter 2, this does not altogether eliminate the possibility that they were still able to access the medical *consultations charitables* or the *conférences*.[106] Yet evidence in the printed *Conférences* also points in the contrary direction. Hidden between thousands of printed lines are a multiplicity of signs indicating that no women took part in the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse. Just a few lines below the defence of women cited above, the *noblesse* debate also contains the following statement: "Le 3. dist, Les femmes ne doivent point alleguer, voyans les hommes seuls traiter ce different sans elles, qu'il est aisé de louër les Atheniens dans la ville d'Athens […]."[107] The speaker claims that men like him, declaring their superiority over women, are not merely engaging in idle self-praise, even though there are no women present to defend their own position. According to the speaker, it can be stated lawfully that women are subordinated to men – even in their absence – as this view is anchored in the Bible.[108] The fact that this *conférencier* deems it necessary to argue in this way clearly demonstrates

101 "Le 3. dist, Que le visage estant le tableau & le miroir de l'ame, comme l'ypocrisie [*sic*] & le mensonge dans l'ame est contraire à la candeur & franchise sans laquelle il n'y auroit point de confidence ni d'amitié syncere dans le monde, mais des déguizemens & défiances perpétuelles: ainsi, le fard sur le visage est illicite & d'autant plus pernicieux que c'est un mensonge parlant" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 103.II, p. 46). On the cosmetic as the antithesis of (highly valued) virginity, see Bloch 1991, p. 106.

102 "Le 4. dist, Puis que la beauté est un des quatre dons du corps, il […] est permis de la conserver & accroistre tant qu'on peut, principalement celle du visage, lequel puis qu'il est le miroir de la divinité doit estre orné & embelli soigneusement […]" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 103.II, p. 47).

103 Regarding (Early Modern) beauty as a product of art, see Sammern and Saviello 2019a. According to Peter Paul Rubens, painting was nothing but *fard*. See Sammern and Saviello 2019b, p. 24. On rhetoric and dissimulation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Geitner 1992.

104 Jellinek 1987, p. 186.

105 Renaudot originally presents this constraint in the *Inventaire des addresses du Bureau de rencontre* 1630, p. 26.

106 See chapter 2, p. 46–47.

107 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 452.

108 See vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 452.

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that no women were present during the discussion regarding their superiority or inferiority. Men imposed themselves as arbiters of the question without consulting women. Nonetheless, through his wish to debilitate women's foreseeable counterargument to his point, the speaker expresses an awareness of the possibility that they could at least read the printed *Conférences*.[109]

Other evidence indicates that the absence of women at this particular discussion was no isolated case. In the twenty-sixth *Conférence*, the speakers consider the question of beauty.[110] They enumerate an exhaustive catalogue of thirty-one points that ought to make it possible to define exactly how beautiful a woman is.[111] According to their ideas, she must be young, should neither be too tall nor too short, neither too fat nor too skinny. Her whole body must be symmetrical, and her hair should be long and blonde, her skin delicate and light. Subsequently we learn that her teeth should be like pearls and her bust like two snowballs.[112] Before the first speaker initiates this catalogue of insignia of perfect beauty, he states, significantly, that he can only speak of what men find beautiful in women. Regarding the beauty of men, he advises women to compose their own list:

> […] ainsi ceux qui ont voulu parler de la beauté en ont imaginé une parfaite: laquélle (laissant à dire aux femmes les conditions qu'elles requierent aux beaux hommes) nous ferons consister pour leur regard en 31. poincts, dont plus une femme participera, & plus elle meritera le nom de belle.[113]

Yet throughout the debate, there isn't any mention of the features of beauty in men. Evidentially, men are examining the topic among themselves. There are no women present who could compile a catalogue of male beauty.

I therefore argue that no women took part in the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse. Consequently, the speaker arguing in favour of women in the *noblesse* debate must also be a man. No woman could have presented her own side against the attacks of men in their quarrel. This is important to make clear, because there is a tendency to identify women's contributions to the *querelle* as sincere arguments for equality, whereas men's contributions are often classified as rhetorical, that is to say, as ironic flippancy.[114] However, regardless of whether a contribution was written by a woman or a man, rhetoric is always already the system of refer-

109 For a more detailed analysis of Renaudot's publication strategies, see chapter 5.

110 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 26.II, p. 462. The page numbers of the *Conférence* on beauty are mixed up. Between pages 459 and 499 there are only twelve pages, and the numbers 462, 464, and 465 appear on multiple printed pages.

111 Such detailed catalogues of (conventional) female beauty stem from the Italian vernacular poetic tradition and were notably influenced by Petrarca but also by Pietro Bembo, Ludovico Ariosto, Mario Equicola, and others. See Cropper 1976, p. 385. As Elizabeth Cropper points out, even though Petrarca became so closely associated with them, he never "addressed himself to the simple enumeration" of the beautiful features of his Laura (ibid., p. 386).

112 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 26.II, pp. 464–465.

113 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 26.II, p. 464.

114 See Swift 2008, p. 5. See also Warner 2011, p. 5.

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ence regulating the *querelle*'s discourse (*diskurssteuerndes Referenzsystem*), as literary scholar Anita Traninger argues.[115]

Numerous scholars have observed that the arguments brought forward for or against women in the *querelle* almost always resemble each other.[116] Some insist that the *querelle*, even though its authors make use of the same sources, nevertheless harboured some potential for innovative argumentation.[117] The potential vitality of the debate is presented as somewhat astonishing – but it is not, in fact, surprising at all: Cicero already pointed out that the mere finding of arguments is no great art; rather, the orator's art consists in transforming the base materials of his speech through *vis* and *copia*.[118]

The reason the arguments in the *querelle* are so conventional can be found in the process of *inventio*, the point of origin of arguments presented in rhetorical debates. The finding of arguments in such debates functions by means of *topoi* and *loci communes*. *Topoi*, in Aristotle's conception, provide general points of view from which any topic can be analysed:[119]

> Topoi sind also Kategorien zur Befragung, Bewältigung und Einordnung von Wirklichkeit. Topoi, Loci [see note] bezeichnen die Quellen der Argumente, und nicht die konkreten Argumente selbst. Topoi sind nicht materieller Natur, sondern sind formelle Kategorien.[120]

In Cicero's formulation, *topoi* are the *sedes argumentorum* – the places where arguments reside.[121] These seats serve to arrange concrete arguments of universal validity that are called *loci communes*. In contrast to the *topoi*, the *loci communes* are not formal but (concrete) thematic elements; they are the linguistic elaboration of the topic defined by the *topos*.[122] It is important to note that this method of arranging and storing materials is intended to enable the formulation of arguments for and against a given thesis – it is designed for *in utramque partem* argumentation. [123]

An example: Citations from the book of Genesis describing the creation of Adam and Eve could, for instance, be organised according to the *topos* 'materia'. A *locus communis* under this heading would be that Eve was created from Adam's rib. This could then be steered in two different directions in an argument: the

115 Traninger 2008, p. 183.
116 See, for example, Bock and Zimmermann 1997, p. 18. Regarding the *Conférences* concerned with *querelle* topics, Kathleen Wellman has also noted this. See Wellman 2003, p. 326.
117 See, for example, Bock 1997, p. 357.
118 See Bornscheuer 1976, p. 64. Cicero refers to the orator's *elocutio*, which obviously falls flat in written texts. However, written texts must just as well transform the materials they work with through their use of language and stylistic means.
119 See Hess 1991, p. 72.
120 Ibid., p. 73. With "loci", Peter Hess here means the *loci dialectici*, not the *loci communes*. The *loci dialectici* are identical to the *topoi*.
121 See Bornscheuer 1976, p. 63.
122 See ibid., p. 67.
123 See Traninger 2008, p. 186. See also Sloane 1993, p. 164.

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material from which Eve stems was merely an insignificant part of Adam, and she must therefore be less noble than him; or, Eve was created from a nobler material – flesh – and not from mud like Adam, and thus Eve is more noble than Adam.[124] As can be seen, the *loci communes* in themselves are extremely flexible. The outcome depends on what the writer or speaker wants to argue.

The historian Ann M. Blair has shown that the centrality of *loci communes* for Early Modern text production led to the successful commercialisation of commonplace books, which were large collections of categorised commonplaces.[125] The Early Modern concept of 'commonplaces' was highly formalised and strict, and it greatly differed from the "fairly elastic" definition that is often projected onto the Early Modern period, as the French literary scholar Ann Moss has pointed out.[126] Today's scholars often use the term '*topos*' to describe a conventional, uninventive argument,[127] but this is actually rather a *locus*.[128]

The fact that two opposing arguments can and should be based on the same *locus* illustrates why it is not possible to simply identify rhetorical arguments with their author's real-life convictions. Discussions in the mode of *in utramque partem* revolve around the principle that the ideal orator should be able to defend two sides of an argument in a convincing manner and irrespective of personal convictions.[129] Regarding the *noblesse* debate, for example, a great orator would be able to argue that women are nobler than men. However, they should just as well be able to defend men's superiority. In these debates, one's own beliefs are of no importance; what is vital is the ability to take one of two possible sides and to persuade an audience. To be precise, the ultimate goal of *querelle* debates was not to convince but to delight (*delectare*) an audience. The rhetorical *genus* according to which it functions is the *genus demonstrativum*, the speech of praise and blame, as Traninger has indicated. The core competency ascribed to this genre is entertainment.[130] Because of this, it does not make sense to try to detect early feminist content in *querelle* literature. Regarding the term, this firstly would be highly anachronistic.[131] Furthermore, it also obscures the specific context of the *querelle* and the rhetorical tradition vital to an understanding of it.

Early Modern contributions to the *querelle* can be perceived as functioning like declamations.[132] Certain texts, such as Agrippa von Nettesheim's *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* (1529), even bear 'declamatio' on their title page, thereby

124 See Traninger 2008, p. 191.
125 See Blair 2010, pp. 62–116.
126 Moss 2010, pp. 1–2. For a text operating with such an 'elastic' definition of *topoi*, see, for example, Ernst Robert Curtius's chapter "Topik" in his *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (1993), pp. 89–115.
127 See, for example, Zimmermann 1997, p. 18.
128 See Bornscheuer 1976, p. 138.
129 See Traninger 2014a, pp. 199–200.
130 Traninger 2008, p. 188.
131 See, for example, Opitz 1995, p. 27.
132 For a more detailed discussion of declamation, see chapter 4.2.

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indicating that they must be read as a construction of learned discourse (*gelehrte Diskursmontage*).[133] Consequently, like declamations, *querelle* debates cannot be read as 'honest' debates, in the sense we would give this term today.

Like other contributions to the *querelle*, the *Conférences* concerned with women's *noblesse* and their ability to become *savantes* are often read outside the context that determines their status. While philosopher Simone Mazauric and historian Kathleen Wellman are both conscious of the similarities between certain *Conférences* and the *querelle des femmes*, they fail to take the rhetorical tradition of the *querelle* into consideration. They are unable to circumnavigate the pitfalls of the 'honesty' problem. As to the argument in favour of women in the *noblesse* debate, Mazauric claims: "Ce plaidoyer est sans doute parfaitement sincère".[134] Speaking on the *querelle* in general, she tries to establish a difference between "adversaires des femmes et partisans d'un mouvement d'émancipation qui était en train de s'accomplir".[135] In a similar manner, Wellman is certain that contributions to the question of women in the *Conférences* "are informed either by a fundamental belief in the inferiority of women or by an attempt to mitigate it".[136]

However, in the context of rhetorical debates such as the *querelle des femmes*, the question about whether someone believed what they argued simply did not pose itself. This does not mean that certain participants of the *querelle* were not in favour of women's education or women's rights; rather, what defines their debates is rhetoric and the principle of *in utramque partem*. One does not have to take every word that writers like Lucrezia Marinella and Moderata Fonte contributed to the *querelle* as 'sincere', 'honest', or 'feminist' in order to see how they were able to further the case of women. In arguing the side of women (or, potentially, even the contrary position) in the manner foreseen by rhetorical tradition, they were able to demonstrate that they could participate in a learned debate just as well as men.[137] In a sense, women like Marinella and Fonte managed to defeat men at their own game, even if this success did not immediately change women's place in society.

It is crucial to note that while the *querelle* contains certain arguments in favour of women, these remain without immediate connection to women's lives.[138] In the context of the *Conférences*, this means that even if the *conférenciers* had arrived, for example, at the conclusion that women are nobler than men (if the *Conférences* were to reach any conclusion at all!), this would not mean that women's position in society would be transformed in any way. The purpose of *querelle* discussions

133 Traninger 2008, p. 192.
134 Mazauric 1997, p. 363.
135 Ibid., p. 346.
136 Wellman 2003, p. 331.
137 "Die rhetorische Tradition jedenfalls hat Marinella internalisiert. Ihr Traktat belegt auch auf der Ebene der Topik, dass sie am Normenkanon der Rhetorik partizipiert, die regelrechte Textproduktion beherrscht und mit dem gelehrten Diskurs, in den sie sich erstmals einschreibt, vertraut ist" (Traninger 2008, p. 198).
138 Traninger has argued that the *querelle des femmes* on the whole did not propagate real changes in society. See Traninger 2008, p. 199.

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was by no means to induce immediate change in the way society was organised. A close reading of the *conférenciers*' *savantes* debate serves to illustrate this point.[139]

Addressing the question of whether it is possible or advisable for women to become learned, the first *savantes* speaker argues that men, already depriving women of their rights to succession and property ownership and snatching everything for themselves, are going so far as to deprive women of the greatest of all goods: knowledge.[140] This is unjust, he states, as women's bodily constitution as well as their way of life indicate that they are exceedingly suitable for learning:

> […] elles semblent mesmes avoir l'avantage de l'esprit: non seulement pour la delicatesse de leur chair, indice de la bonté de l'esprit, mais à cause de leur curiosité, qui est mere de la Philosophie […]. Leur memoire causée par la constitution humide de leur cerveau & leur vie sedentaire & solitaire, sont encore favorables à l'estude.[141]

The second speaker claims that women are already much too imperious, even without the advantage of science. As it is their duty to unconditionally obey men, they should not have too much knowledge themselves.[142] Also, in a direct reversal of the first speaker's point, he claims that the delicateness of women's bodies makes them incapable of suffering the tiring efforts necessary to acquire knowledge. Moreover, their minds are extremely capricious, and the humidity of their brains is science's worst enemy. Women should therefore be banned from learning, he concludes:

> […] la délicatesse de leur corps impatient des travaux & suëurs avec lesquels la science s'acquiert, l'humidité de leur cerveau ennemie de la science, & la foiblesse de leur esprit capricieux, sont des raisons assez puissantes pour interdire à ce sexe les sciences […].[143]

The third speaker, reacting to the second's underlying assumption that women are less perfect than men, argues that if this were true, then they should receive *even more* instruction. They would thereby be able to overcome their natural deficits.[144] He asserts that it is unreasonable to expect women to be virtuous while at the same time forbidding them the means by which they could become so: "C'est donc une injustice de vouloir que les femmes soient plus parfaites et plus sages que les hommes, & neantmoins leur en interdire les moyens. Car comment est-ce qu'elles seront vertüeuses si elles ne sçavent ce que c'est de la vertu […]."[145]

139 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, pp. 90–96.
140 See vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, p. 91.
141 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, pp. 91–92. In the *Libro del Cortegiano* (1528), one of Baldassare Castiglione's courtiers voices a similar argument. See Schiebinger 1989, p. 18.
142 See vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, p. 93.
143 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, pp. 93–94.
144 See vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, p. 95.
145 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, p. 95.

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What a rather progressive opinion on education, the present-day reader might think. Yet in this reasoning, to make women learned would by no means guarantee them greater freedom or responsibility. On the contrary, the third speaker contends, it would keep them occupied in their place, the home, preventing them from wrongdoing and misconduct: "[…] il semble que le plus asseuré moyen dont les femmes se puissent servir pour garder leur pureté & chasteté, qui est leur seul thresor, c'est de faire provision de sciences & de connoissances."[146] In this line of thought, women have no more important duty than to maintain their chastity and their purity.[147] If (a certain kind of) learning helps them to do so, it is advisable for them to learn.[148]

This type of argument likewise appears in many other *querelle* texts.[149] Even women writers such as Christine de Pizan – who claimed the superiority of women and called for them to become learned and also demonstrated their own ability to participate in learned debates – never deviate from ideals of women's chastity and purity.[150] For male and female authors alike, these clearly remain women's highest virtues. As French literary scholar R. Howard Bloch has pointed out, the reason for this is the all-dominating idea that women must renounce their carnal nature and their sexuality, which defines them (in contrast to men), in order to be freed from the tutelage of men.[151]

As can be seen, the modern reader encounters arguments of a problematic nature in the *savantes* debate. Certain texts, as I have shown above, might at first glance appear to be in favour of ameliorating women's position, but they often merely attempt to cement the traditional order of society. These texts permit women "a dignified and honoured place in society, while at the same time demonstrating that this place is beneath that of men".[152]

Arguments in favour of women in the *querelle* cannot conceal the fact that the relation of men and women in the Early Modern period was generally conceived as a relation of polarity. According to this concept, woman must be seen as "an inferior being".[153] To understand this viewpoint in the context of the *Conférences*, it is revealing to consider the distribution of views on women not only in the small

146 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106.II, p. 96.

147 This idea also appears in Torquato Tasso's *Discorso della virtù feminile e donnesca* (1582). He argues that the central virtue for women is chastity and for men, courage. In the inverse, the greatest vice for women is lack of chastity and for men cowardice. See Maclean 1977, p. 18.

148 As Friederike Hassauer explains, only "genuskompatible Optimierung" is possible for women if they do not want to endanger their femininity (Hassauer 1994, p. 30).

149 See Maclean 1977, p. 56.

150 See Swift 2008, p. 51. For an examination of the obsession with chastity in the Middle Ages, see Bloch 1991, pp. 93–112.

151 "Only so long as a woman was willing to renounce sexuality – that is, to remain unmarried if she was a virgin, and not remarry if she was a widow, or even to renounce sexuality within marriage ('house monasticism') – was she able to escape the tutelage of fathers and husbands, and indeed become the equal of man" (Bloch 1991, p. 93).

152 Jordan 1990, p. 19.

153 Maclean 1977, p. 62.

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circuit of questions immediately concerned with topics central to the *querelle* but also in those topics more loosely related to it. Analysing the *noblesse* and the *savantes* debates, one finds nearly as many superficially women-friendly arguments as arguments against women. This does not mean that the former arguments seek a different situation for women in society; but they are, at least, not openly against women. However, in *Conférences* where women are only casually mentioned ancillary to other topics, we no longer see any such equilibrium. The opinions voiced in these discussions are in the majority extremely hostile towards women.[154]

By way of example, I trace an argument built on the Aristotelian commonplace stating that women are imperfect beings, or even monsters.[155] This argument is not only voiced by the third speaker in the *noblesse* debate but also appears on many other occasions – for instance, in the discussion addressing how men and women reproduce.[156] One speaker in that debate argues that nature produces a woman only if the necessary conditions for perfection are not available; woman, therefore, is called an 'error of nature' or a 'monster' by Aristotle: "[…] mais si les conditions requises lui manquent, elle [i.e., la nature] fait une femelle, qu'il [i.e., Aristote] appelle à ce sujet un égarement de la nature ou monstre."[157] It also appears in the question of whether children are more obliged to their father or to their mother.[158] Woman is again described as an imperfection and a mistake of nature, which usually aims at producing a man: "[…] la femme, laquelle est une imperfection et defaut de la nature qui tent tousjours à faire un masle."[159]

These citations show that the 'monster' argument is directly connected to the (Aristotelian) idea that nature always strives for perfection, and that man is the most perfect of creations. Man's relationship to woman, therefore, must be seen as one of perfect to imperfect: "Laquelle distinction Aristote dit n'estre que du parfait à l'imperfait: l'intention de la nature estant de faire tousjours un masle."[160] This argument's frequent recurrence documents how man is seen as the dominant party in a relationship of polarity.

The concept of polarity,[161] a structure of thought corroborated in Early Modern education through the importance of the Aristotelian tradition at universities, fundamentally pervades the debate about men and women.[162] Aristotle did not

154 See Mazauric 1997, p. 347.
155 According to Aristotle, "anyone who does not take after their parents is really in a way a monstrosity, since in these cases Nature has in a way strayed from the generic type. The first beginning of this deviation is when a female is formed instead of a male, though this indeed is a necessity required by Nature" (Aristotle, *GA*. 767b5, transl. Peck 1942, p. 401).
156 "Comment s'engendrent les malles et les femelles" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 185, pp. 897–904).
157 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 185, p. 897.
158 "Auquel on est plus obligé au pere ou à la mere" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 197, pp. 89–96).
159 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 197, p. 849.
160 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 185, p. 897.
161 In ancient Greek thought, relationships between objects could be envisaged in terms of either analogy or polarity. See Maclean 1981, p. 8.
162 See Allen 1985, pp. 413–414.

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invent polarity, though he contributed much to its theorisation.[163] Earlier examples are found, for instance, in the Pythagorean table of opposites.[164] Furthermore, polarity as a concept occurs not only in ancient Greek society but in many other societies as well.[165] Polarity means that "objects are classified by being related to one or other of a pair of opposite principles".[166] Aristotle, in Book II of the *Metaphysics*, describes these opposing principles in the following manner: "substance and existing things are composed of contraries; at any rate all speak of the first principles as contraries – some as Odd and Even, some as Hot and Cold, some as Limit and Unlimited, some as Love and Strife."[167]

In Aristotelian thought, the male and the female are also opposing principles: "Now the opposite of the male is the female, and it is opposite in respect of that whereby one is male and the other female".[168] In Aristotle's conception, male and female must be classified as contraries within the same genus and species:[169] "Female is contrary to male".[170] According to the philosopher, one of the elements in such a relationship always has to be inferior to the other,[171] as one is the privation of the other: "one of a pair of contraries always has a privative sense".[172] Aristotle argues that the female is the male's privation.[173] Obviously, both male and female are necessary for a species to survive, as "processes of material generation start from the contraries".[174] In generation, the male contributes the form (the principle of movement, the soul), while the female contributes the matter.[175] The male is the active and the female the passive element,[176] the male the hot and the female

163 See Lloyd 1966, pp. 15–17.
164 See ibid., p. 16.
165 Such polarity can be seen in, for example, the ancient Chinese concept of 'yin' and 'yang'. See ibid., p. 35.
166 Ibid., p. 7.
167 Aristotle, *Met.* III. 1004b25, transl. Tredennick 1933, p. 157.
168 Aristotle, *GA*. 766a20, transl. Peck 1942, p. 391.
169 See Allen 1985, p. 89.
170 Aristotle, *Met.* X. 1058a30, transl. Tredennick 1935, p. 45.
171 "Every contrariety involves privation as one of its contraries, but not always in the same way" (Aristotle, *Met.* X. 1055b15, transl. Tredennick 1935, p. 25).
172 Aristotle, *Met*. X. 1055b25, transl. Tredennick 1935, p. 25.
173 See Allen 1985, p. 89.
174 Aristotle, *Met.* X. 1055b10, transl. Tredennick 1935, p. 25.
175 "That is why there is always a class of men, of animals, of plants; and since the principle of these is 'the male' and 'the female', it will surely be for the sake of generation that 'the male' and 'the female' are present in the individuals which are male and female. And as the proximate motive cause, to which belong the logos and the Form, is better and more divine in its nature than the Matter, it is better also that the superior one should be separate from the inferior one. That is why wherever possible and so far as possible the male is separate from the female, since it is something better and more divine in that it is the principle of movement for generated things, while the female serves as the matter. The male, however, comes together with the female and mingles with it for the business of generation, because this is something that concerns both of them" (Aristotle, *GA*. 732a, transl. Peck 1942, p. 131).
176 "Now of course the female, qua female, is passive, and the male, qua male, is active – it is that whence the principle of movement comes" (Aristotle, *GA*. 729b15, transl. Peck 1942, p. 113).

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the cold one.[177] As we have seen, the male element is seen as more perfect, and only when it fails to gain mastery over the material is a female created.[178] In this sense, woman is, merely, a man *manqué*: "a woman is as it were an infertile male; the female in fact, is female on account of inability of a sort."[179] Women are, in this sense, a deformity, "though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature".[180]

In the *Conférences*, the prevalence of these Aristotelian ideas manifests on many occasions. In the debate concerning resemblance, one speaker claims, for example: "[…] le but de la nature estant tousjours de faire un ouvrage parfait, à scavoir un masle, auquel si elle ne peut parvenir, elle fait une femelle."[181] Moreover, the idea of greater perfection in men serves as justification for the rule of men over women in "S'il vaut mieux que les hommes avent plusieurs femmes, ou les femmes plusieurs maris":[182] "[…] le masle, comme le plus parfait, estant le chef et le maistre de la femme."[183] On many other occasions, woman is defined as 'less perfect'[184] or as a 'necessary evil' for the conservation of the species.[185]

Altogether, I have shown that the art of rhetoric formally determined how the *querelle des femmes* functioned, which makes it difficult to directly ascribe corresponding personal positions to *querelle* authors. At the level of content, debates about men and women are often infused with ideas based on the concept of polarity, according to which woman is perceived as fundamentally inferior to man. This inferiority might be turned on its head in arguments for the superiority of women, yet the underlying assumption of an asymmetrical relation between man and women remains unchallenged. This set of circumstances suggests that arguments for the superiority of women were perceived as essentially paradoxical in Early Modern society.

177 "[…] it follows of necessity that male animals are hotter than female ones" (Aristotle, *GA*. 765b15, transl. Peck 1942, p. 387).

178 "When the 'principle' is failing to gain mastery and is unable to effect concoction owing to deficiency of heat, and does not succeed in reducing the material into its own proper form, but instead is worsted in the attempt, then of necessity the material must change over into its opposite condition" (Aristotle, *GA*. 766a15, transl. Peck 1942, p. 391).

179 Aristotle, *GA*. 728a157, transl. Peck 1942, p. 103.

180 Aristotle, *GA*. 775a10, transl. Peck 1942, pp. 459–461.

181 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 5.I, p. 72.

182 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 130, pp. 389–398.

183 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 130, p. 390.

184 See, for example, vol. 2, *Conférence* 83.II, p. 543: "[…] elle [i.e., la femme] est obligé d'aimer davantage pource qu'elle y trouve son bien et sa perfection."

185 See vol. 2, *Conférence* 93.II, p. 716: "Car le mesme proverb qui met les valets entre les maux necessaires y met aussi la femme." In vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 453, one reads: "[…] qui ont appelle la femme un mal necessaire, auquel les hommes s'appliquent par un instinct naturel, pour le bien commun, au prejudice du particulier […]."

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6.3 Beyond the *Querelle*: "Ce n'est pas estre homme ou estre femme qui fait estre noble ou ne l'estre pas"

After considering the points discussed above, the *Conférences* concerning men and women hardly seem to bear any innovative potential. Many contributions reveal themselves to be little more than repetitions of all too familiar *querelle* arguments. These debates are, as we have seen, not endowed with much revolutionary force. However, in the *noblesse* debate, there is an instance where a speaker aims at breaking out of the *querelle*'s constraints. In this contribution, the speaker argues for individuality instead of trying to establish which sex is superior to the other. Through this line of thought, he becomes capable of circumventing a deadlocked debate. This *conférencier*'s argument usefully illustrates the transformation that debates about men and women underwent in the middle of the seventeenth century. Around this time, the debate began to depart from the strictly rhetorical patterns that characterised the previous centuries' discussions.[186] Arguments for equality instead of superiority appear, for example, in Marie de Gournay's *Egalité de l'homme et de la femme* (1622) and François Poulain de la Barre's *De l'egalité des deux sexes* (1673).[187] These authors, in surpassing the *querelle*'s traditional constraints, provided inspiration for later feminist thinkers fighting for actual political equality between men and women.

In the *conférencier*'s discussions of *querelle* questions, we can sometimes see a small space for liberty manifesting itself, through which women's freedom could at least be envisaged. Let us take a closer look at the last argument voiced in the *noblesse* debate. The fourth speaker, at the beginning of his contribution, argues that everything must be evaluated according to its author, structure, composition, and purpose (among other things). As men and women have the same author, God, and consist mostly of the same body parts, their *noblesse* cannot be decided based on their sex alone.[188] He thereby denies the importance of the arguments voiced by the speakers before him – concerned with establishing whether Eve was more or less noble than Adam, given the place, material, and order of her creation. Even though the fourth and last speaker argues in favour of equality between the sexes regarding these points, he remains committed to the same vocabulary as his predecessors, and he obtains his arguments from the same *topoi.* Yet further down the page, he asserts:

> Il est certain que ce n'est pas d'estre homme ou femme que l'on est bon ou mauvais, beau ou laid, noble ou infame, heureux ou mal heureux. Il s'en trouve en chaque sexe des uns et des autres. […] C'est pourquoy ceux qui cherchent la cause de noblesse ou vilité de l'homme & de la femme dans le sexe, cherchent une cause où elle n'est point. Ce n'est pas estre homme ou estre femme qui fait

186 See Maclean 1977, p. 63.
187 Poulain de la Barre's text was first published anonymously. See Maistre Welch 2002, p. 10.
188 See vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 454–456.

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> estre noble ou ne l'estre pas: c'est estre excellent homme ou excellente femme. […] chacun desquels pris en general n'a rien en soy qui ne soit tres-beau, tres-bon et tres-parfaict, et conséquemment tres-noble. […] S'il y a du défaut, il vient de l'individu, & ne se doit pas plustost attribüer au sexe qu'à l'espece.[189]

In his argument, the speaker refuses to pick a side in the general quarrel for superiority. He does not engage in *in utramque partem* argumentation but rather declares that the nobility and excellence of humans must be assessed individually. This claim also opens up the possibility for escaping Aristotle's largely unquestioned concept of polarity. If nothing general about men's and women's *noblesse* can be said, then the underlying inferiority of women no longer persists: the question concerning their worth and capability becomes a purely personal question. Such an outcome also means that women, because of their sex, are not less able to perform certain tasks, such as ruling[190] or acting courageously.[191] In comparison to discussions of great women in other *querelle* texts, the remarkable element about this *conférencier*'s reasoning is that women's potential for nobleness is no longer presented as an exception.[192] Women, in general, are just as able as men, in general, to act according to ideals of courage or justice. Their ability to arrive at such nobleness depends on their individual character, not on their sex. In traditional *querelle* literature, exceptional women appear great always by dissociation with other, normal women.[193] Here, however, we see a real possibility to escape women's always underlying inferiority to men.

This argument is obviously only one idea among several more conservative opinions on women and their abilities in the *Conférences*, as my above discussion of the *savantes* and *noblesse* debates has shown. Nevertheless, arguing for individuality hints towards a transformation which, according to certain scholars, took place in the second half of the seventeenth century in *querelle* literature.[194] According to Marie-Frédérique Pellegrin, Poulain de la Barre's texts mark a paradigm shift in literature concerned with women. She argues that he can be qualified as the "premier théoricien moderne de l'égalité entre les sexes". Poulain de la Barre's arguments "marquent une veritable rupture avec les arguments philogynes traditionels".[195]

189 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, pp. 455–456.
190 "Dans les thrones […] plusieurs Reines & Imperatrices ont fait voir que les femmes scavoient commander aussi bien que les hommes" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 455).
191 "Judith coupant la teste à Holofernes, & la Pucelle d'Orleans au temps de nos ayeuls, ont montré que les seuls hommes n'estoient pas courageux & gens d'execution" (Vol. 1, *Conférence* 25.II, p. 455).
192 See Maclean's discussion of the heroic woman as an exception (1977, p. 260).
193 See Bösch 2001, p. 65.
194 See Maclean 1977, p. 63, and Pellegrin 2013, p. 71. See also Opitz 1995, p. 17.
195 Pellegrin 2013, pp. 73–74. Zimmermann also notes the "Innovationscharakter dieses Texts" (1992, p. 265).

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However, Gournay must be seen as a precursor to Poulain de la Barre.[196] In 1622, Gournay already voiced in *Egalité de l'homme et de la femme* what Poulain de la Barre would assert in more detail in his *De l'egalité des deux sexes* in 1673. Neither argues for the superiority of women over men but rather for equality between the sexes.[197] As Gournay points out, those defending women against male claims for supremacy traditionally do so in proposing arguments for women's superiority. She, on the other hand, merely wants to place both sexes on an equal footing:

> La pluspart de ceux qui prennent la cause, des femmes, contre cette orgueilleuse preferance que les hommes s'attribuent, leur rendent le change entier: r'envoyans la preference vers elles. Moy qui fuys toutes extremitez, je me contente de les esgaler aux hommes: la nature s'opposant pour ce regard autant à la superiorité qu'à l'inferiorité.[198]

In leaving behind the debate about the superiority of one or the other sex and instead arguing for the equality of both, Gournay disengages from the *querelle* in its traditional cast. She explicitly professes that it does not make sense to combat the *querelle* debaters on their own turf. Arguments for the dignity and the capacities of women can be debated and redebated, and the examples provided to support the case of women are much too general: "Et si je juge bien, soit de la dignité, soit de la capacité des dames, je ne pretends pas à cette heure de le prouver par raisons, puisque les opiniastres les pouroient debattre, ny par exemples, d'autant qu'ils sont trop communs […]."[199] Gournay does not merely reverse arguments against women in order to defend them: she dismisses such arguments altogether, identifying them as futile.

Overall, she bases her conviction that men and women are equal under God, as he created them as one.[200] In contrast to others who argue for equal dignity while refusing equality between the sexes, Gournay does not believe in different *officia* for men and women, even when it comes to the church.[201] Women can already administer the sacrament of baptism – why should they not be able to perform other sacraments?[202]

196 See Maistre Welch 2002, pp. 21–22. See also Franchetti 2006, p. 193.
197 According to Anna Lia Franchetti, a seed for this egalitarian discourse can already be found in Christine de Pizan's *La Cité des Dames*. See Franchetti 2006, p. 195.
198 Gournay 1622, p. 7.
199 Ibid., pp. 9–10.
200 "L'homme et la femme sont tellement uns, que si l'homme est plus que la femme, la femme est plus que l'homme. L'homme fut creé masle & femelle, dit l'Escriture, ne comptant ces deux que pour un" (ibid., p. 18). See also ibid., p. 10.
201 Several authors argue that men and women are equal in dignity but must fulfil different roles. The role assigned to woman of course confines her to the home. See Maclean 1981, p. 56. See also Gössmann 1996, p. 34.
202 See Gournay 1622, p. 22.

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Poulain de la Barre, for his part, explicitly sets out to explore men's and women's relation to each other philosophically.[203] The Cartesian thinker wants the public to rid themselves of their prejudices so as to be able to arrive at clear and distinct ideas.[204] Nevertheless, the majority of contemporary readers of his book *De l'égalité des deux sexes* seemingly regarded it as a paradox, more concerned with being gallant than with speaking the truth: "Je me souviens encore fort bien que lors que le livre de l'égalité commenca à paroistre il n'y eût que les Pretieuses qui le receurent avec applaudissement […] mais tout le reste en parla comme d'un paradoxe qui avoit plus de galanterie que de verité […]."[205]

A paradox, in Early Modern times, was not something contradictory or logically unacceptable but rather an idea which goes against the *doxa* – that is to say, against the commonly held belief regarding a given topic.[206] In discussions concerning the *noblesse* of women, it must be considered that an argument stating that women are superior or equal to men could, given the historical context, merely be seen as countering the *doxa*.[207] Be they the learned or the vulgar, the majority of readers undoubtedly were convinced that woman was man's inferior. In rhetorical *in utramque partem* argumentation, exploring both sides of a question, one side is invariably the paradoxical side.[208]

Yet Poulain de la Barre's text is not supposed to be a gallant paradox. He rather wants his readers to explore the topic of men and women in an unprejudiced, impartial manner and to find out the truth about their relation to each other. This task does not accord with the gallantry inherent to typical *querelle* arguments favouring women's side, he states. When a discourse mixes gallantry and reason, it often fails to convince its readers, as the agreeable and amusing elements prevent the mind from focusing on the solid parts of the argument:

> Ce n'est pas qu'on ne puisse joindre la fleurette avec la raison, mais ce mélange empéche souvent la fin qu'on se doit proposer dans les Discours, qui est de convaincre & de persuader; ce qu'il y a d'agreable amusant l'Esprit, & ne luy permettant pas de s'arréter au solide.[209]

203 See Poulain de la Barre 1673, fol. [a iiiij^{v}].

204 Those looking to acquire "une science solide" necessarily discover that "[…] nous sommes remplis de préjugez, & qu'il faut y renoncer absolument, pour avoir des connoissances claires & distinctes" (ibid., fol. [a ij^{v}]). For a discussion of Poulain de la Barre's Cartesianism, see Maistre Welch 2002, pp. 6–8.

205 Poulain de la Barre 1675, pp. 118–119.

206 See Steczowicz 2004, p. 2. Agnieszka Steczowicz gives the following definition for the paradox: "'Paradox', from the Greek *para* with the sense of 'beside', 'alongside' and by extension 'contrary to', and *doxa* 'opinion', was taken to mean that which is beside or contrary to common or received opinion" (ibid., p. 13).

207 See Maclean 1981, 91. See also Steczowicz 2004, p. 58.

208 For a more detailed analysis of the Early Modern paradox in connection with declamation and disputation, see Traninger 2012, pp. 215–228. According to Traninger, the paradox "steckt ab, wo gegen eine etablierte (Lehr-)meinung angetreten wird und bildet damit die topische Wissensordnung stets mit ab" (ibid., p. 226).

209 Poulain de la Barre 1673, fol. [a iiiij^{v}]–[aiiiiij^{r}].

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The conclusion his readers should reach, Poulain de la Barre explains, is that women and men are equal. It is merely custom and education, not nature, that makes women inferior to men. They have the same intellectual capacities.[210] Indeed, the mind has no sex: "l'esprit n'a point de sexe".[211] Consequently, there is no reason to exclude women from science or employment.[212]

Like Poulain de la Barre, the fourth speaker in the *noblesse* debate refuses to decide the question under the presumptions of the *querelle*. Both decline to pass judgement on women in general. Yet to reach a judgement on all women collectively is exactly what the *querelle* was concerned with.[213] By arguing in favour of individuality and individual circumstance, a universal verdict is impossible to be reached. Moreover, this argument breaks the binary of masculine/feminine which had reigned supreme over the *querelle des femmes* and wherein the feminine invariably carried negative connotations.

Was this turn, therefore, the end of the *querelle*? The debate about the equality or inequality of men and women continued – yet it indeed no longer followed the traditional rhetorical pattern of the *querelle des femmes*. Pellegrin explains that in the first half of the seventeenth century, the importance of *loci communes* citations in debates about men and women decreased. Other, more individual ways of arguing appeared in texts concerning them.[214] Maclean asserts that the traditional rhetorical *querelle* died out around 1630, as a focus on the real transformation of women's role in society appeared:[215] "From the sporadic appearance of works in the genre after 1630, it may be safely concluded that the traditional *querelle des femmes* is a feature only of the first three decades of the seventeenth century."[216] Maclean, also discussing the *Conférence* on *noblesse* in this context, firmly assigns it to the 'old' *querelle* with its conventional arguments. My discussion has shown, however, that in the multiplicity of arguments in the *noblesse* debate at the Bureau d'Adresse, there was one speaker who departed from the traditional argumentation, pointing forwards to texts such as Poulain de la Barre's *De l'égalite des deux sexes* and Gournay's *Egalité de l'homme et de la femme*.

This departure from the *querelle* might be consistently overlooked because the *Conférences* consolidate a debate which otherwise might not have appeared in the pages of one single book. The *querelle*, in many cases, was a debate where one text would answer another, or one treatise refute another, more or less quickly, but often lacking the possibility to really contrast arguments side by side (this, obvi-

210 The argument that women and men have the same intellectual faculties and that women are merely constrained by their inefficient education had already been presented by Christine de Pizan. See Maistre Welch 2002, p. 21.
211 Poulain de la Barre 1673, p. 109.
212 See ibid., fol. [a iiij^{v}]–[a iiiij^{r}].
213 See Pellegrin 2013, p. 71.
214 Ibid., p. 71.
215 Maclean 1977, p. 63.
216 Ibid., p. 35.

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ously, does not count for *querelle* texts in dialogue form).[217] Directly compared to the fourth speaker's ideas, the arguments voiced by speakers before him appear particularly static. Placing arguments side by side as is done in the *Conférences* certainly produces this effect regarding unconvincing contributions.[218]

Poulain de la Barre probably also thought of the subversive potential of direct comparison when writing *De l'excellence des hommes contre l'égalité des sexes* (1675). The title of this text is somewhat deceptive:[219] even though the middle part of his second book on men and women argues for the superiority of the former, Poulain de la Barre begins with a preface where he analyses women-friendly quotes by the Church fathers. The book ends with a refutation of arguments against women.[220] Through this, Poulain de la Barre wishes to give his readers the means to reject claims of the superiority of men.[221] He asserts that he did not write his book

> […] pour prouver qu'ils [i.e., les hommes] sont plus excellens que les femmes […] mais seulement pour donner moyen de comparer les deux sentimens opposez & de mieux juger lequel est le plus vrai, en voyant séparement dans tout leur jour les raisons sur lesquelles ils sont fondez.[222]

In directly comparing the opposed arguments, he aims to hold up a mirror to men and their persuasion of being superior to women, by examining their errors and prejudices:

> Je ne vois guéres de plus grande marque de la prévention des hommes que la persuasion où ils sont du merite & de la noblesse de leur sexe. Ce n'a été que pour mieux connoistre leurs erreurs & leurs préjugez que je me suis appliqué à celuy-cy qui les renferme presque tous.[223]

It appears that Poulain de la Barre wrote his second book because nobody engaged in any debate with him over *De l'egalité*.[224] He therefore wrote an answer to

217 With *Il merito delle donne* (1600), for example, Fonte provides a text in the form of a dialogue, where arguments for and against women appear side by side. See also Zimmermann 1992, pp. 261–262.

218 Martin Gierl has pointed this out in the context of learned journalism, which began to gain influence at the end of the seventeenth century. See Gierl 2004, p. 436.

219 See Maistre Welch 2002, p. 3.

220 As Maistre Welch argues, Poulain de la Barre wrote "a complex series of rebuttals to his own *On the Equality of the Two Sexes* that he framed between a two-part defense of women's equality" (ibid., p. 13).

221 He does so in order to "[…] donner aux femmes dequoy se deffendre fortement contre ceux qui se servent de l'Ecriture pour les mortifier" (Poulain de la Barre 1675, p. 5).

222 Ibid., pp. 4–5.

223 Ibid., p. 328.

224 See Maistre Welch 2002, p. 13. In his *Dictionnaire*, Bayle had already argued: "L'Auteur [i.e., Poulain de la Barre] est celui qui publia à Paris en 1673 un Ouvrage qui a pour Titre, *De l'Egalité des deux Sexes* […]. Il crut que l'on écriroit contre lui, & il en fut menacé; mais, ne voiant point paroître de Réfutation, il écrivit lui-même contre son Livre; car il publia en 1675 un Traité *De l'Excellence des Hommes contre l'Egalité des Sexes*. Quand on examine bien tout ce qu'il dit on découvre qu'il n'a pas dessein de réfuter son prémier Ouvrage, & qu'il a plutôt

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it himself, proving in the process that the various arguments for men's superiority are unsatisfactory and again illustrating that woman is man's equal. Poulain de la Barre's arguments proved so powerful that they inspired many later feminist thinkers.[225] For example, Simone de Beauvoir chose a Poulain de la Barre citation as an epigraph for her seminal work *Le deuxième sexe* (1949).[226]

Like Poulain de la Barre's text, the *Conférences* enable a direct comparison of arguments concerning men and women. Given the variety of opinions it presents, the *Conférence* on *noblesse* admirably shows that history rarely works in the way of a revolution by which old beliefs are overthrown in an instant. The *noblesse* debate showcases the continuity of traditional *querelle* arguments while incorporating arguments which would eventually lead to the collapse of the whole Aristotelian construct regarding sexual difference and spell the end of the *querelle* in its traditional rhetorical form.

In the first part of this chapter, I explained the connection of certain *Conférences* to the larger debate of the *querelle des femmes*. While arguments concerning men and women and their respective virtue and merit (or lack thereof) appear in many discussions, some *Conférences* –such as the debates on *noblesse* and *savantes* – explicitly stand in the tradition of the *querelle*. Regarding debate on the *noblesse* of women, I explored typical arguments of the *querelle* and their implications.

In the second part of the chapter, I explored how it is highly unlikely that women took part in the *conférences*, even though, on the surface, some statements voiced in certain discussion seem to suggest otherwise. However, arguments made in favour of women and their ability to learn were not intended to change women's position in society: they merely aimed at reinforcing women's chastity and purity, which remained their most essential virtues. Furthermore, arguments made in favour of women as part of the *querelle* are ambiguous in nature, as they take up the long rhetorical tradition of *in utramque partem* argumentation. This means that speakers' contributions cannot be straightforwardly connected to their personal opinions. Consequently, it does not make sense to judge *querelle* debates according to their perceived degree of feminism or misogyny. It is clear, however, that Aristotle's prevailing concept of sex polarity lurks behind many qualifications of both women and men in the *Conférences* (and the *querelle* in general). Ultimately, women must always remain inferior to men in this concept. In the *Conférences*, we can see the dominance of this conviction especially through an analysis of debates at the Maison du Grand-Coq not directly concerned with *querelle* topics. There, speakers overwhelmingly assume women's inferiority.

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envie de le confirmer indirectement (Bayle 1734, vol. 4, "Marinella, ou Marinelli (Lucrece)", pp. 145–146, p. 145).

225 See Maistre Welch 2002, pp. 31–32.

226 See ibid., p. 32. This epigraph is double-edged, in a sense, as she printed Poulain de la Barre's "Tout ce qui a été écrit par les hommes sur les femmes doit être suspect, car ils sont à la fois juge et partie" on the first page of her book (Beauvoir 1949).

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In the final section of this chapter, I discussed a *Conférence* argument on *noblesse*, showcasing the way in which the debate about women changed in the middle of the seventeenth century. Discussions started to relinquish traditional patterns and focus more and more on changing the actual structure of society. This turn can be seen through a comparison of the fourth speaker's arguments with ideas expressed by Marie de Gournay and François Poulain de la Barre, who argued for women's equality and left behind the *querelle* and the rhetoricity that characterised it. The fourth *noblesse* speaker shows how 'individuality' arguments could figure as gateways to later feminist claims for political rights and the equality of men and women. In this spirit, I must close with Simone de Beauvoir: "La querelle du féminisme a fait couler assez d'encre, à présent elle est à peu près close: n'en parlons plus. On en parle encore cependant."[227]

227 Beauvoir 1949, p. 11.

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7

The Medical *Conférences* or "quand la raison repugne à l'experience"

> *Toutesfois, quand il semble que la raison repugne à l'experience, il faut plustost se tenir à l'experience; pourveu qu'elle soit establie par plusieurs observations.*[1]

Wherever it seems that reason and experience do not coincide with each other, one should rather believe what experience suggests – if it is based on several observations. This is the argument proposed by a *conférencier* regarding the question "S'il y a des remedes specifiques à chaque maladie".[2] The speaker is convinced that if physicians discover some kind of effective medication, they need to employ it, even if they cannot explain why it works. He therefore appears to be arguing for empirical evidence and against adhering to medical authorities and their theories. This stance is remarkable, as the *conférenciers*, in all the topics they discuss, mostly argue in a rather conservative manner. They follow the opinions of authorities and are mostly not the ones promoting empirical scientific practices. Yet in the discussions of medical questions, opinions placing experience (in the sense of practical knowledge)[3] over reason (explanations of phenomena in accordance with medical doctrine)[4] appear quite frequently. Could it therefore be the case that the medical *Conférences* function according to different principles than the other questions hitherto explored in this study?

1 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 815.

2 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, pp. 807–816.

3 The *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* (*TLFi*) gives as historical meaning for *expérience* (documented in a text from 1265) "connaissance acquise par la pratique" (*TLFi*, s.v. "expérience"). In the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694), *expérience* is rendered as "Espreuve qu'on fait de quelque chose, soit à dessein, soit par hazard." "Il signifie aussi, Connoissance des choses, acquise par un long usage" (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, première éd. online, s.v., "expérience"). For a more detailed overview of the definitions of *expérience* in a variety of texts and dictionaries from 1600 to 1800 – as well as earlier examples – see Gorcy 2001.

4 *Raison*, as knowledge of a theoretical kind, is opposed to the more practical *expérience*. According to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694) it was understood as "preuve par discours, par argument" (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, première éd. online, s.v. "raison"). The *TLFi* gives "ce qui rend compte de quelque chose, ce qui l'explique", a meaning documented in texts dating from as early as 1119 (*TLFi*, s.v. "raison").

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The conflict of reason and experience is a topic relevant not only to the discussions that took place at Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse but also to the seventeenth-century Parisian medical setting in general. While this conflict acquired a specific urgency for physicians who would have been taunted as 'empirics',[5] those strictly adhering to Aristotelian and Galenic doctrine similarly encountered it. The principles the Galenists subscribed to could not always explain why certain remedies were successful in curing diseases; yet practical evidence demonstrated that they did exactly that. In the Parisian contest of reason and experience, Aristotelian faculties and Galenic humours were pitted against Paracelsian chemical remedies. The latter were feared to destabilise the established medical system. While the Parisian Faculty of Medicine stood firm on the side of humoral pathology, it faced doctors from other parts of France, especially from Montpellier, who advocated chemical treatments. Renaudot was one of them, and, as we have seen, he was not someone who would hesitate to put his ideas into practice, even when faced with a very powerful Parisian corporation such as the Faculty of Medicine.

In many ways, the *Conférences* on medical topics seem to be the opposite of those concerned with moral-philosophical questions such as the *querelle des femmes*, examined in the previous chapter. In contrast to debates about the status of men and women, the medical *Conférences* were immediately connected to real-life practice and therefore clearly did not remain in the realm of potential argumentation alone. Moreover, Early Modern physicians were forbidden from engaging in *in utramque partem* debate.[6] As they were trying to cure their patients, they could not concern themselves with eloquence.[7] The many physicians present at the in-person *conférences* could, however, argue from their practical experience. What, then, happened when reason and experience opposed each other in the debates at the Bureau d'Adresse?

To answer this question in a comprehensive manner, I first analyse the *conférenciers*' conception of experience as it appears in the discussions in general. My examination of the printed *Conférences* shows that while they frequently resort to experience in their arguments, their notion of the term is decidedly not uniform. Whereas some speakers seem to invoke knowledge acquired through (personal) observation, others adhere to an Aristotelian notion of experience. In the Aristotelian tradition, experience is something that does not need to be obtained individually; Aristotelian *experientia* is, rather, knowledge that is distinctly general and impersonal and that must be comprehensible to everyone.[8]

5 Julie Giovacchini explains that there was a "transformation progressive au Moyen Âge du sens de l'adjectiv 'empirique', qui ne désigne plus l'école médicale que nous conaissons, mais un ensemble de praticiens déclassés, méprisés par la médecine universitaire: barbiers, sage-femmes, etc." (Giovacchini 2011, p. 325).

6 See Maclean 2002, p. 104.

7 See ibid.

8 See Dear 1985, p. 148.

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What does this mean regarding the case of the medical *Conférences*? Did the speakers in the medical discussions promote a different idea of what experience is? My analysis reveals that even though at least some of the participants did use their personal experience as physicians, the conception of experience nevertheless also remains ambiguous here. Experience, in the medical *Conférences*, can refer to knowledge obtained through practice, but it can also describe knowledge acquired through reading authoritative medical texts. Symptomatically, even the passionate appeal for experience over reason in "quand la raison repugne à l'experience" is, in fact, a citation from authoritative sources. The entire dilemma of experience and reason can be traced from Renaissance physicians back to the authorities of antiquity.[9] Yet it became more urgent through the emergence of the physician and astrologer Paracelsus and his followers in the early sixteenth century and the greater emphasis they put on chemical remedies, while disavowing Scholastic reasoning. Still, while some radical Paracelsian ideas surface in the *Conférences*, the traditional Galenic way of arguing clearly remains dominant. All in all, the medical questions, even though (or because) they are closely linked to the actual practice of medicine, remain inscribed in a tradition of arguing from the experience of medical authorities.

Notably, Renaudot did not only discuss chemical medicine and Paracelsian ideas – he very much applied them. Debates in the *Conférences* are linked to the *consultations charitables*, where Renaudot and his fellow doctors prescribed chemical remedies. In *fourneaux* installed at the Bureau d'Adresse, Renaudot even had his own chemical medicines produced. Moreover, his book *La presence des absens* (1642) attests to his interest in the popularisation of medicine and the regulation of treatment methods. It is clear that Renaudot's practice was a thorn in the side of the Parisian doctors, who believed in the superiority of the Parisian faculty over all other medical practitioners and firmly defended a Galenic way of treating patients, by recourse to humoral pathology. In their eyes, there was not enough experience (in the Aristotelian sense of the term) to confirm what they qualified as the Chemists' experiments; the chemical physicians, on the other hand, believed their experiences to be significant. These same arguments were already used in the *querelle de l'antimoine*, which started in the sixteenth century and later would also see the participation of Renaudot's son Eusèbe. The debate surrounding chemical medicine reached one of its final pinnacles in the mid-seventeenth century, after which the Parisian doctors were finally forced to accept chemical remedies. For Renaudot, this came too late. Already entangled in a string of legal trials for a number of years, the *gazetier* would, by 1644, find that the faculty had succeeded in its attempts to obliterate most of his endeavours.[10]

9 See Maclean 2000, p. 234.

10 My article "'Quand la raison répugne à l'expérience'. Medizinisches Erfahrungswissen im Paris des 17. Jahrhunderts" (2022) offers a compact version of some of the discussions elaborated upon in this chapter.

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7.1 The Notion of *Expérience* in the *Conférences* in General

As I have shown in previous chapters, the *conférenciers* often used authoritative arguments and constructed their contributions using reference to canonical texts in order to convince their peers. Yet when reading through the *Conférences*, one also often finds the speakers invoking *expérience* or using the expression "l'expérience nous fait voir". This reference to experience appears to suggest a line of reasoning constructed in a fundamentally different way than the arguments from authority. Yet in the plurivocal discourse of the *Conférences*, one can never be sure that the *conférenciers* consistently mean the same thing when they employ certain terms. Part 7.1.1 of the chapter therefore analyses the *conférenciers*' references to *expérience*.

An overview of the many *Conférences* in which *expérience* is mentioned indeed reveals that the *conférenciers* do not appear to have any uniform conception of what exactly *expérience* is. While some use it to describe the knowledge about the world a person acquires during their lifetime, others employ it in a general sense, one which does not necessarily have anything to do with personal involvement. Still others, albeit rarely, invoke *expérience* when describing what appears to be direct, personal experience of natural phenomena in the sense of an experiment. Finally, a few *conférenciers* even employ *expérience* in the context of supernatural incidents. Amid this multiplicity of meanings, the *conférenciers* do not in any way question the fact that they all speak about fundamentally different forms of experience.[11]

In part 7.1.2, I focus on the evolution of *expérience* as a concept. It gained influence in Scholastic philosophy especially through the Aristotelian idea of *empeiríā* (lat. *experientia*). Subsequently, in the period from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, the concept underwent numerous important changes, as part 7.1.3 reveals. Historians of science Katharine Park, Gianna Pomata, and Lorraine Daston have shown through their enquiries into *observatio* and *experientia* that these categories in a historical perspective, are not at all stable and fundamentally changed in scope across the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment.[12] These

11 This usage does not set them apart but rather corresponds to how the term *experientia* is used in other Early Modern texts. For a study of different kinds of experience prevalent in the Early Modern period, see Christina Schaefer's and my book *Facetten der* Experientia. *Zum Rekurs auf Erfahrung und Erfahrungswissen in der frühneuzeitlichen Romania* (2022). The contributions to this volume examine *experientia* in a variety of contexts, understood as experience of life, as spiritual experience, as the specific experience of women, and as empirically acquired knowledge. Therein, Schaefer's article "Facetten frühneuzeitlicher *experientia*-Diskurse. Zur Einleitung" (2022) provides a theoretical examination of the different dimensions of *experientia*. Regarding the conceptual history of 'experience' see Friedrich Kambartel's "Erfahrung" in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (1972). For the Early Modern period specifically, see Peter Dear's "The Meanings of Experience" in the *Cambridge History of Science* (2006).

12 In the *Histories of Scientific Observation* (2011), a volume edited by Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck, the articles in the first section, looking at the changes the practice of observation underwent over several hundred years, were especially useful to me. Katharine Park covers the period from 500 to 1500, where observation existed only in the margins of the dominant *experientia*. Gianna Pomata locates the birth of observation as an epistemic genre

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changes seem to be reflected in the *Conférences*: while some *conférenciers* still seem to adhere to a purely Aristotelian conception of *expérience*, viewing it as universally comprehensible general experience,[13] others use it in the much more restricted sense of personal involvement. In the course of the seventeenth century, active scientific experiment and passive observation ultimately became the hallmarks of great scientific academies, whereas general Aristotelian *experientia* lost its appeal for natural philosophers.[14]

7.1.1 Different Kinds of *Experiénce* in the *Conférences*

In the twenty-first century, 'arguing from experience' means something very specific. When experience is invoked today, it refers to the acquisition of certain practical, philosophical, or emotional knowledge through one's own cognition or sense perception.[15] For the seventeenth-century *conférenciers*, *expérience* seems to be something rather more fluid. A survey of how they employ the term in their arguments reveals at least four major rival conceptions of *experiénce* to be found between the covers of the five volumes of *Conférences*.

When arguing from experience, the *conférenciers* often refer to something thoroughly general. Theirs are experiences that potentially anyone can attain, which makes them something akin to common knowledge. As my examples show, the *conférenciers* especially think of this kind of experience when using the expression "l'experience nous fait voir" – 'experience shows us'. This kind of common knowledge is so general that not everybody needs to acquire it themselves for it to hold true. It can be passed down through history, as examples of historical argumentation in the *Conférences* reveal.

However, the speakers at the Bureau d'Adresse also refer to the term *expérience* when speaking of a much more personal sort of knowledge. In some cases, they mean the individual experiences someone has made throughout their lifetime, which provides them with a wisdom of age superior to the knowledge of youth. Yet even though a person must have made certain experiences to arrive at this wisdom, it again refers to a general sort of knowledge: anyone can potentially acquire it.

This is not the case regarding the third form of *expérience* that the *conférenciers* mention. In certain instances, they use 'experience' in a sense that later became

in the period 1500–1650, and Daston argues that by 1600–1800, the empire of observation had definitely been established.

13 On the Aristotelian conception of *experientia* and how it changed in the context of the early Royal Society, see Dear's seminal study "Totius in Verba: Rhetoric and Authority in the Early Royal Society" (1985).

14 See the cases of the Accademia del Cimento, Royal Society, and Académie royale des sciences, which, while originating in divergent social contexts, all spearheaded a new kind of empiricism. See ibid., p. 160.

15 The current online edition of the *Cambridge Dictionary* gives the following meaning for 'experience': "(the process of getting) knowledge or skill from doing, seeing, or feeling things" (*Cambridge Dictionary* online, s.v. "experience").

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bound to the term 'experiment' in certain languages.[16] That is to say, they refer to a particular experience, made at a particular point in time, and by a particular person. Significantly, the way they address this type of *expérience* does not reveal if the individual speakers themselves experienced something. Certain text passages rather suggest that the *conférenciers* gained knowledge about these experiments from reading about them.

For the *conférenciers*, *expérience* in the sense of a direct, personal encounter (potentially mediated through literature) is not restricted to natural phenomena but also applies to the supernatural. This is the fourth kind of *expérience* to be found in the *Conférences*. In a realm that reason cannot access, it is experience alone which can attest to the apparition of ghosts and spirits or the effectiveness of amulets.

Importantly, it is not possible to allocate general and specific experience to moral-philosophical and natural-philosophical questions, respectively. Whereas specific experiences in the sense of experiments are restricted to the study of nature (or the supernatural), arguments from commonplace experience can be found regarding both kinds of questions. The first type of general experience, accessible to anyone, certainly predominates in the *Conférences*.

General Experience

We can find examples of experience meant in a general sense in the discussion of, for example, "De la coustume".[17] Here, one speaker argues that the force of memory decreases if it is not exercised. As experience shows us, he contends, the most certain art of memory is to cultivate it: "Comme la memoire se roüille en ne l'exercant point, ainsi l'experience nous fait voir que le plus certain art d'icelle est de la cultiver."[18] To draw a broader conclusion about the force of custom, the *conférencier* in question departs from something that everyone can relate to – that mental inactivity is detrimental to memory. As readers will agree with his first reflection, they are more likely to also agree with his final judgement.

Similarly, in "Des moyens de rendre quelque lieu peuplé",[19] one speaker aims to reinforce his proposition – that the happiest city is the most populated one (how times have changed) – by mentioning an experience that anyone could have. It is common knowledge – or so it appears to be in the seventeenth century, at least – that law and justice are more easily administered in larger cities than in small villages: "[…] la plus heureuse ville est la plus populeuse. Et l'experience nous fait voir que les loix & la Justice sont mieux administrées dans les grandes villes qu'és bicoques & villages […]."[20]

These two examples might suggest that common experience is especially relevant when speakers discuss moral-philosophical questions or practical problems,

16 Crucially, this is not necessarily the case in French. See pp. 182–183 of the present chapter.
17 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 63.II, pp. 215–224.
18 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 63.II, p. 218.
19 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 65.II, pp. 409–416.
20 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 65.II, pp. 415–416.

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whereas natural-philosophical questions were to be handled in a different manner. However, this is not the case, as the example of "Des causes des vapeurs" shows.[21] Here, a speaker refutes the conclusion of one of his predecessors, who had argued that vapours are caused by the sun, with recourse to a well-established experience. In winter, when the sun's warmth is less intense, there is more rain, fog, and wind and they are stronger: "[…] cela repugne à l'experience qui nous fait voir & sentir plus de pluyes, de broüillards & de vents, & plus violents en Hyver que la chaleur du Soleil est plus foible […]."[22] The point of departure for his argument is not a complicated evaluation of causes and effects but rather a simple description of weather phenomena to which everyone can attest. Through describing a conventional experience, this *conférencier* effectively annuls the previous speaker's argument.

This example illustrates that arguments from general experience do, in fact, appear in the discussion of all kinds of topics. What all three cases discussed above have in common is that they not only mention experience but refer to it by using the expression "l'expérience nous fait voir".[23] Interestingly, when describing a general kind of experience, speakers in many cases resort to this expression, which almost seems to mean something like 'We all know that … '. There are parallels between the *conférenciers*' use of "l'expérience nous fait voir" and Galileo's earlier employment of a similar expression in *De motu* (ca. 1589–1592). Therein, Galileo often argues from a general kind of experience gained by way of experiencing the world surrounding us. Galileo refers to this sort of experience through the expression *experientia docet*, meaning 'experience teaches' or 'experience shows us', as historian of science Charles B. Schmitt reveals.[24] The *conférenciers* use "l'experience nous fait voir" in quite the same manner; their expression appears as a vernacular rendering of *experientia docet*, which was a commonplace expression.[25]

21 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 115, pp. 233–242.

22 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 115, p. 237.

23 In a philological and linguistic analysis of French texts dating from 1325 to 1524, Gérard Gorcy notes that similar expressions such as "voir par expérience", "l'expérience apprend", "expérience certifie", "l'expérience démontre", and "l'expérience témoigne" frequently appear in a variety of texts (Gorcy 2001, p. 406). Regarding later texts (1600–1800), Gorcy does not cite any examples but simply states: "Dans le domaine général, l'*expérience apprend* (tour le plus fréquent), elle *démontre, enseigne, fait connaître, fait voir, montre*: point n'est besoin d'exemplifier ces expressions qui attestant que l'expérience est un moyen pédagogique et instructif de premier ordre" (ibid., p. 424). This attests to the frequent use of expressions corresponding to the *conférenciers*' "l'expérience nous fait voir".

24 See Schmitt 1969, p. 109.

25 Charles Knapp quotes Tacitus using a similar expression. See Knapp 1935, p. 1. Ingrid Edlund-Berry asserts that the phrase originally stems from Lucretius and Tacitus and became common in Latin literature. See Edlund-Berry 2000, p. 511. In her lexicographical study of *experientia* and *experimentum* in Medieval texts, Jacqueline Hamesse (2001) states: "En poursuivant l'examen des deux termes dans leurs contextes, on constate d'abord que *experientia* est souvent accompagné du verbe *docere*, tandis que *experimentum* ou plutôt *experimenta* fonctionne habituellement avec le verbe *facere*" (p. 79). Nevertheless, Hamesse concludes that there is no systematic differentiation between *experimentum* and *experientia* in the period she studies (see ibid., p. 80).

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Experience in the sense of "l'experience nous fait voir" by no means needs to be acquired personally; speakers may, for example, refer to general knowledge derived from history. In the discussion of "Le courage est-il naturel ou aquis?",[26] one speaker asserts that there is no real courage without knowledge of danger. Experiences with nation-states in the past and the present all show this: "Aussi, puisqu'il n'y a point de vrai courage sans connoissance du danger […]. L'experience l'a fait voir en tous les Estats des siécles passez & du nostre."[27]

Another *conférencier* discussing the question "Si le françois est leger & inconstant et pourquoy"[28] also refers to experience acquired throughout the course of history. Invoking past experience, he claims that the French are far removed from the constancy of those from other nations: "[…] l'experience a fait assez voir par le passé qu'ils sont fort eloignez de la constance de beaucoup d'autres nations […]."[29] These examples distinctly reveal that the *expérience* the speakers refer to is, in many instances, not something they have obtained themselves but rather a concoction made of the experiences of others. It can be orally transmitted or acquired through the study of texts, by way of the examples history provides.[30]

Under the banner of "l'experience nous fait voir", one *conférencier* even combines general experience with historical examples, as part of the discussion of "Des causes de la gelée & du dégel".[31] Considering the case of bodies of running water, he argues that they do not freeze as easily as other kinds of water, similar to oil, the sea, and wine:

> […] elles ne sont pas si aizées à geler, non plus que l'huile pour son humidité aërienne & onctüeuse, la mer & le vin pour leurs esprits chauds, que toutesfois l'experience nous fait voir se geler par un froid vehement: le Poëte en ses Georgiques lors qu'il d'escrit la rigueur d'un Hyver, disant que l'on fendoit le vin à coups de hache: & les navigations des Holandois vers le Septentrion, nous rapportent qu'ils furent trois mois arrestez sous le 74^{e} degré, leurs vaisseaux ayans esté glacez en pleine mer.[32]

Yet, as per "l'expérience nous fait voir", these liquids nevertheless freeze when temperatures are low enough. This experience, which might be described as common enough, does not seem to be sufficient for the *conférencier* presenting his arguments here. He wants to land a second blow by furthermore substantiat-

26 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 155, pp. 629–636.
27 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 155, pp. 629–630.
28 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 146, pp. 547–556.
29 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 146, p. 548.
30 The *conférenciers*' stance here seems to coincide with the Medieval conception of *experientia*, which, according to Thomas Bénatouïl and Isabelle Draelants, implied that regardless of its presentation, *experientia* was often taken from written texts. References to *experientia* only seldomly meant that the knowledge in question was personally acquired. See Bénatouïl and Draelants 2011, p. 6.
31 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 125, pp. 339–348.
32 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 125, pp. 341–342.

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ing his claims through authoritative sources. Therefore, he cites "le poëte en ses Georgiques", Virgil, who furnishes further evidence for the fact that wine does freeze in bitter winter, describing in one of his texts how the beverage had to be defrosted by axe blows. Support for the argument that even the sea can freeze over comes from Dutch seafarers, who reported that their ship had become ice-bound near the 74th parallel.

Importantly, the historical evidence cited here is not of the general kind. What we see here are *specific* historical occurrences. Virgil describes a specific and extremely cold winter; the Dutch sailors recount a specific historical voyage. Such singular historical incidents had no place in the philosophy of Aristotle and his (Scholastic) followers, as they were perceived as contingent (a line of thought I discuss in more detail in part 7.1.2).[33] It is probably for this reason that the *conférencier* speaking about how different bodies of water freeze departs from general experience and only later supplies specific corresponding evidence. What is crucial, then, is the general experience, but this speaker wagers that it might be accepted even more easily if further substantiated through historical examples – especially from well-known sources like Virgil.[34]

Experience of Life

In certain instances, the *conférenciers* employ *expérience* in a more personal – if still general – way. They sometimes refer to this type of experience when they wish to describe a kind of knowledge acquired through a long life.[35] It is in this sense that the *conférenciers*' notion of experience most resembles our understanding of the term today.

Discussing the question "Quel est le plus à desirer des aages",[36] one speaker claims that the crown belongs to old age, as its experiences renders it the most perfect. Old age alone is able to judge which of the ages is best, as it alone has traversed them all: "Aussi estant plus parfaite par ses expériences, & seule capable de juger la bonté des aages, qu'elle [i.e., la vieillesse] a parcouru, il faut s'en rapporter à la bonté de son jugement, aussi bien en ce poinct comme en tous les autres."[37] It is

33 See Daston 1994, pp. 40–41. Philosophy was concerned with the universal, whereas particulars were history's domain. See ibid., p. 40.

34 "For medieval and Renaissance scholastics, as for Aristotle himself, attaching the name of an authority to a statement of experiential fact rendered it probable and hence suitable for use in argument" (Dear 1985, p. 148).

35 See the discussion of experience of life as one aspect of experience in Etienne Chauvin's *Lexicon Rationale sive Thesaurus Philosophicus* (1692), in Dear 2006, p. 115. In his lexicographical analysis of the notion of *expérience* in French texts, Gorcy opens what he calls the 'pole' of "expérience / temps" (for a period roughly spanning from 1325 to 1800). Under this dimension of *expérience*, he groups a number of examples corresponding to experience of life or of old age. See Gorcy 2001, pp. 405–406 and 410–412. He cites, for example, the following passage from Jean de Rotrou's *Venceslas* (1647): "Régner est un secret, dont la haute science, / Ne s'acquiert que par l'âge, et par l'experience" (Rotrou in ibid., pp. 410–411).

36 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 109.I, pp. 137–144.

37 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 109.I, p. 139.

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striking that this speaker, in describing the knowledge a person acquires throughout their lifetime, refers to their "experiences", not to "experience" in the singular. Unfortunately, no consistent differentiation between general *expérience* and particular *expériences* can be found in the *Conférences*.

Hence, when referring to the serenity of old age in "Quel est le plus loüable des temperaments",[38] one speaker claims that the reason for their wisdom is not so much the experience (in the singular) that the elderly acquire throughout their lives but rather the dryness and coolness of their brains: "[…] la sagesse [i.e., des vieillards] ne vient pas tant de l'expérience qu'ils ont acquise par une longue suite d'années, que de la froideur et sécheresse de leur cerveau, laquelle fait les hommes posez."[39]

Overall, when referring to knowledge obtained through a long life, the *conférenciers* never use the impersonal expression "l'expérience nous fait voir". While some of them use the plural *expériences* when referring to the experience of life, others speak of *expérience* in the singular, and so no clear distinction between personal and impersonal experience emerges on the sole basis of vocabulary choices. Similar to today's perception of experience of life, the *conférenciers* do not automatically imply that someone has to live through every ordeal imaginable in order to acquire wisdom. Experience in life can also be obtained through the experiences of others, and therefore involves indirect or mediated elements. The situation might unfold differently regarding the third sense in which the *conférenciers* refer to *expérience*.

Expérience *as Experiment*

In some cases, the *conférenciers* speak of *expérience* when referring to experimentally acquired knowledge. As historian of science Peter Dear has pointed out, it was only in the course of the Early Modern period that the Latin *experimentum* began to acquire a specific, consistent meaning. Before that, one could use *experientia* and *experimentum* interchangeably.[40] Crucially, this shift of meaning is not reflected in the French language (contrary to English and German, for example, which each began using two different terms). In modern French, *expérience* still refers to both (particular) experimental knowledge and (general) knowledge acquired through usage and practice, as it did in Early Modern times.[41] Therefore, and even though some *conférenciers* seem to be aware of a distinct 'experimental' experience, they had no specific term at hand which they could employ in their proceedings. In the

38 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 134, pp. 427–436.

39 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 134, p. 433.

40 See Dear 2006, p. 106. Hamesse (2001) studies a number of Medieval texts and comes to a similar conclusion. Her examples include, among others, Roger Bacon, Jean Pecham, and Albertus Magnus.

41 The ninth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1986) gives the following two meanings for *expérience*: "Le fait d'acquérir, d'entendre ou d'enrichir une connaissance, un savoir, un savoir-faire, par l'usage et la pratique; épreuve que l'on fait personnellement d'une chose" and "[e]nsemble des connaissances pratiques tirées de l'usage" (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, neuvième éd. online, s.v. "expérience").

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Conférences, we find only a special type of *expérience* that appears different to the two other types already discussed, as the following examples show.

The fifth speaker in the *Conférence* on "De l'iris ou arc-en-ciel"[42] does not refer to general principles everybody knows or to elders' extensive knowledge of life when speaking of experience; he means something much more specific. The *conférencier* argues that the best way to demonstrate how rainbows are formed is to fill a vial with water and hold it in the sunlight over a solid surface. Thereby, the colours of the rainbow reveal themselves: "Le 5. dist, Qu'il ne trouvoit point de demonstration plus claire à prouver la façon en laquelle se forme l'Iris que l'experience d'une phiole pleine d'eau, laquelle exposée au Soleil, sur quelque lieu solide y represente les mesmes couleurs que celles de l'arc en ciel […]."[43] The precise description of the procedure necessary to reveal the rainbow seems to suggest that the *conférencier* in question has undertaken the experiment himself. If this really is the case is, however, difficult to determine.

In contrast to academies such as the Royal Society of London (est. 1660), the *conférenciers* in no way clarify if the experimental experiences they discuss are their own. To be published in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*, authors describing an experiment (which they still called 'experience') had to adhere to a strict protocol. They needed to make clear that they had personally conducted the experiment in question, and they were urged to describe it as specifically set in time and space, as a "single, historical occurrence", as Dear explains:[44]

> The credentials that established the actuality of the event were provided by surrounding the description by a wealth of circumstantial detail. This detail generally included information regarding time, place, and participants, together with additional extraneous remarks about the experience, all serving to add verisimilitude.[45]

This means that the reports of observations and experiments submitted to the *Philosophical Transactions* had to be protocols of the author's own experiences.[46] The texts were not to contain theoretical or abstract considerations of the matter experimented with. This rule led to a somewhat absurd event where Isaac Newton had to rewrite one of his optical experiments to fit into the Royal Society's format. His experiment, as it is described in the *Philosophical Transactions*,[47] apparently never really occurred in that way. Newton's text rather appears to be fabricated from several experiments he had performed on various occasions and condensed into one.[48]

42 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 113, pp. 193–210.
43 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 113, pp. 208–209.
44 Dear 1985, p. 154.
45 Ibid.
46 See ibid.
47 See Newton 1671, pp. 3,075–3,087.
48 See Dear 1985, pp. 154–155. For a more detailed analysis of Newton's optical theory, see Kuhn 1978.

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The *conférenciers* do not proceed in this manner; they do not apply a specific vocabulary which would clearly authenticate the experiments they present as their own. Even though it is therefore possible that the speaker discussing the rainbow made the *expérience* himself, it is also thoroughly conceivable that he had merely heard or read about it. That the *conférenciers* were not necessarily experimenters themselves becomes more clear in the discussion of "De la rozée".[49] Here, one speaker refers to an *expérience* involving raising half an eggshell filled with morning dew attached to a specific instrument towards the sun. It is not his own experiment but rather one executed by others, the aim of which is to prove the greater subtlety of morning dew in contrast to normal water, or so the speaker contends: "Sa subtilité beaucocp [*sic*] plus grande que celle de l'eau: tesmoin l'experience de ceux qui font élever au Soleil le long d'une pique un peu enclinée, une coquille d'œuf pleine de rozée: ce qui n'arriveroit pas estant remplie d'eau commne, tant rarefiée fust-elle."[50] The *conférencier* in question thus uses an experiment to underscore his argument, but he in no way claims that he has undertaken it himself. He presumably knows about the results of the morning dew experiment not through his own *expérience* but through that of others.

In a similar fashion, another *conférencier* recounts the invention of the cannon in "Si l'invention de l'artillerie a fait plus de mal que de bien".[51] As the speaker supposes, the cannon was discovered by a certain Bertolde Aleman by way of the *expérience* of putting a receptacle filled with sulphur and nitre over a fire: "[…] il [i.e., le canon] fut inventé par Bertolde Aleman: par l'expérience qu'il vid arriver fortüitement dans du nitre & du soulphre enfermez en un vase sur le feu, pour s'en servir en une operation de Chymie dont il faisoit profession."[52] Here again, the *expérience* which led to the discovery of the weapon in question was undertaken by someone else, not the *conférencier* himself. It is cited as evidence anyway.

Most interestingly, Renaudot proves to possess a distinct understanding of *expérience* as personal experiment, as evidenced in his introduction to the second volume of *Conférences*. Summarising the debates about various inventions and secrets presented at the Bureau d'Adresse during the "vacances" period, when no *conférences* took place, Renaudot alludes to what seems to be experimental *expérience*. Regarding the inspection of these inventions and secrets, he claims: "La plus part desquelles ont esté trouvées veritables, au rapport des personnes commisses par la Compagnie à leur examen & experience."[53] According to the verdict of those members of the company assigned to their examination and experience, most of the inventions had turned out to be genuine. In this phrase, 'experience' distinctly

49 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106, pp. 81–90.
50 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 106, p. 83.
51 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 104.II, pp. 57–64.
52 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 104.II, p. 59.
53 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 4.

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refers to sense perception and bears the meaning of 'test' or 'trial', which would go on to become firmly attached to the term *'experimentum'* in the Latin language.[54]

On one occasion, the *conférenciers* mention experiences that could be qualified as 'observational'. In contrast to experiments – which, in the course of the seventeenth century, began to designate a deliberate intervention in nature – observations did not require an interference in nature's course. In this sense, observations merely record what would have happened anyhow.[55] Correspondingly, the fifth speaker in the *Conférence* on "Des taches de la lune & du soleil" argues,[56] as "l'expérience nous fait voir" that sunspots always remain in the same place, whereas the spots on the surface of the moon change their place and form. According to him, this means that the two phenomena cannot both result from the same principle: "Le 5. dist, Que les taches du Soleil ne peuvent venir de mesmes principes que celles de la Lune, que l'experience nous fait voir changer de lieu & de figure: celles du Soleil demeurans tousjours semblables & en mesme lieu."[57]

As in the examples cited above, "l'expérience nous fait voir" here describes a knowledge that does not stem from a singular contingent event but rather is somehow generally accepted. Yet contrary to the general experience everyone can ascertain, the *expérience* described in this instance is something that only experts observing heavenly bodies could collect. While the spots on the moon might be visible to the naked eye, sunspots are only rarely so (they have to be exceptionally large).[58] Ultimately, the *conférencier* may be wrong with his conclusion – as sunspots do change over time – yet he could only have been aware of any sunspot behaviour at all if he had personally observed the sun with a telescope over a period of more than ten years.[59] Given the general context of the *Conférences*, it is rather unlikely that the *conférencier* speaking was a professional observer of the skies; his choice of vocabulary, "l'expérience nous fait voir", rather suggests that his knowledge about the sun and the moon is some sort of common (though not verifiable) knowledge – a concoction of authoritative opinions, even though he does not indicate any specific source.

54 I explain this in more detail in part 7.1.2.
55 See Daston 2011, pp. 85–86.
56 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 93.I, pp. 697–713.
57 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 93.I, p. 711.
58 I thank Daniel Stader for this clarification.
59 Crucially, in Aristotelian philosophy, the heavens were perceived as unchangeable. It is only in the sublunar sphere where changes (such as comets) could occur. This is the reason why Galileo's observation of (moving) sunspots ca. 1610 was so heatedly debated. See Shapin 1996, pp. 14–16.

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Occult Experiénce

The fourth distinct type of *expérience* found in the *Conférences* is what one might call 'occult *expérience*': the experience of supernatural phenomena (including religious visions, etc.). Given the association of experience with empirical evidence, this closeness to the supernatural definition seems somewhat counterintuitive.[60]

In "De l'apparition des esprits, ou phantomes",[61] one speaker argues that both secular and ecclesiastic history confirm appearances of angels and demons to humans. This, already, is a powerful argument from authority. Yet it is furthermore substantiated by "l'expérience journaliere", proving that the spirits of the dead, too, appear to the living, albeit there are many who are doubtful of this, the *conférencier* asserts. Even though the modern reader might be of a similar sceptical disposition, the force of the double argument presented here is impressive. The speaker concludes with the following sweeping blow: challenging his opinion would discredit the whole of antiquity. That phantoms do, in fact, appear to the living is upheld in the anecdote of the ghost that revealed itself to Brutus, among many other examples, as history teaches us. But what carries even more weight is that the holy scripture sees the return of Samuel, Moses, and Elias, which, as the *conférencier* concludes, can only mean their spirits:

> Pour les Anges & les Demons, l'histoire sacrée & prophane font foy qu'ils ont souvent paru aux hommes. L'experience journaliere prouve le mesme des ames des defuncts: bien que l'aparition de ces dernieres soit revoquée en doute de plusieurs. Mais outre la presomption qu'il y a de decrediter toute l'antiquité, laquelle entr'autres nous remarque l'esprit qui parla à Brutus […]. L'authorité de l'Escriture Saincte fait revenir Samuël, Moyse, & Helie: ce qui ne peut estre entendu que de leurs ames.[62]

Given its empirical imprint, the *conférenciers*' use of the term *expérience* in connection with occult phenomena seems to break rank. Yet, as historian of science Eduard Jan Dijksterhuis explains, there had been a whole Medieval tradition of describing such occurrences in the terms of experience. Roger Bacon's *scientia experimentalis* was closely connected to astrology, alchemy, and magic; according to Bacon and to other Medieval scholars, all three disciplines were part of the sciences.[63] Consequently, concerning the literature of the Middle Ages, Dijksterhuis asserts that where one finds the notions of *experientia* or *experimentum*, the sphere of the occult is always close at hand.[64]

60 According to Bénatouïl and Draelants, the fact that in its Medieval conception *expérience* "peut porter sur des êtres ou des phénomènes surnaturels ou spirituels" is one of the factors making it impossible to draw a direct line from Medieval *experientia* to the experimentation of the Moderns (Bénatouïl and Draelants 2011, p. 6).

61 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 69.II, pp. 474–480.

62 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 69.II, p. 475.

63 Dijksterhuis 1983, p. 155. Regarding Roger Bacon's "scholastic empiricism" (p. 135), see also Steve J. Williams's "Roger Bacon in Context: Empiricism in the High Middle Ages" (2011).

64 See Dijksterhuis 1983, p. 156.

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While Medieval philosophy was "determined by a structure and order, knowable through reason", magic, concerned with the "contingent, must rely directly upon experience".[65] Whereas philosophy conforms to logical reasoning and methods of formal argumentation such as syllogism, magic follows no logical principles. Precisely because magic exists only in the minds of the people who believe in it, it can only be recorded in the terms of their individual experience. Charles B. Schmitt furthermore asserts that such a view of experience survived in certain sixteenth-century texts.[66] Seemingly, strands of it surface even in the seventeenth-century, as the *Conférences* show. Given that the *conférenciers* heavily rely on traditional authoritative sources, this is not altogether surprising.

Authors of religious texts in the Medieval and Early Modern periods similarly often argue from experience in their writings.[67] In her *Libro de la vida* (1588),[68] Teresa of Ávila (Teresa de Jesús) alludes to her (practical) experience in prayer resulting in visions.[69] Her writings reveal that, unlike other *expérience*, mystical experience in a religious context ultimately remains dependent on God's volition – God cannot be known against his will.[70] Jean-Joseph Surin, in his *Science expérimentale des choses de l'autre vie* (1663), refers to mystical experience, but his conception also includes observational and, according to the literary scholars Daniel Fliege and Marie Guthmüller, even experimental elements.[71] Crucially, religious experiments cannot be repeated, which gives them a status that is not comparable to experiments in the natural-philosophical context.[72]

Yet in fields such as Early Modern medicine, the transitions between mystical powers, magic, and science might easily become blurred. A further *conférencier* proposes an argument concerned with occult experience in the debate on the question of "Des Talismans".[73] He is convinced of the effectiveness of talismans and argues that it is wrong to question the veracity of things only because they cannot be explained through reason. This line of thought leads to the assertion that reason, when confronted with experience, the mistress of all things, resolves to questioning the existence of experience, as reason cannot fathom experience with the feebleness of her own judgement.

> Le 4. dist, Que c'est estre trop sensuel de vouloir impugner à la verité des choses, sous prétexte qu'elles ne tombent pas sous nostre raison […] d'où vient que si on

65 Schmitt 1969, p. 86.
66 See ibid.
67 Regarding experiences of the divine in Franciscan hagiography, see Leonardi (2001).
68 Teresa of Ávila wrote the book between 1554 and 1565, yet it was only published after her death, in 1588. See Roebling-Grau 2022, p. 93.
69 See ibid., pp. 97–99.
70 See ibid., p. 102.
71 See Fliege and Guthmüller 2022, pp. 161–166.
72 See ibid., p. 164.
73 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 108.I, pp. 113–125.

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> luy met en avant des experiences maistresses des choses, elle leur veut dénier l'estre pource qu'elle ne peut les accorder avec la foiblesse de son jugement.[74]

To modern readers, the debate about the properties of talismans might seem a thoroughly magical discussion, but to the *conférenciers*, this question was also a medical concern.[75] Members of the medical profession, directly confronted with the success or failure of remedies, often encountered effects they could not explain. As a solution, they resorted to ascribing certain inexplicable occult qualities to medical substances. I discuss this tendency in greater detail in part 7.2.1, where I analyse the notions of *expérience* dominant in the medical *Conférences*.

7.1.2 The Aristotelian Notion of *Experientia*

How is it possible that such a variety of conceptions of the same term exist next to each other in one single publication? To answer this question, I examine the Aristotelian notion of *empeiríā* (rendered as *experientia* in the Latin tradition),[76] which dominated the term's understanding throughout the Middle Ages and up to the Early Modern period.[77] Although the Scholastics faced heavy criticism for putting abstract reasoning above experience,[78] Aristotle's philosophy, all in all, can be qualified as empirical, in the sense that it is ultimately based on sense perception.[79] In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle argues:

> Thus sense-perception gives rise to memory, as we hold; and repeated memories of the same thing give rise to experience; because the memories, though numerically many, constitute a single experience. And experience […] provides the starting point of art and science: art in the world of process and science in the world of facts.[80]

Experience, for Aristotle, forms the single basis from which the principles of both art and science derive. Yet these are only the two last steps in a four-step mechanism. At the beginning stands mere (undifferentiated) sense perception. In a second step, sense perceptions become *memoria* through frequent repetition. Several similar memories are then shaped into one experience in the third step. This process indicates that experience cannot be extracted from one single phenomenon

74 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 108.I, pp. 121–122.
75 On the relation of religious beliefs and medical knowledge in the seventeenth century (discussed using the example of canonisation), see Pomata's "Malpighi and the Holy Body: Medical Experts and Miraculous Evidence in Seventeenth-Century Italy" (2007).
76 See Pomata 2011, p. 45.
77 For an overview of various strands of empiricism in antiquity, see Barry Allen's *Empiricism: Experience and Experiment from Antiquity to the Anthropocene* (2021), pp. 11–286. Regarding the Middle Ages, see Jürgen Sarnowsky's "Expertus – experientia – experimentum. Neue Wege der wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis im Spätmittelalter" (2012).
78 See Dear 2006, p. 107.
79 See Schmitt 1969, p. 93, and Dear 2006, p. 107.
80 Aristotle, *An. Post.* II.19, 100a3–9, transl. Tredennick 1960, pp. 257–259.

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alone. For *experientia* to form, objects must have been differentiated and ordered according to their specific characteristics. In the peripatetic understanding, experience therefore provides information about how things generally function. *Experientia* is, as Peter Dear summarises, "a statement of how things are, or how they behave, and it was taken to have been originally constructed from a large number of individual sensory impressions".[81] In a fourth and last step, one can then derive the principles of the arts and sciences from experience by way of induction.[82]

For Aristotle, (self-evident) statements such as 'the whole is greater than its proper part' usually form the basic premises of a science. Yet in sciences concerned with the natural world, it is not possible to simply find these premises in one's mind through a process of introspection. Consequently, in such cases, it is for experience to deliver them (through the steps discussed above). For this to work, however, experience must be completely evident to everyone.[83] Experience of this kind would be, for example, the knowledge that acorns always grow into oak trees.[84]

Yet even though experience was therefore something that theoretically everyone could acquire through their own senses, it did not mean that it was imperative for each person to collect such experience personally.[85] For the Scholastics, experience was all the more convincing when "drawn from weighty authority and thereby rendered probable".[86] As a result, one need not go into the woods to observe how an acorn grows into an oak tree; it is enough to know that Aristotle says that this is the case. Experience was therefore empirical in theory but, in practice,

81 Dear 1985, p. 148.

82 On Aristotle's four steps from sense perception to the principles, see Wolfgang Detel's comments on passages 100a3–9 in Aristotle, *An. Post,* transl. Detel 1993, pp. 831–834.

83 See Dear 1987, p. 141. In another article, Dear explains that "[f]or Aristotle, a science of the physical world should, ideally, take the form of a logical deductive structure derived from incontestable basic statements or premises. […] In the case of sciences that concerned the natural world, however, such axioms could not be known by simple introspection. In those cases, the axioms had to be rooted in familiar and commonly accepted experience" (Dear 2006, p. 109).

84 See ibid. As Dear puts it in another text: "A statement of experience was acceptable because, at least ideally, it was what everyone knew. It was a universal statement of common experience, and could therefore be used as a premise in a scientific, syllogistic demonstration: just like the axioms of geometry, it was evident, and so required no formal proof" (Dear 1990, p. 666).

85 Bénatouïl and Draelants point out that *expérience*, in its Medieval conception, was rarely direct experience but often stemmed from books. According to the two authors, this is one of the specificities that "empêchent de l'assimiler à l'expérimentation des modernes" (Bénatouïl and Draelants 2011, p. 6). In her article "Expérience et autorités dans la philosophie naturelle d'Albert le Grand" (2011), Draelants examines the expression "expertus sum" in Albertus Magnus's oeuvre. She shows that Albertus Magnus often uses the expression when referencing passages that he clearly took from the writings of his predecessor Arnoldus Saxo. See Draelants 2011, p. 100. Arnaud Zucker, in "Expertine sunt antiqui", explains regarding references to experience in the Middle Ages: "L'*experientia per sensus* n'est pas nécessairement la mienne, mais on l'exprime souvent par la première personne, comme pour aligner sur le régime de l'autorité ce qui pourrait être d'un autre ordre, une source de connaissance d'un autre type" (Zucker 2011, p. 23).

86 Dear 1985, p. 149.

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heavily based on authoritative texts. In this sense, Galileo's critique of Aristotelianism is to be understood as a critique not of Aristotle's method pure and simple but rather of how his followers practised it:[87]

> [T]hose who learn in this way never know anything by its causes, but merely have opinions based on belief, that is, because this is what Aristotle said. And few of them inquire whether what Aristotle said is true. For it suffices for them that they will be considered more learned, the more passages of Aristotle they have ready for use.[88]

In the Aristotelian tradition, singular occurrences of certain events could not be classified as *experientia*, because they provide no information about how nature usually behaves, as already indicated.[89] Such particulars belonged to history; philosophy, by contrast, was solely concerned with universals.[90] As Aristotle puts it in the *Metaphysics*: "it is clear that there is no science of the accidental – because all scientific knowledge is of that which is always or usually so."[91] Consequently, Aristotelian science had no use for singular events such as volcano eruptions or the like.[92] Similarly, aberrations from the ordinary course of nature in the form of 'monsters' could not – by definition – provide any information about how nature generally works;[93] rather, they were relegated to the realm of the preternatural.[94] As a consequence, no scientific knowledge about them could be envisaged.[95]

This brings us to the problematic nature of *observationes* of the heavens that did not fit into the grid of general, comprehensible *experientia*, as the example of the sunspots above has shown. Certainly, observations of recurring phenomena in the skies could be distilled into generally valid experiences: everyone could see with their own eyes that the sun always rises in the east.[96] Yet a great number of other regular events, such as the movements of the planets, were not immediately evident to everyone. Such observations in astronomy had to be conducted by specially trained experts, and they often required specific instruments. Conse-

87 See Schmitt 1969, p. 113.
88 Galileo in ibid., pp. 112–113. Or, as Zucker puts it: "Par le jeu inévitable de la consécration patrimoniale, les savants antiques, fussent-ils passionnément expérimentateurs, deviennent des autorités contraignantes qui semblent réprimer l'expérience par les sens. L'expérience chez Aristote est convertie depuis longtemps en savoir, tout simplement" (Zucker 2011, p. 32).
89 See Dear 1987, p. 145. Christian Licoppe, in discussing how Mersenne used the term *expérience* both in the Aristotelian sense and in the sense of *experimentum*, points out that Mersenne put much less trust in the latter form of experience. See Licoppe 1996, pp. 23–24. "[L]e statut de verité de l'*experimentum* doit souvent être renforcé, par exemple par la repetition" (ibid., p. 24).
90 See Daston 1994, p. 40.
91 Aristotle, *Met.* VI.2, 1027a20–22, transl. Tredennick 1933, p. 305.
92 See Dear 2006, p. 109.
93 See Dear 1987, p. 145.
94 On the difference between the natural, the preternatural, and the supernatural, see Daston's "Marvellous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe" (1991), pp. 95–108.
95 See Maclean 2000, p. 234.
96 The sun example stems from Dear 2006, p. 109.

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quently, such phenomena were crucially lacking in "evidentness",[97] thus requiring a problematic "reliance on […] testimony and human records".[98]

7.1.3 Differentiated Experience: *Experimentum* and *Observatio*

In the late seventeenth century, natural philosophers arrived at a clear conception of 'active experiment' and 'passive observation'. They differentiated between the two terms according to "whether one intervened in the course of nature to produce an effect or studied effects as they occurred in the course of nature", as Lorraine Daston asserts.[99] Yet while the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the gradual emergence of a variety of highly differentiated practices and textual genres to classify empirical evidence, all of these were originally more or less subsumed under the general heading of *experientia*.[100]

To begin with, those concerned with the study of nature had no clear conception of the difference between *experientia* and *experimentum* in the Western European Middle Ages.[101] Meanwhile, *observatio* was already perceived as a distinct practice, albeit one that had attained only marginal significance.[102] It had achieved a certain autonomy already for Cicero and Pliny, yet confined to a single distinct field: the observation of the stars.[103] Over the course of the centuries, numerous astronomers documented the cycles of the heavens; mostly, these observations were recorded in anonymous form.[104] Outside astronomical studies, *observatio* was mainly understood as (religious) observance, Katharine Park explains.[105]

The fact that, for a long time, *observatio* was perceived as subservient to *experientia* has its roots in the Aristotelian conception of empiricism. Aristotle presents a specific concept of *empeiríā* but neglects observation, which he understands mostly as a passive form of "watching and attentive waiting, rather than test or trial".[106] As a consequence, the Scholastic followers of Aristotle also showed little interest in *observatio*. This changed with the humanists' translations of texts by Sextus Empiricus, which led to the rediscovery of the Skeptics' (and the Empirics') concept of *observatio* (*tērēsis)*.[107]

Subsequently, *observatio* was able to step out of the shadow of *experientia*. It emerged as a distinct epistemic genre in the period from 1500 to 1650, as Gianna

97 Dear 1987, p. 147.
98 Dear 2006, p. 122.
99 Daston 2011, p. 86. See also Allen 2021, p. 242.
100 See Park 2011, p. 16. See also Giovacchini 2011, p. 369.
101 See Dijksterhuis 1983, p. 155. For an overview of the evolution of empiricism(s) throughout history, from antiquity to the twentieth century, see Allen 2021.
102 See Park 2011.
103 See ibid., pp. 18–19. Charles B. Schmitt explains that "[a]stronomy, which by its very nature cannot be experimental in the normal sense of the word, was observational long before the scientific revolution" (Schmitt 1969, p. 88).
104 See Park 2011, p. 19.
105 See ibid., p. 21.
106 Ibid., p. 18.
107 See Pomata 2011, p. 46.

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Pomata emphasises.[108] No longer solely concerned with the study of the heavens, *observatio* became an epistemic practice in other disciplines as well, especially in medicine. Moreover, its primary meaning changed "from observance to empirical observation".[109] Observations as descriptions of singular events were now signed by individual authors and – often cast in letter form – meant for circulation between scholars; they served community-building purposes.[110] Rather than taking up an interest in general theory, these letters focused on particular cases.[111] In the medical field, *observationes* became a source of professional pride, Pomata argues. They had developed into a genre that physicians alone could comply with, whereas *experientia* – understood as the bland knowledge that a certain remedy worked – had more vulgar overtones. *Experientia* was assumed to be based on the knowledge of 'empirics',[112] the illiterate, or – even worse (by Early Modern standards) – old women.[113]

Originally, *observationes* took the form of mere marginal notes added to medical doctrine. However, medical case studies became more and more detached from the opinion of authorities and emerged as their own genre of medical writing, as Pomata illustrates.[114] After first finding itself relegated to a secondary place – as happens, for example, in Amatus Lusitanus's *Curationum medicinalium centuria prima* (1551)[115] – doctrine ultimately completely vanished from medical observations in the second half of the seventeenth century.[116]

This process of slow disappearance illustrates how practice became an increasingly important source of validation for medical knowledge, partially replacing doctrine.[117] Physicians placed great importance on *observationes* in the sense of "*experientia propria*, *autopsia*, authored observation" and were no longer interested in the "generic, anonymous experience of the Aristotelian *empeiríā* or the Plin-

108 See Pomata (2011). Regarding the development of *observationes* into a prominent form of medical writing, see also Pomata's "Sharing Cases: The *Observationes* in Early Modern Medicine" (2010).

109 Pomata 2011, p. 47.

110 See ibid., p. 53. The volume *Communicating Observations in Early Modern Letters (1500–1675)* (2013), edited by Dirk van Miert, specifically focuses on the letter as the preferred medium to convey observations in a variety of disciplines.

111 See Maclean 2008, p. 26.

112 Regarding this point, Ian Maclean stresses that the colleges of physicians founded in Early Modern Europe were eager to distinguish "their members, all Latinists if not Graecists also and all university-trained, from empirics, surgeons and Jewish doctors, whom they contrived to characterize as unlicensed and dangerous" (ibid., p. 18).

113 See Pomata 2011, pp. 50–52.

114 See ibid., p. 54.

115 Lusitanus therein separated case narrative and *scholion*, thereby focusing the reader's attention on the case. See ibid., pp. 55–57.

116 See ibid., p. 62 and 67.

117 See ibid., p. 59. Regarding the situation before these developments occurred, Maclean asserts: "In many centres (but not all) the training was explicitly philosophical in the sense of applying logic and dialectic to medical data (hence the degree 'doctor of medicine and philosophy' awarded at a number of Northern Italian universities)" (Maclean 2008, pp. 18–19).

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ian *observationes*".[118] Crucially, this did not mean that observations had to be self-made in every case – they could still derive from texts, as the example of Johannes Schenck von Grafenberg shows. His *Observationum medicarum rariorum* (1584) is a large collection of observations he assembled from ancient sources, the letters of his colleagues, and his own records. Importantly, the observations therein are marked as individual: authors and sources are meticulously cited.[119]

In the period from 1600 to 1800, observation then developed from an epistemic genre to an epistemic category, according to Daston.[120] No longer primarily bound to astronomy or medicine, *observatio* gained importance in all kinds disciplines.[121] Academies such as the Royal Society of London and the Parisian Académie royale des sciences published observations on a variety of topics.[122] The fact that a great number of corporations and institutions encouraged observations created, as it were, a problem of standardisation.[123] Yet the great enthusiasm of individuals to conduct continuous, long-term observations – often considerably restricting their personal movement – also illustrates that observation had become a way of life.[124] Observations were no longer a means to individual self-improvement but rather a collective enterprise aimed at public utility.[125]

Thus, observation emerged out of the shadows of *experientia* and evolved into a distinct empirical practice.[126] But what about the relation of *experientia* and *experimentum*? As already mentioned, there was no clear distinction between the two terms in the Medieval period.[127] *Experientia*, in the Middle Ages, could denote what one was told by one's unassisted senses, but it could also describe something more 'experimental' in character.[128] Given that the same counted for *experimentum*, the two terms could be used interchangeably.[129] Even if, therefore, the notion of test and trial was partially inherent to both 'experience' and 'experiment', it did not mean that those writing about them had to conduct such examinations personally. In most cases, authors compiled evidence from authoritative sources.[130] Moreover, *experimenta* existed as a specific genre of Medieval medical writing. They recorded

118 Pomata 2011, p. 67.
119 See Krämer 2014, pp. 80–82.
120 See Daston 2011, p. 81. As Daston states in "Observation and Enlightenment" (2013, p. 660): "Between circa 1660 and 1830 observation reigned supreme in the natural and human sciences: cultivated as a practice, analyzed as a logic, embraced as a vocation."
121 See Daston. 2011, pp. 81–82.
122 See ibid., pp. 84–85.
123 See ibid., p. 88.
124 See ibid., pp. 101–102. For further discussion of the life of the observer, see Daston 2013, pp. 673–675.
125 See Daston 2011, p. 90.
126 Despite the differences between the two concepts, Daston notes that "[t]he boundary between observation and experiment could be quite fluid" (2013, p. 663).
127 See Schmitt 1969, p. 86.
128 See Park 2011, p. 11.
129 See Daston 2011, pp. 82–84.
130 See Park 2011, p. 11. See also Schmitt 1969, p. 87.

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"remedies that had proven successful but whose efficacy could not be justified on doctrinal grounds".[131] I will come back to this point in the following section, during my discussion of experience in the medical *Conférences*.

As Schmitt has noted, there still was no clear distinction between *experientia* and *experimentum* in the sixteenth century.[132] This is evidenced by Francesco Buonamici's writings on the vacuum, which Schmitt analyses. In the description of empirical events such as the behaviour of a water clock, Buonamici refers to both *experientia* and *experimentum*. As Schmitt asserts, natural philosophers with divergent convictions concerning the vacuum do not seem to use the two terms any differently.[133]

It is in Francis Bacon's conception of experimental philosophy[134] that *experimentum* finally began to specifically designate the deliberate manipulation of natural phenomena in order to put certain ideas to the test, as can be seen in his *Novum organum* (1620).[135] The Royal Society, meanwhile, still referred to 'experi-

131 Pomata 2011, p. 55.

132 See Schmitt 1969, p. 91.

133 See ibid.

134 For an overview of Early Modern experimental philosophy and its problematic relation to speculative philosophy, see Alberto Vanzo and Peter R. Anstey's *Experiment, Speculation and Religion in Early Modern Philosophy* (2019). Most of the volume's contributions focus on English experimental philosophers such as Bacon, Robert Boyle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Isaac Newton. Yet with Vanzo's "Experimental Philosophy and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Italy" (2019) and Dmitri Levitin's "Early Modern Experimental Philosophy: A Non-Anglocentric Overview" (2019), the book also contains two articles taking a non-Anglocentric stance. Christian Licoppe, in *La formation de la pratique scientifique. Le discours de l'expérience en France et en Angleterre (1630–1820)* (1996), studies the *discours* about *experientia* and *experimentum* in both France and England. Dear, in his "Miracles, Experiments, and the Ordinary Course of Nature" (1990), presents the argument that there was a fundamental difference between English experimental philosophy and the natural philosophy dominant in France in the seventeenth century: while the former began to privilege "singular experiences", the latter put greater weight on "universalized experiences of precisely the sort found in the mixed mathematical sciences" (p. 664). Dear closes his argument with the assertion that "'experimental philosophy' was indeed English, not French" (p. 683). The articles in David Gooding, Trevor Pinch, and Simon Schaffer's *The Uses of Experiment: Studies in the Natural Sciences* (1989) focus on the process of experimentation (not their results) since the sixteenth century. In their introduction, the three editors argue that experimentation must be understood as "an active process of argument and persuasion" (p. XVI). They stress that "[t]he experimenter is never alone with nature: there is always an audience, real or implied, which must be addressed and persuaded that what one experimenter makes is meaningful and important" (p. XIV).

135 See Daston 2011, pp. 85–86. For a more detailed analysis of Bacon's concept of "contained, controlled experiment" (p. 732), see Merchant 2008. For a discussion of Bacon's as well as Boyle's and Robert Hooke's philosophies of experiment, see Anstey 2014. Anstey discusses the different types of experiments as understood by his three protagonists (see ibid., pp. 111–115) and then focuses on their understanding of the relation of experiment and theory (pp. 116–123). Levitin (2019) paints a somewhat different picture than Anstey or Daston here. Criticising the stance taken by Anstey and Vanzo in a variety of texts, he argues that Bacon's views were not as important a factor of change when it comes to Early Modern experimental natural philosophy. Levitin argues that many important developments already

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ence' in its proceedings. Yet the term had lost all its Aristotelian connotations for the London natural philosophers and was understood in an experimental sense. The society's members no longer wanted to know how nature usually behaves, but rather how it had behaved in one very specific instance.[136] The Aristotelian general *experientia*, often embodied in authoritative texts, necessarily was an impersonal one. Now the observer became a crucial part of the experiment,[137] which emerged as the "primary empirical component of natural philosophy".[138] Crucially, a greater reliance on experimental knowledge in natural philosophy necessitated a new and different kind of trust, as the sociologist of science Steven Shapin argues in *A Social History of Truth* (1994). Trust was no longer automatically placed in classical authorities but rather conferred to contemporary practitioners of experiments. This shift also led to a growth in the importance of testimony.[139]

The broad concept of all-embracing and general Aristotelian *experientia* was thus subdivided into specific empirical practices and genres. Given the centrality of the discipline of medicine in these developments, does any of this have any influence on the *Conférences* concerned with medical questions?

took place before Bacon or regardless of Bacon on the continent (see, for example, Levitin's discussion of the Jesuits Cabeo and Kircher on pp. 244–245).

136 See Dear 1985, p. 152.

137 See ibid.

138 Dear 1987, p. 134. Importantly, as Daston points out: "The new-style natural philosophical experience had at least one striking disadvantage vis-à-vis the old-fashioned scholastic sort: whereas universals and commonplaces are by definition accessible to all, specific events, particularly those produced by experiment with finicky, expensive equipment, were not" (Daston 1995, p. 14).

139 See Shapin 1988, p. 375. In this context, see also Dear's (1992) analysis of the changes the concepts of 'objective' and 'subjective' underwent in the seventeenth century. In this article, Dear discusses the reasons for the trust Johannes Kepler placed in Galileo's observation of the four moons of Jupiter, even though Kepler was materially incapable of repeating these observations, as he did not possess a good enough telescope (pp. 625–628). As Daston puts it: "Trust, rather than replicability, made the collaborative empiricism of particulars possible among natural philosophers" (Daston 1995, p. 15). Licoppe (1996), studying the "organisation narrative de la preuve" (p. 10) in texts written by English and French natural philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, argues that experimental *compte rendus* resembled a kind of contract: "[L]'agencement des représentations à l'intérieur de la forme littéraire propre au compte rendu expérimental peut être lu comme une forme de contrat: l'auteur propose un phénomène jamais vu auparavant et construit selon des procédures définies à un public réel ou fictif (le lecteur-type), soigneusement choisi pour la valeur de la caution qu'il prête à la construction des faits, en vertu des intérêts que la mise en scène lui confère" (p. 16).

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7.2 Experience in the Medical *Conférences*

It is unsurprising that medicine was one of the first disciplines where *observatio* began to assert itself as a specific empirical practice. Medicine is, after all, a field where theory and practice interlink in a particular manner. It is not enough to merely reason about how diseases propagate themselves or how they can be identified – physicians also have to cure their real-life patients.[140] A practitioner of medicine in the seventeenth century might have the experience that doctrinal sources did not always sufficiently explain how certain remedies worked. Patients would react in certain, inexplicable manners, and diseases did not always develop as they should according to the textbooks of humoral pathology.

Consequently, it seems reasonable to assume that the discussion of medical questions at the *Conférences* unfolded in a slightly different way than did other debates. This inference counts all the more due to the fact that many physicians gathered around Renaudot and his various activities. The following part, 7.2.1, therefore investigates whether the *conférenciers*' conception of medical *expérience* differs from their usage of the term regarding other fields of knowledge. Could it be that the physicians present at the *conférences* argued much more from their own professional experience and left generic Aristotelian *experientia* aside? As my analysis shows, this does not seem to be the case. Certainly, to underscore their claims, speakers in the medical *Conférences* only very rarely resort to general Aristotelian experience. However, this does not mean that personal experience automatically triumphs. Much more frequently, the *conférenciers* invoke the collective experience of men of the medical profession, especially when it comes to criticising authorities. In some instances, the *conférenciers* also appeal to the experience of specific, named (medical) authorities. All in all, arguments from personally acquired *expérience* are tangibly lacking in the medical *Conférences*.

However, *expérience* that the speakers have personally acquired seems to be decisive in a particular situation: when the conflict between reason and experience surfaces, as it often did in the medical debates at the Bureau d'Adresse. My analysis in part 7.2.2 shows that a sort of instant awareness seems to exist regarding how reason and experience might potentially be at variance with each other in the medical *Conférences*. The issue reaches its climax in the question of how to react when reason and experience plainly contradict each other: "quand la raison répugne à l'experience".[141] This problem occurs, for example, in the case of *spécifiques*, substances known to act against specific illnesses. The reason why they can cure

140 Crucially, (Medieval) Scholastic physicians did not necessarily engage in the practical aspects of the treatment of patients. See Debus 1992, p. 15. In their conception, *theoria* and *practica* were not what we understand by these terms today: "The practice of medicine is not the work which the physician carries out, but is that branch of medical knowledge which, when acquired, enables one to form an opinion upon which to base the proper plan of treatment" (Avicenna in Cook 1991, p. 69).

141 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 815.

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those illnesses, however, cannot be explained through argumentation based on the then dominant Galenic doctrine. According to several *conférenciers*, a physician should act according to his experience and leave reason aside in such cases. This standpoint represents a marked shift of emphasis from medical theory – which was perceived as more significant in the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance[142] – to actual medical practice as a legitimate source of knowledge.

Yet the apparent preference of *expérience* over *raison* does not mean that the *conférenciers* broke away from the dominant Galenic doctrine after all. In most cases, their medical ideas remain based on the principles of humoral pathology, as part 7.2.3 shows. Crucially, as Galenic medicine focused on individual patients and did not view illnesses as entities in themselves, arguments from *expérience* take on a highly problematic status when it comes to determining required treatments. The conflict of *expérience* and *raison*, finally, cannot be qualified as empirical evidence's triumph over reason. The precedence which the *conférenciers* give to *expérience* itself turns out to be an idea taken from authoritative texts and can indeed be traced as far back as Galen.[143] In this sense, the *conférenciers' expérience* is literary experience, or experience acquired from doctrinal sources. It most definitely is not the inflow of sense perception, triumphing over an ossified canon of theory.

The problem of specific medicaments, the focus of part 7.2.4, nevertheless remains unresolved. Because the healing powers of *spécifiques* cannot be explained through reason, they pose a potential threat to the established medical system. They do not fit in the dominant Galenic (and Aristotelian) mould of elements and humours and therefore could potentially figure as a gateway for Paracelsian 'heresy'. Yet even though some *conférenciers* are most definitely sympathetic to Paracelsus and chemical medicine, others still manage to assimilate the healing powers of the *spécifiques* into their system of thought. According to them, those powers are explained through *qualitez occultes*, which, by definition, cannot be accounted for. This fact does not mean, however, that they automatically cancel the healing powers of Galenic first or second *qualitez*, as I will illustrate through a discussion of Jean Fernel's influential treatise on occult qualities, *De abditis rerum causis* (1548).

Overall, the way the *conférenciers* argue shows that they are very close to the medical controversies of their times. This tenor again underscores that many university-trained doctors were among the speakers at Renaudot's discussion meetings. On the one hand, the physicians' presence explains the profusion of medical knowledge in the *Conférences*, be it from contemporary or ancient sources. On the other hand, it is exactly for this reason that many speakers seem reluctant to renounce arguments from authorities such as Galen, and why they place the collective *expérience* of their profession over personal and therefore singular experiences.

142 See Debus 1992, p. 15.
143 See Maclean 2000, p. 234.

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7.2.1 Different Kinds of *Expérience* in the Medical *Conférences*

In the following passages, I analyse the different conceptions of *expérience* that the speakers offer in the medical *Conférences*. Just as in the *Conférences* in general, the *conférenciers* debating medical questions do resort to generic Aristotelian *expérience* in some instances. Nevertheless, this happens only rarely, and in a much lower percentage of cases than in the *Conférences* on the whole. Far more often, the speakers resort to what could be called the collective *expérience* of the medical profession. This kind of experience is not personal but rather acquired over the course of centuries by physicians as a group. The force of such combined medical experience appears to be especially necessary when the speakers criticise predominant medical authorities such as Galen. In other instances, the speakers debating medical questions invoke the experimental *expérience* of specific authorities to emphasise the points they are trying to make. In contrast to examples drawn from collective medical experience, this kind of experience is clearly marked as coming from the study of specific medical (or other) texts. Contrary to Aristotelian general experience, it cannot easily be reproduced by anyone. It results from the personal experience and experiments of named authorities whose importance adds weight to their experiences. Overall, personally acquired medical experience seems to play only an ancillary role in the *conférenciers*' arguments. It is precisely the lack thereof which is deplored by a speaker in the discussion of the bezoar, a controversial remedy. As the speaker argues, the bezoar reveals its lack of usefulness specifically through the fact that no contemporary has actually experienced its effects.

General Experience

In the following examples, the speakers debate medical questions but they invoke experience that is not medical in itself. It could belong to anyone and does not come out of a specific discipline, and therefore it effortlessly joins the Aristotelian tradition.

The fourth speaker in the *Conférence* on "Des causes de la contagion",[144] for example, refers to *expérience* while considering the causes of the plague. The experience that this illness occurs in all kinds of seasons and climates while befalling people of various sexes and ages shows, he argues, that its (near) cause must be something other than a simple corruption of humours or imbalance of primary qualities:

> Le 4. dist: Que la peste se rencontrant également en toutes sortes de saisons, de climats, de sexes, d'aages & de personnes, comme l'experience le fait voir, montre que sa cause prochaine est autre que la corruption des humeurs, & l'intemperie des qualitez premieres.[145]

The speaker therefore doubts that the plague can be explained through the system of humoral pathology. This view results from an experience that anyone who

144 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 98.I, pp. 821–829.
145 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 98.I, pp. 827–828.

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knows anything about the black death, or who has ever encountered it, could attest to: that everyone, regardless of their temperament, might be attacked by the illness. The speaker seems to consider this experience so general that it even merits the expression "l'expérience nous fait voir", which appears only very rarely in the medical *Conférences*.

In a similar manner, a speaker arguing that everything in the world is composed of the Paracelsian principles of mercury, sulphur, and salt invokes a general experience to substantiate his argument. He claims that physicians have no better way to show us that we are made of earth than by the experience that we return to it once we are dead, as revealed by holy scripture: "[…] les Physiciens ne nous prouvent point mieux que l'homme est composé de terre que par l'expérience qui nous fait voir qu'il retourne en terre, selon l'Escriture […]."[146] Like the speaker debating the causes of the plague, this speaker also uses the expression "l'experience nous fait voir", which is employed in the *Conférences* in cases of truly generic *expérience*.

Overall, general Aristotelian experience appears infrequently in the debates concerning medical questions. Significantly, the *conférenciers* mostly argue from experiences generally known to physicians but not accessible to laymen. Even though their personal experiences might sometimes inform their arguments, speakers in the medical debates often aim at arguing from the position of their whole profession, as the following examples show.

Collective Medical Experience

The experience of men of the medical profession sometimes leads to the momentous supposition that (medical) authorities might not be right in all cases. Even Galen, who reigned supreme over Early Modern medicine, sometimes must be criticised by the *conférenciers*. One of them argues, for instance, that Galen's examples regarding the curability of leprosy are fundamentally wrong. Contrary experiences in the last centuries have proven it: Galen "[…] rapporte cinq histoires de ceux qui en ont esté gueris, mais dont nous avons des experiences contraires en ces derniers siecles […]."[147] The *conférencier*'s formulation "dont nous avons des experiences contraires" suggests that he counts himself among the physicians and that he might have directly had this experience himself. However, it is not his own experience which he invokes to denounce Galen, the prince of medicine. Against such a heavyweight, he rather appeals to the experience of past centuries. It appears that Galen's opinion is of such great authority that only the accumulated experiences of a great number of physicians could possibly counter it.

146 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 260, p. 611.
147 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 75.I, pp. 408–409.

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Likewise, the third speaker discussing the question "D'où viennent les crises des maladies"[148] does not come without reinforcement. The daily experience of contemporary physicians does not seem to be enough against the opinion of Girolamo Fracastoro, whose calculation concerning the critical days of illnesses the speaker denounces. So, the *conférencier* also raises all of antiquity: "Le 3^{e} dist, Que cette opinion de Fracastor faisoit tomber les crises en des jours non critiques, tels que sont le 10. 13. 16. 19. 22, contre toute l'antiquité & nostre expérience journaliére, & posoit pour fondement un erreur […]".[149] Here again, it is not a single observation of a particular case which casts doubt on Fracastoro's calculation but rather the daily experience of a great number of ancient and contemporary medical doctors, to which the speaker seems to belong. Theirs is a kind of expert experience that only medical practitioners could obtain; yet it remains an impersonal form of experience.

The deciding factor overpowering both Galen and Fracastoro resides in the collective experience of the medical profession, accumulated over multiple centuries. As these examples show, the *conférenciers* seem reluctant to invoke their personal experience as physicians when they criticise eminent medical authorities. The experience they position against the opinion of authorities is, rather, the collective knowledge of the medical profession ("nostre expérience"). And while they do place importance on the experiences of contemporary doctors, it is preferable if these conform to the experiences of medical authorities of previous centuries that they know from their medical training. Unsurprisingly, the experience that the *conférenciers* call upon in many other instances is clearly collected from texts, as the following examples reveal.

Experi(m)ental Evidence Taken from Literature

In some instances, the speakers in the medical *Conférences* do refer to experience which is not of a collective but rather of a personal kind. In most cases, this is the experience of authoritative authors, which the *conférenciers* know from the study of textual sources.

Concerning the question of talismans, for example, one speaker argues that it is certainly possible to doubt their effects. However, several historical examples prove their veracity: "On pourroit douter de l'effet de ces Talismans, si plusieurs histoires n'en faisoient foy."[150] Among examples from Greek mythology, the speaker names the humanist scholar Marsilio Ficino to underscore his opinion. Furthermore, he cites a talisman made by a Carmelite named Julianus Ristorius against gout, as well as those Paracelsus apparently fabricated against the plague. According to the speaker, all the innumerable experiences prove that the effects of talismans are common and confirm their existence: "[…] celuy qu'à Florence un Carme nommé Julianus Ristorius à prato, fit contre la goute: ceux de Paracelse

148 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 168, pp. 733–740.
149 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 168, p. 740.
150 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 108, p. 115.

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contre la peste, & infinis autres, rendent leurs effets aussi communs comme leur existence certaine […]."[151]

In the case of Ristorius and Paracelsus, the examples are of an individual kind. The *conférencier* names particular talismans fabricated at particular historical instances. These are combined with other examples whose status is uncertain (they might be the personal experiences of certain authors, or they might have been taken from other texts). Grouped together, those experiences become something very similar to the collective medical experience discussed above. Particular experiences here are significant precisely because they have been confirmed by other, concordant experiences, or so the *conférencier* believes.

Another speaker, discussing the question of "De la Mandragore",[152] expresses the view that mandrakes spring from the semen of hanged men or those who were killed on the roads.[153] As the human semen produces this plant, it is called "anthropomorphite" by Pythagoras. Pythagoras, as the speaker goes on to say, used a particular experience with human semen to prove the mandrake's metempsychosis. An experiment conducted by Paracelsus points in the same direction:

> Aussi tiennent-ils que cette plante […] vient de la semence des hommes pendus aux gibets ou écrazez sur les rouës qui […] produit cette plante anthropomorphite, ainsi l'appelloit Pythagore, s'en servant d'une pressante expérience à prouver sa metempsychose: le sperme masculin faisant l'office & l'effet de graine, par la mesme raison que Paracelse […] s'est vanté d'avoir fait naistre de la seule semence humaine, mise dans une phiole & enfermée neuf mois, arrouzée par un canal d'un aliment convenable un homuncule vivant […].[154]

Here, the *conférencier* seems to mean by 'experience' what we would rather call 'experiment' in today's English. Yet, for him, it simply falls under the general heading of 'experience'. Pythagoras's assumed *expérience* is of a clearly experimental kind. The mathematician from Samos seemingly tested a specific hypothesis by way of an experiment. After him, Paracelsus did the same.

Concerning talismans as well as the mandrake, the *conférenciers* lean on the opinions of authorities to substantiate their points. The authorities' experiences are not generic and general but personal in the sense that they can be ascribed to a particular author (who might have taken it from another text, however).[155] Never-

151 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 108, p. 116.

152 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 222, pp. 316–331.

153 Arguably, the question of the mandrake does not unambiguously belong to the realm of medicine. The formulation of the question ("De la Mandragore") already reveals that the *conférenciers* do not debate the medical uses of mandrakes alone; they discuss the mandrake in all its dimensions. Obviously, their discussion therefore also encompasses botanical and occult aspects. Nevertheless, the *conférenciers* are especially interested in the mandrake's healing powers, which is why I group it among the medical questions.

154 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 222, p. 321.

155 Regarding a similar practice in the oeuvre of Albertus Magnus, see Draelants 2011. For the

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theless, like all the other kinds of experience discussed so far, it lacks one obvious element: it is not personal to the *conférenciers* themselves.

Personal (Experimental) Experience, or the Lack Thereof

The *conférenciers* only very rarely invoke what could be qualified as their own, personal experience as physicians. Crucially, one speaker precisely laments the lack of personal experience in the discussion of the bezoar. Doubting the bezoar's medical qualities, he solicits the testimony of those of his contemporaries who have used the bezoar themselves and asks if they can attest to its properties. For him, the bezoar must be refused twice over: first, because it is unreasonably expensive, and, second, because it keeps patients from taking other good remedies and makes them lose precious time that could be employed to rescue them.

> Aussi imploray-je cette occurence le tesmoignage de tous ceux de nostre aage qui s'en sont servis, s'ils y ont jamais trouvé les effets qu'on luy impute. D'où s'ensuit qu'il est doublement à rejetter: Premierement, pource qu'il est de grand coust au patient; secondement, pource qu'il tient lieu de quelqu'autre bon remede, faisant perdre le temps qui s'employeroit utilement à secourir le malade par autres remedes.[156]

This speaker is decidedly unsatisfied with the opinions of medical authorities, passed down through history. He calls for the experimental experiences of contemporary physicians. Accordingly, he illustrates a trend away from authorities to personal, experimental experience, which, overall, was not *de rigueur* at the *conférences*.

In the introduction to the second volume of *Conférences*, Renaudot presents a similar argument. Concerning the numerous (restorative) remedies presented at the Bureau d'Adresse during the *conférences*' summer recess, he argues that he will publish them for the public only when the necessary *expériences* have been achieved. This is because in medicine, credulity is inexcusable and highly dangerous:

> Furent proposez presques infinis secrets pour la conservation de la santé & guerison des maladies, desquelles je vous réserve la déduction plus particuliere apres que les experiences en auront esté faites: n'y ayant aucun art ou science où la credulité soit moins excusable ni plus perilleuse lors qu'il s'agist de quelque effet extraordinaire, qu'en la Médecine […].[157]

Here, *expérience* is meant in a decidedly experimental sense; Renaudot suggests that the proposed medicaments must be tested before the public can be notified of their effectiveness. However, it is not a singular and individual experiment that he calls for. Rather, Renaudot's comment implies that multiple *expériences* of the medications must be conducted, to prove their validity. As I will show below, many

medical context, see also Danielle Jacquart's analysis of Medieval university medicine in "Médecine universitaire et créativité intellectuelle à la fin du Moyen Âge" (2003).

156 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 256, p. 583.

157 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 11.

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Early Modern physicians did not accept singular experiences as sufficient proof for medical phenomena. To be accepted, individual experiences had to be confirmed by the *expérience* of many doctors, over prolonged periods of time.

Overall, experimental experience belonging to the individual practitioner mostly does not seem to be decisive for the *conférenciers*' arguments. Yet the personal experience of physicians, acquired through their medical practice, nevertheless seems to be crucial in another instance in the *Conférences*: the conflict of reason and experience. It is here where the medical men seem to most decisively argue from their own experience, which they oppose to dogmatic explanations in medicine.

7.2.2 The Battle of Reason and Experience

In the debate concerning the mandrake, the fifth speaker refutes the argument of his predecessor, who claims that it is unlikely that mandrakes really possess any of the properties ascribed to them.[158] His counter-argument begins with a compelling problematisation of the conflict of reason and experience: in the case of things which appear to shock our reason, it is much easier to destroy something (perceived as) true than to establish truth, he argues. Reason is often incompatible with our own experience, which in this case presents a number of contrary effects of one and the same plant.

> Le 5. dist, Qu'il es bien plus aizé de destruire une verité que de l'establir lors qu'il s'agit des choses qui choque [*sic*] apparement la raison, laquelle ne compatit pas mesmes souvent avec nostre propre expérience, qui nous fait voir plusieurs effets contraires d'une plante.[159]

To prove his argument, he then mentions the case of oranges. The speaker believes their interior to be cooling. At the same time, their zest has warming qualities, while oil from their seeds is tempered, he is certain.[160] Thus, the simultaneous existence of contrary plant qualities should not be doubted, even if reason cannot make sense of them, he claims. To further underscore this notion, he cites "nostre *propre* expérience". What the speaker invokes here does not seem to be generic Aristotelian *experientia*, so evident that everyone can attest to it. Certainly, it is also not necessarily personal (or experimental) experience. Rather, it is the specialised knowledge of the physician, who has studied the properties of various plants and plant parts. It is a knowledge held by medical professionals, among which the *conférencier* counts himself; it is their own *expérience*. Moreover, the fifth speaker claims that he has even seen a mandrake himself, thereby additionally invoking his individual experience. Yet, crucially, arguments from personal experience can only go so far: he admits that he cannot be sure if what he saw was genuine or fake.[161]

158 "Il est donc plus vray semblable que cette plante n'a ni la forme ni les proprietez que le vulgaire & la vaine antiquité luy attribuent" (Vol. 4, *Conférence* 222, p. 329).
159 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 222, pp. 329–330.
160 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 222, p. 330.
161 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 222, p. 331.

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The case of the mandrake thus leads us directly to the centre of the problematic relationship of reason and experience in medicine. Reason often cannot make sense of experience; but this does not mean that knowledge from experience is not viable, as the fifth speaker discussing *la mandragore* believes. Yet how should one react in cases where experience not only remains inexplicable but where reason and experience openly contradict each other? In such cases, the medical *Conférences* record certain speakers who decidedly place experience over reason, as I will show in the following passages.

Before we delve deeper into this conflict, it is necessary to explore what exactly *raison* might mean for the *conférenciers*. According to the *Trésor de la langue française*, as early as 1119 '*raison*' could be understood as "ce qui rend compte de quelque chose, ce qui l'explique". This dimension was already present in classical Latin, where '*ratio*' could mean 'explanation of a phenomenon'. In classical Latin, *ratio* was perceived as distinct from *causa* – a differentiation lost in the Middle Ages but regained in the Renaissance.[162] Regarding the conflict of reason and experience in the medical *Conférences* specifically, the speakers most definitely make the distinction between *cause*, in the sense of "ce qui produit ou occasionne quelque chose",[163] and *raison*. For them, the latter clearly means 'explication of a phenomenon'. Moreover, for the *conférenciers*, *raison* is something that is opposed to the more practical *experiénce*, in the sense that the former is purely theoretical knowledge. Correspondingly, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, in its first edition from 1694, gives one meaning of *raison* as "preuve par discours, par argument".[164]

While *expérience* is the knowledge *that* certain things behave in a particular manner, *raison* is what explains *why* they do so. This distinction already indicates the close connection *raison* has to doctrine, which, as the "ensemble des connaissances que l'on possède",[165] is constituted by the explanations that authorities provide of various phenomena. For the *conférenciers*, *raison* often simply appears to be identical with the doctrinal apparatus. In the medical field, the most important authority is Galen. As the subsequent examples illustrate, the conflict of reason and experience therefore often takes the form of a dispute over the writings of the great physician from Pergamon.

Concerning the relation of reason and experience, the seventh speaker debating the question "S'il y a des remedes specifiques à chaque maladie"[166] asserts that medicine was first invented through usage and experience. Medicine simply had to find ways to discover the reason for things that our senses can clearly percept. But, at least regarding those things which surpass our senses, it is better reason

162 *TLFi*, s.v. "raison". The *TLFi* provides a wide range of examples taken from literature to illustrate the dimensions of meaning of the terms discussed in it.
163 *TLFi*, s.v. "cause".
164 *Dictonnaire de l'Académie française*, première éd. online, s.v. "raison".
165 The *TLFi* provides a passage from a text from 1175 to document this meaning. See *TLFi*, s.v. "raison".
166 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, pp. 807–816.

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can confirm them as well. Thus, the ideal situation seems to be unanimity between reason and experience.[167] This accords with the conviction, voiced by Galen, that medicine as a discipline is based on the two pillars of reason and experience.[168] If reason disputes experience, however, one should uphold what *expérience* teaches, the speaker argues. Yet he specifies that this counts only when the experience is based on multiple observations. After establishing this theoretical principle, the *conférencier* finally approaches the question of specific remedies. According to him, experience shows us that some specific remedies treat certain illnesses, even if the human spirit, in its feebleness, cannot determine why this is so. In such cases, it is better to heed one's senses without reason than to follow reason disproved by experience, he claims. If some ailments have specific remedies, then all must have one; we simply do not know of them because of their multitude.

> Le 7. dist: Que la Medecine inventée premierement par l'usage & l'experience n'avoit que faire de raison és choses qui tomboient clairement sous nos sens, mais seulement en celles qui les surpassoient: lesquelles estans confirmées par la raison sont beaucoup plus infaillibles.[169] Toutesfois, quand il semble que la raison repugne à l'experience, il faut plustost se tenir à l'experience; pourveu qu'elle soit establie par plusieurs observations. Puis donc que cette experience nous fait voir qu'il y a plusieurs remedes specifiques, bien que l'esprit humain, à cause de sa foiblesse, n'en puisse pas trouver la cause: il vaut mieux s'en rapporter en ce cas icy aux sens destituez de raison, qu'à la raison dementie par l'experience. Que s'il y a des specifiques pour quelques maladies, il y en a pour toutes: mais ils nous sont inconnus pour leur multitude.[170]

This passage presents several interesting elements. First, there is the sheer fact that the *conférencier* decidedly places more weight on experience than on reason. This runs counter to the traditional view that the medical theorist holds higher status

167 This can also be seen in a *Conférence* wholly unconnected to medical topics – the debate about mushrooms: "Le 3. dist. Que c'est la pluye d'Automne qui fait le champignon. Ce qui se void autant par l'expérience que par la raison […]" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 165, p. 712). Bénatouïl and Draelants point out that medieval *expérience* is often invoked next to authority and reason. See Bénatouïl and Draelants 2011, p. 7. In the second part of the seventeenth century, Nicolas Malebranche was still convinced that it is best if reason and experience are in agreement, as Andé Robinet points out in his article "Expérience dans l'œuvre de Malebranche" (2001): "Quand on a la raison de quelque chose, il faut la prouver par l'expérience: 'la raison donne l'idée, l'expérience fait voir'" (Malebranche in ibid., p. 279).

168 See Giovacchini 2011, p. 332. Regarding the relation of reason and experience in the Middle Ages (and beyond), see also Heinrich Schipperges's "Zum Topos von 'ratio et experimentum' in der älteren Wissenschaftsgeschichte" (1982).

169 As this passage is quite difficult to understand in the original French version, I also add my own literal translation: "Medicine, which first was invented by usage and experience, only needed to explain phenomena which our senses can clearly perceive [i.e., which are evident], but, at least in those [things] which surpass them [i.e., the senses]: those being confirmed by reason, they are much more infallible."

170 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, pp. 814–815.

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than the practitioner.[171] According to historian of science Allen G. Debus, physicians of the Middle Ages preferred theoretical knowledge and left the practical aspects of the profession to others – surgeons, for example.[172] Professors of medicine at university were interested in philosophical reasoning, not in the practical details of particular cases.[173] This only began to change late in the Renaissance, as Gianna Pomata has pointed out.[174] Does his view therefore imbue the speaker with what another historian of Early Modern science, Ian Maclean, qualifies as the "nouvel ésprit scientifique" of the seventeenth century?[175]

Secondly, for this speaker, a viable *expérience* is constituted by multiple observations. It is not enough to observe the power of certain *spécifiques* once – several cases must prove their effectiveness. The choice of vocabulary shows that the *conférenciers* discussing medical questions seem to have a more sophisticated understanding of the differences between *observatio* and *experientia* than those considering other questions. Here, the *conférencier* appears to understand *observatio* as the consideration of single cases, which then can be grouped together to form a general experience applicable to other, similar cases. Through the study of particular cases, it is possible to arrive at the principles that govern the actions of remedies in general, the *conférencier* therefore appears to suggest.[176]

It is precisely axioms of this kind that another speaker criticises in the same *Conférence*. As he tries to comprehend why reason and experience so often come to conflict in medicine, he claims that the human spirit always aims at establishing axioms in all the sciences. This is especially the case in medicine, which, as it must rule over nature in its entirety, covers all illnesses, including their causes, symptoms, and remedies, with general laws. Yet, as in jurisprudence, there are never two identical cases in medicine.[177] Consequently, when it comes to the application of those rules in practice, one discovers that the relation between them is not as close as one would have expected, the speaker confesses:

171 See Schmitt 1985, pp. 4–5. See also Siraisi 2004, p. 8.

172 Debus explains that the "medieval attitude" had physicians place much greater importance on theory than on practice: "It regarded active interference at the sick bed as something beneath the dignity of the physician – for he enjoyed the privileges of the scholar. On the other hand, it precluded the surgeon – a mere craftsman – from any theoretical approach" (Debus 1992, p. 15).

173 See Temkin 1973, pp. 65–66.

174 "In stark contrast to Scholastic medicine, where the source of legitimacy was doctrine, the late Renaissance *observationes* indicate the emergence of practice as a new source of validation of medical knowledge" (Pomata 2011, p. 59).

175 Maclean 2006, p. 19.

176 Similar to Aristotelian *experienita*, medical *expérience* therefore aimed at finding general principles applicable to a variety of cases.

177 "Both law and medicine claim for themselves the status of science, in the former case, as the science of justice, in the latter as that of health; but insofar as they treated the quasi-infinite variety and diversity of human beings and actions, each was considered to be an art, which was commonly defined at this time as 'the finite doctrine of infinite things'" (Maclean 2000, pp. 229–230).

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> Et neantmoins l'esprit humain ne laisse pas de se faire des axiomes en toutes les sciences: mais surtout en la Medecine: laquelle ayant à regenter la nature, envelope dans des loix generales toutes les maladies, leurs causes, symptomes & remedes, encore que comme dans le droit, ainsi dans la Medecine il n'y ait jamais deux faits semblables. Aussi quand on vient à appliquer ces regles à la pratique, chacun confesse qu'il n'y trouve pas tout le rapport qu'il s'en estoit promis.[178]

This *conférencier*'s discontent with medicine's tendency to establish principles that can be applied to all cases appears to be a direct criticism of Galen and his propensity to theorise and generalise.[179] Unlike Hippocrates, who doubted that medicine could ever be founded on exact principles, Galen aimed at making medicine a science that functioned according to general premises, as the eminent medical historian Max Neuburger asserts.[180] The next part, 7.2.3, explores whether the *conférenciers* truly understood their arguments for experience over reason as arguments for empirical evidence over the authority of Galen, who dominated the doctrinal apparatus of their discipline in the seventeenth century.

7.2.3 Empirical Evidence against the Knowledge of the Ancients?

By way of the humanists' rediscovery, editioning, and translation of many texts from antiquity, renewed importance was placed on the ancients' medical knowledge – especially Galen's and Hippocrates' – at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[181] One could even say that a "Galenic revival" took place.[182] With Paris as this

178 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 808.

179 Regarding this tendency, see Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, p. 386: "Da Galen in seinen Schriften – abweichend von Hippocrates – stets mehr die Beweisführung zu Gunsten seiner Theorien als die Vorführung reiner Beobachtungen beabsichtigt, so finden sich bei ihm wohl scharfsinnige Analysen der Krankheitsprozesse, aber wenig Gesamtbilder von Symptomenkomplexen." Neuburger also assesses the difference between Galenism and Hippocratism: "Das Wesen des Galenismus gegenüber dem Hippokratismus liegt aber in dem Versuche, die Physis und die Wirkungssphäre derselben theoretisch festzuhalten und dem Artze eine sichere Handhabe für das Vorgehen im Einzelfalle durch allgemeine Grundsätze zu geben" (ibid., p. 393). See also Temkin 1973, p. 124.

180 See Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, pp. 351 and 375. Hippocrates "bestreitet die Möglichkeit einer exakten Begründung der Medizin und sieht im Individualisieren das Wesen der Heilkunst" (ibid., p. 197). "Das Ziel, welches Galen bei all seinen gelungenen oder verfehlten Bestrebungen unverrückbar vorschwebte, war die Umwandlung der Heilkunst in eine exakte Wissenschaft" (ibid., p. 369).

181 See Maclean 2006, p. 15. For an overview of the editions and translations, see Nutton 2020, pp. 143–145.

182 Debus 1991, p. 1. This is not to say that Galen was not a well-known medical authority beforehand. However, for physicians in the Latin West before 1000, "Galen was little more than a name" (Nutton 2020, p. 128). Temkin stresses that in the eleventh century, a number of Galenic works were already available in the Latin West; see Temkin 1973, p. 96. Nutton confirms this and shows that there was a first wave of translations into Latin starting in the late eleventh century and ending at around 1220; see Nutton 2020, p. 141. Galen's importance grew further through the influence of the "much more advanced medicine and philosophy of the Arabs" from the eleventh century onwards, as Temkin points out (Temkin 1973, p. 97).

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revival's epicentre, the ideas of Galen became the single most important source of doctrine for the medical profession across Europe.[183] What Aristotle was to all the other arts and sciences, Galen was to medicine.[184] Yet by the end of the sixteenth century, Galenism had run into difficulties, according to the historian of medicine Owsei Temkin.[185] Developments in the field and especially the emergence of clinical medicine meant that hitherto revered authorities came more and more under fire.[186] This view has been challenged by Maclean, who argues that Galenic medicine was not "in the moribund state in which it is said to [have been]" in that period of time.[187] Especially in the context of the academic study of medicine, it continued to be influential well into the seventeenth century (and even beyond).[188] As I show in the following passages, this can be seen in the *Conférences*. Even though Renaudot and his associates took a notably different position than the Galen-abiding Parisian Faculty of Medicine regarding doctrinal matters,[189] the majority of contributors to the *Conférences* did not find cause to disown the prince of medicine. That the *conférenciers* were aware of a potential conflict between *raison* and *expérience* does not mean they necessarily placed (potentially personally acquired) empirical evidence over the knowledge of Galen or other doctrinal sources.

The criticism voiced by the *conférencier* above, concerned with medicine's tendency to establish axioms, does not lead to him questioning the basic principles of Galenic medicine. He rather remains loyal to Galenic humoral pathology, as he asserts that what he just presented applies only to certain particular and specific disorders such as pleurisy, cataracts, and gout. Other, general illnesses can always be cured by general remedies, if they are of a contrary quality to the illness itself, he suggests:

> Ce qui se doit entendre principalement des maladies particulieres & specifiques, comme est la pleuresie, la cataracte, ou la goute. Car les maladies generales, comme sont les intemperies simples, se peuvent guerir par des remedes aussi generaux, pourveus de qualitez contraites.[190]

The following examples show that many other *conférenciers* argue in a similar fashion. However, to better understand the *conférenciers*' arguments, I first consider

183 See Debus 1991, p. 17.
184 See Dear 1985, p. 149. Regarding their historical importance, Temkin puts Galenism on equal footing with Aristotelianism and Platonism but emphasises that the latter two are much better known today. See Temkin 1973, p. 1. In fact, Galen wrote not only on medical matters but also on physics, logic, and metaphysics. Yet in the latter fields, he never acquired authority and was criticised by many authors. See ibid., pp. 73–80.
185 According to Temkin, the sixteenth century saw the decline of Galenism and the seventeenth century its definite downfall. See ibid., pp. 134–192.
186 See Maclean 2006, p. 15.
187 Maclean 2002, p. 10.
188 See Nutton 2020, pp. 150–151. See also Siraisi 1987, p. 358.
189 I explore this in more detail in section 3 of this chapter.
190 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 808.

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the basic principles of Galenic doctrine. Even though its seventeenth-century adherents advocated non-specific treatment methods such as bloodletting and prescribed only a limited number of simple remedies,[191] Galenic medicine took into account the fact that no two cases were ever the same. It was, as Maclean points out, "founded on a theory of idiosyncrasy"[192] and considered many variables such as the patient's age, their constitution, their habits, the season, and so on.[193] Following Hippocrates, Galenic medicine especially took into account the patient's specific temperament, which was understood to be constituted by the humours.[194]

According to the Hippocratic corpus, all illnesses are caused by imbalances between the four humours: black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm.[195] Galen (and other physicians in ancient Greece) then associated the humours with the four elements of fire, water, air, and earth, as well as with the four primary qualities: hot, cold, wet, and dry.[196] Their focus on the humours and their equilibrium essentially meant that there was but one illness: distemper.[197] To heal a patient, balance between the humours had to be re-established. Physicians added "what was lacking" or withdrew "what was in excess".[198] They achieved this by administering cures of a general kind such as sweating, bloodletting, and vomiting. These were perceived as appropriate in almost all cases,[199] as they efficiently purged noxious or superfluous humours from the body.[200] Another originally Hippocratic principle that Galen observed in treatment was that illnesses need to be cured by

191 Guy Patin, one of the most fervent defenders of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine in the times of Renaudot, exclusively recommended to other physicians the use of Philibert Guybert's *Médecin charitable* (1623), which Patin had helped to reissue in an extended version under the title *Toutes les Œuvres charitables* in 1633. The *Médecin charitable* only advised the use of a handful of simple remedies such as cassia, senna leaves, peach flower syrup, and syrup of pale roses. See Bergounioux 1927, p. 385.

192 Maclean 2000, p. 241.

193 See ibid., p. 240. See also Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, p. 394. These variables were then allocated to one of three categories. The first two were 'naturals', governing the particular constitution of the body, and; 'non-naturals' exterior to the body (air, food and drink, sleep and waking, movement and rest, evacuation and refilling, as well as the passions of the soul). See Maclean 2006, p. 24. The third category influencing the health of a person were the 'contra-naturals', "held to be states of forms of the naturals that could have a detrimental effect on human health" (Whitt 2016, p. 238).

194 See Maclean 2000, p. 241. See also Temkin 1973, p. 103.

195 See Jouanna 2012, p. 335.

196 See Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, p. 372.

197 See Pagel 1982, p. 128.

198 Ibid. A *conférencier* sums it up in the following manner: "[…] ainsi la maladie est dans l'excez ou dans le defaut, qui fait définir la Medecine détraction & addition, pource qu'elle retranche ce qui est de trop, & ajouste ce qui manque" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 99).

199 See Pagel 1982, p. 141. Neuburger explains: "Der Humoralpathologie entsprechend, spielen in der galenischen Therapie jene Heilverfahren eine Hauptrolle, welche die Entleerung überschüssiger oder verdorbener Säfte bezwecken, also die Blutentziehung (Aderlaß, Schröpfköpfe, Blutegel), Laxantia, Brechmittel, Diuretika, Schwitzmittel" (Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, p. 395).

200 See ibid.

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remedies possessing qualities contrary to the ailment (rendered in the formulation *contraria contrariis curentur* in the Latin tradition).[201] For example, the cure for a hot illness such as fever would be a cooling remedy.[202]

Galen divided medicaments into three classes. Those belonging to the first class acted only according to their primary qualities: hot, cold, dry, or wet. Yet some remedies worked by way of their secondary qualities, which were considered to result from the specific mixture of elements (or primary qualities) constituting them. Remedies in this second category had properties that could be detected by the senses, for example, a sweet or bitter taste.[203] Furthermore, Galen also believed that there were certain substances which, in and of themselves and through their specific composition, acted as, for example, antidotes, laxatives, or fortification for certain organs. Those medicaments he described as functioning by way of their tertiary qualities.[204]

Crucially, because humoral pathology understood every patient as requiring a specific humoral equilibrium, it was not possible to argue by analogy in Galenic Early Modern medicine, as Maclean points out. Just because a certain remedy had worked once for a specific patient, it did not automatically mean it would work for another.[205] It was the physician's mission to find out how to redress the humoral balance of a particular patient, thus bringing them back to health.[206] As a consequence, experience, in this system of thought, is a particularly problematic category.

The fifth speaker in the debate on "S'il y a des remedes specifiques à chaque maladie"[207] is certainly of this opinion. He believes that something can be detrimental to one being but not another. This counts not only for different species but, given their different circumstances, individuals within one species. For this reason, the same remedy can cure one person and kill another, he is certain. It is even possible that a remedy that once cured a person could later do exactly the opposite. Consequently, it is impossible to assign specific remedies even to indi-

201 See Pagel 1982, p. 146. Galen expresses this idea in the following manner: "In all instances, then, the return to balance from imbalance will be trough the opposite imbalance" (Galen, *De const. art. med.* 11.260K, transl. Johnston 2016, p. 69). And, "[a]s Hippocrates said somewhere: 'Opposites are the cures of opposites" (ibid., 11.261K, p. 71). For the respective Greek passages in the critical standard edition, see Galen, *De const. art. med.* transl. Fortuna 1997, CMG V 1, 3, p. 86, and CMG V 1, 3, p. 88.

202 See Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, pp. 394 and 398. This is a decidedly simple example. Physicians differentiated not only the quality but also the intensity of a disease. For a more detailed explanation, see Temkin 1973, p. 112.

203 See Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, pp. 372 and 398.

204 See ibid., p. 398.

205 In the words of Maclean: "Those who argue 'analogistically', in the manner of empirics, that because guaiac wood had cured some Italians of syphilis, it will cure some Germans […] are treated as medical heretics by traditional Galenic doctors, and perpetrators of the fallacy of the consequent" (Maclean 2000, p. 241).

206 See Maclean 2006, pp. 22–23.

207 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, pp. 807–816.

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viduals, although it is the individual that medicine must cure and not the human race in general, the speaker concludes:

> Or nous voyons qu'une mesme chose est nuisible à l'un qui ne l'est point à l'autre, non seulement entre les especes differentes, mais aussi entre les individus d'une mesme espece: à cause des diverses circonstances. C'est pourquoy tel remede procurera la santé à l'un qui fera mourir l'autre: voire tel estoit n'agueres salutaire à un individu qui luy sera à present contraire. De sorte qu'il est impossible d'assigner aucuns specifiques pour l'individu, & neantmoins c'est luy qu'il faut guerir, & non l'epece [*sic*] de l'homme.[208]

To the *conférencier*, this is the great paradox of medicine. For Galenists, who believe that every human has a specific humoral composition, arguments derived from experience must be approached with the utmost caution. There can be no cure which always works against a certain illness; it can only ever heal a certain patient. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Galenists of the Early Modern period completely renounced experience. Even Jean Riolan *père*, one of the most fervent champions of Galenic medicine from the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, declared: "It is ridiculous to search for reasons to be able to oppose oneself to the testimony of the senses and of experience, only to pay respect to the ancients."[209] Riolan's comment illustrates that arguments derived exclusively from authority were seen as weak in the field of medicine.[210]

Yet, crucially, Early Modern physicians were able to both theoretically acknowledge the importance of experience and adhere to a vision predominantly structured by Galenic doctrine.[211] This *modus operandi* can be seen, for example, in physicians' opposition to William Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, as described in his *Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus* (1628).[212] Harvey's discovery shook Galen's theories to their very foundations;[213] many Ga-

208 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, pp. 812–813.

209 Jean Riolan *père* in Maclean 2006, p. 20. The Latin citation reads as follows: "Stultum [est] ratione pugnare contra sensum et experientiam pro antiquitatis reverentia" (ibid.).

210 See Maclean 2002, p. 207.

211 See Maclean 2006, p. 20.

212 Crucially, Harvey was not opposed to ancient doctrine but was a staunch Aristotelian himself. See Wear 1982, p. 118, and Cook 2006, p. 425. As Andrew Cunningham and Perry Williams put it: "Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, once seen as the exemplary case of the physiological application of mechanical ideas (e.g. the heart as a pump) is now generally accepted to have been the result of an essentially Aristotelian investigation into the 'final cause' of the heart's motion and structure, into the ways in which this organ served the purpose of the soul" (Cunningham and Williams 1993, p. 413). Opposing Harvey and Patin to each other, Lynn Thorndike, in the seminal *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (1958, vol. VII, p. 543), argues: "When we look back upon the views of Harvey and Patin, the one an experimenter and discoverer [Harvey], the other a dogmatic conservative [Patin], we find that the conservative is the less animistic, astrological and magical of the two, while the progressive is the more so."

213 See Temkin 1973, pp. 157–158. Regarding the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, Laurence Brockliss points out that it "took nearly forty years for the account of the circulation of the blood

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lenic physicians rejected it on the grounds that autopsy put the animal body under so much stress that no conclusive results could be gained through it.[214] In their view, Harvey's results therefore did not constitute a valid medical experience.

Consequently, the invoking of experience and apparent downgrading of reason alone cannot be seen as a distinct renouncement of Galenic Early Modern medicine. As it turns out, even the assertion that experience must be placed over reason – "quand il semble que la raison repugne à l'experience, il faut plustot se tenir à l'experience"[215] – cannot be qualified as empirical evidence's triumph over doctrine. Ironically, the passage is itself a citation of authoritative opinion.

In his treatise *Nova veraque medicina, experimentis et evidentibus rationibus comprobata* (1558), Gómez Pereira expresses a view that bears remarkable resemblance to the opinion of the *conférencier* who places *expérience* over *raison*. In cases where reason and experience contradict each other, experience should be given precedence, Pereira argues: "[…] adeò ingentem vim ad dignotionem veritatis experimenta habere, ut teneamur cùm ratio apparens experimento adversatur, plus fidere experimento, quàm rationi: cogamurque potiorem rationem, quàm fuerit prior inquirere."[216]

Admittedly, Pereira is markedly critical of Galen.[217] But other, less critical sixteenth-century physicians argued along similar lines. According to Jacques Grévin, for example, it is "[…] l'experience, laquelle ferme la bouche & arreste le pas de toutes raisons […]".[218] Ultimately, the genealogy of this idea goes much further back in medical history. As Maclean asserts,[219] the idea of the primacy of experience can be found in Galen,[220] Aristotle[221], and Hippocrates[222].

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presented in Harvey's *De motu cordis* (1628) to be accepted in one of the leading medical faculties of Europe" (Brockliss 2002, p. 116).

214 See Dear 2006, p. 112.

215 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 815.

216 Pereira 1558, col. 11. Maclean translates the passage as follows: "[…] so enormous is the force of experience in discovering the truth that we must, when an apparent explanation ['ratio'] is opposed to experience, place greater trust in the evidence of the senses ['experimentum'] than the explanation, and search for a better one" (Maclean 2000, p. 234).

217 Maclean 2002, pp. 21–22.

218 Grevin 1566, fol. 11^{r}. Maclean furthermore cites Giovanni Argenterio and Girolamo Cardano. See Maclean 2000, p. 234. Argenterio and Cardano also attacked Galen. See ibid., 2002, pp. 21–22. Before them, similar ideas could already be found in the writings of Pietro Pomponazzi in 1525. See Levitin 2019, pp. 234–235.

219 See Maclean, 2000, p. 234. Vivian Nutton stresses that Galen believed in the unity of reason and experience. See Nutton 2002, p. 800. There are, of course, also those who give precedence to reason. See Maclean 2002, pp. 194–195.

220 In his commentary on the first book of Hippocrates's *Epidemics*, Galen argues, for example: "I urged those who intend to study medicine to gain experience with the details they observe [through sense perception (as opposed to theoretical reasoning)] and to become thoroughly familiar with them beforehand. The empiricists claimed that these details are the basis of knowing universal things and that the only reliable concepts are those based in experience. Even if we assume that many concepts are derived by reasoning, however, their validity is only established through experience and they are proven true and confirmed by it […]. Hence, when explanations are given on the basis of geometrical proofs, they be-

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Thus, it is revealed that the *conférenciers*' argument for experience over reason – in combination with their other doctrinal convictions – is in no way a swansong to the opinions of authorities; it is, indeed, a reference to them. One can assume that it is precisely because of its capacity to accommodate (conflicting) experience – by making it inoffensive – that Galenic doctrine was able to dominate the study of medicine well into the seventeenth century. In the following part of the chapter, I look at its ability to adapt through the example of occult qualities.

7.2.4 Occult Qualities Experienced

In cases where the *conférenciers* know from experience that certain remedies work in a particular manner but do not understand why this is the case, they often resort to occult qualities as an explanation. Occult qualities are qualities that, by definition, cannot be accounted for by Galenic humoral pathology. As they designate a weak spot in this system, we can potentially understand mentions of occult qualities as markers of where opposition to Galenic doctrine accumulates in the *Conférences*. Effectively, occult qualities frequently appear in debates where the speakers address Paracelsian ideas. But the clou with occult qualities is that Galen already, in fact, includes them in his qualification of the first, second, and third qualities, even though he does not designate them as 'occult'. Similar to how other authors conceive of the *qualitez occultes*, Galen marks the third qualities as inex-

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come more certain and correct when confirmed by details perceptible through the senses. How much more sound and certain are (concepts) deduced in medicine by reasoning from general principles when they are tested and examined on the basis of details!" (Galen, *Commentary on the First Book of Hippocrates' Epidemics*, I Prooemium, transl. Vagelphol 2014, pp. 85–87). See also Allen 2021, p. 31.

221 The passage where Aristotle gives precedence to experience over reason seems to be one concerning motion: "Well then (1) to adopt the thesis that all things are at rest, and (ruling sense-perception out of court) to attempt to prove it by reasoning, really amounts to paralysing intelligence itself, and this not only in the particular field in question but universally, since it affects not Physics only but, if I may say so, every science and every received opinion, since they all assume motion" (Aristotle, *Phys.* VIII.3, 253a33–253b2, transl. Wicksteed and Cornford 1934, pp. 293–295). See also Zucker 2011, pp. 23–24.

222 In a passage in the *Praecepta*, Hippocrates points out that a physician should not treat his patients according to theoretical principles which he has *a priori* defined as persuasive. Rather, he should act according to practical experience that goes hand in hand with reason: "Die Heilung erfolgt durch die Zeit, aber manchmal auch durch den günstigen Zeitpunkt. Folglich darf sich bei der Behandlung derjenige, der diese Dinge weiß, nicht an eine theoretische Überlegung halten, die schon im Voraus als überzeugend festgelegt wurde, sondern an eine praktische Erfahrung, die mit der Vernunft einhergeht" (Hippocrates, *Praecepta* I.1, transl. Ecca 2016, p. 111). In another passage, Hippocrates claims that if a physician only aims at imitating a theoretical kind of reason that has nothing to do with actual evidence, it will often result in a painful condition (for his patients.): "Ich lasse also auch die theoretische Überlegung zu, falls sie ihren Anfang in der unmittelbaren Erfahrung nimmt und die Schlussfolgerung aus den sichtbaren Phänomenen als Methode anwendet. […] Wenn aber [scil. ein Arzt] nicht von der Methode der Evidenz [scil. ausgeht], sondern von einer Nachahmung der Vernunft, die überzeugend scheint, bringt er oft einen schlimmen und schmerzlichen Zustand" (ibid., *Praecepta* I.2–3, p. 111).

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plicable. Consequently, arguments supporting occult qualities do not necessarily endanger the system of humoral pathology. Certain Renaissance physicians, such as Jean Fernel, heavily rely on them in their medical writings. Fernel certainly was interested in some well-defined aspects of Paracelsian medicine and, to some extent, he could be seen as a medical reformer.[223] Yet, fundamentally, he always remained a Galenist.[224] Accordingly, the *Conférences* see a number of speakers who demonstrate how Galenic medical theory is able to incorporate inexplicable phenomena and render them innocuous. For them, occult qualities are clearly a way out of the difficult situation that arises when "la raison répugne à l'expérience".

In the *Conférences*, occult qualities indeed appear in connection with a theory very much opposed to Galen and his Early Modern adherents: the medicine of Paracelsus. An analysis of the topics considered by the *conférenciers* reveals that they effectively discuss several questions which must be situated in a Paracelsian tradition. They consider, for example, the weapon salve ("De la cure magnetique des maladies"),[225] chemical remedies ("S'il est bon de se servir de remedes chymiques"),[226] and mineral waters ("Des eaux minerales")[227] and refer to signature theory (more on this in the ensuing paragraphs) in a number of other debates.

These questions potentially enable fundamental digressions from the path of seventeenth-century orthodox medicine. Paracelsus, in his way of practising medicine, truly put experience over reason in a much more radical manner than Galenic physicians. Overall, the presence of Paracelsian ideas in the *Conférences* does not come as a surprise, as Renaudot himself was very much in favour of chemical medicaments perceived as stemming from the Paracelsian tradition. He prescribed and even produced them at the Bureau d'Adresse – a fact which brought him the ire of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine.

The principles the Paracelsian physicians followed were fundamentally different to those of the Galenists, as one *conférencier* explains. While the latter cured illnesses through their *contraries*, the former believed in the healing powers of substances *similar* to the afflicted organ or body part. According to the Chemists, as the Paracelsians are also called, the speaker explains, remedies act against illnesses through their whole substance, and not through their temperature or various mixtures of contrary qualities. The Chemists "[…] guérissent les semblables, par leurs semblables, qu'ils disent agir par une proprieté de toute la substance contre les maladies, & non par leur temperature ou divers meslanges des qualitez contraires […]".[228]

From this argument, it clearly emerges that the Paracelsian physicians did not believe in humoral pathology. The did not adhere to the theory of elements and hu-

223 See Deer Richardson 1985, p. 176.
224 See Pagel 1982, p. 311.
225 Vol. 2, *Conférence* 68.I, pp. 289–297.
226 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 97–107.
227 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 110.I, pp. 145–154.
228 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 98.

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moral imbalances, but "sought the origin of disease in external factors that entered the body through food or respiration and became localized in body organs".[229] Illnesses, for them, did not result from the pathological lack or superabundance of certain humours but came from the outside world into the body.[230] As already mentioned, remedies had to be found in 'similars', not in contraries. Moreover, the Paracelsians presumed that certain plants revealed their utility for the treatment of particular organs and body parts by virtue of their resemblance to them.

Signature theory also appears in the *Conférences*. A speaker debating the explicitly Paracelsian question "Qu'est-ce qu'a voulu entendre Paracelse par le livre M"[231] explains how it works. He believes that certain plants are marked in the character of an illness or resemble the afflicted body part. His examples include lungwort, liverleaf, and knotweed. Those remedies cure through properties which do not depend on their primary qualities. According to the *conférencier*, many beautiful secrets of this kind are at play. Their effects seem miraculous and surpass those of ordinary remedies:

> Ainsi les plantes qu'on appelle signées ou marquées au caractere de la maladie, ou de la partie malade, comme la pulmonaire,[232] l'hépatique,[233] la persicaire,[234] les guerissent par une proprieté qui ne dépend pas des premieres qualitez. De ce genre sont tant de beaux secrets, dont les effets semblent miraculeux, & surpassent autant ceux des remedes ordinaires […].[235]

The names of such plants already reveal that knowledge about their healing power belongs to a realm much different to university medicine. Just by looking at the plant and, in the broader sense, at its name, everyone can easily discover what purposes it can be used for. No knowledge of logic or syllogistic argument is necessary to be able to recognise it.[236] In this sense, signature theory is close to the

229 Debus 1991, p. 12.

230 See Pagel 1982, pp. 325–326. It must be pointed out that many ancient authors already presented theories of seeds of diseases long before Paracelsus. See Nutton 1983. Galen himself voiced the idea but did not elaborate on it much. Yet, for him, the seeds of disease would only ever be able to initially trigger an illness which would still consist in humoral imbalances, as Nutton explains; see ibid., pp. 14–15. Paracelsus, on the other hand, thought that diseases as entities in themselves came from outside into the body and caused illness there. See Pagel 1982, pp. 139 and 332.

231 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 203, pp. 145–152.

232 "Genre de plantes herbacées, vivaces, à floraison précoce dont certaines espèces étaient utilisées autrefois pour guérir les maladies du poumon" (*TLFi*, s.v. "pulmonaire").

233 "Plante (Renonculacées) à fleurs bleu mauve, aux nombreuses étamines blanches et à floraison précoce. […] cette plante était recommandée contre les maladies de foie" (*TLFi*, s.v. "hépatique").

234 "Plante de la famille des Renouées, à fleurs roses ou blanches, poussant dans des lieux humides, utilisée autrefois en médecine comme cicatrisant et dans des maladies du système respiratoire […]" (*TLFi*, s.v. "persicaire").

235 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 203, p. 149.

236 On the use of syllogism in medicine, see Maclean 2006, chapter four. On logic as applied in medicine (in contrast to the logic of law), see Maclean 2000.

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practical knowledge of herb women and 'empirics': it is popular knowledge. "It is the shape of a medicine that directs it to the appropriate place of action without any further guide", as medical historian Walter Pagel sums it up.[237]

Paracelsus and his followers placed great importance on the theory of signatures,[238] but its roots can be found in the writings of Hippocrates.[239] Quite evidently, the idea of signatures coincides with the Paracelsians' principle that similar cures similar. Signature theory accords with their idea that nature reveals her secrets to those roaming the world with open eyes.[240] To be a good physician, a person needs firsthand experience of nature and her workings, they believed.[241] Paracelsian experience of nature is, however, a kind of experimentalism and empiricism not quite identical to our conception of those terms today. It is by way of the relation of macrocosm (world) and microcosm (man) that students of nature could uncover the particularities of herbs: "[T]here is an element inside the naturalist – himself a microcosmic whole – which corresponds to this particular plant and must, by an act of sympathetic and magnetic attraction, unite with it".[242]

Paracelsus staunchly positioned himself on the side of experience and against the dominance of reason. He was a much more radical advocate for practice's primacy over theory than Galen's Early Modern adherents. During his short stint as a professor of medicine at the University of Basel, he seemingly even resorted to publicly burning Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*.[243] Paracelsus criticised the dominance of ancient authorities in the medical field because they were heathens; he aimed at establishing a medicine based on a Christian system.[244] In this sense, his thought constituted a veritable "rupture épistemologique et philosophale" with ancient medicine, historian of science Bernard Joly asserts.[245]

In Paracelsus's conception, physicians heal through a kind of natural magic[246] that has nothing to do with book learning. They effect "cures because they had been touched by Divine Grace".[247] Yet, most interestingly, it turns out that this

237 Pagel 1982, p. 149.
238 "[Ils] construisent le monde sensible comme un lieu où les choses portent les marques visibles du Créateur, les signatures de leurs appartenances multiples et réciproques au plan divin" (Panese 2003, p. 7).
239 See Penrose Schmidt 1982, p. 53.
240 See Debus 1991, pp. 8–9.
241 See ibid., pp. 56–57.
242 Ibid., p. 51.
243 See Pagel 1982, p. 20. For a more detailed analysis of Paracelsus's understanding of experience, see Massimo Luigi Bianchi's "Il tema dell'esperienzia in Paracelso" (2001, p. 200). Therein, Bianchi stresses: "Ciò che qui importava sottolineare è come il suo uso dei termini *erfaren, erfarenheit, experienz* si leghi il più delle volte alla rappresentazione di un sapere che può acquisirsi solo gradualmente e non senza fatica, attraverso l'ispezione laboriosa di una realtà molteplice, composita, *mannigfaltig*."
244 See Debus 1991, p. 8.
245 Joly 1997, p. 304.
246 See Pagel 1982, p. 225.
247 Debus 1991, p. 11.

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natural magic is not necessarily supernatural. In the end, it nothing more than the knowledge of the specific actions of certain substances and the physician's ability to cure by way of this knowledge.[248]

In the *Conférences*, one speaker debating signatures clearly understands *magia naturalis* in this manner. He argues that natural magic is knowledge about nature and all those properties which remain hidden to the vulgar, who, only concerned with the manifest qualities, reduce everything to generalities. Thereby, they avoid having to look for the specific virtue of particular things. This seems to be a poorly veiled attack on the Galenists and their general healing methods in accordance with humoral pathology. According to the *conférencier*, it does not come as a surprise that only general effects and achievements follow from such an approach. Often, the results are far from what the practitioners envisaged, because actions cannot be conceived of in general terms:

> Laquelle Magie naturelle est la connoissance de la nature & proprietez de toutes choses cachées au vulgaire, qui ne s'amusant sinon aux qualitez manifestes, & reduisant tout à des generalitez, pour s'exempter de la peine qui se trouve en la recherche des vertus particulieres de chaque chose; ce n'est pas de merveille s'il n'en void aussi que des effets & succés communs, & le plus souvent éloignez de son dessein; car les actions estans des particuliers, elle ne se peuvvent bien destiner en general.[249]

Similar to the *conférencier* criticising medicine's tendency to establish axioms, this speaker decidedly disapproves of general (humoral) principles when it comes to curing patients. Yet while his axiom-debating co-participant retracts his claims in order to not annul the legitimacy of Galenic humoral pathology as a whole, this speaker's argument is much more radical: he argues for a medicine which no longer has much to do with Galen's understanding of the discipline.

Yet the case of occult qualities in the *Conférences* also shows that not all speakers come to such radical conclusions. Certain *conférenciers* find a kind of middle ground between the different medical sects, between humoral pathology and Paracelsian chemical medicine. As Galen himself believed in inexplicable third qualities, occult qualities, as described by physicians such as Fernel, fit neatly into his system. Consequently, the *conférenciers*' arguments for occult qualities cannot be invariably qualified as a dismissal of doctrine in favour of pure sensory experience. Ultimately, the dominance of humoral pathology in medical thought is not challenged by most of the *conférenciers*.

The third speaker discussing the question "S'il y a des remedes specifiques à chaque maladie"[250] exemplifies the tendency to smooth over the discrepancies between Galenic humoral cures and specific remedies that work by way of occult

248 See ibid., p. 64.
249 Vol. 4, *Conférence* 203, p. 149.
250 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, pp. 807–816.

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qualities. He argues that experience shows us, through a number of admirable cures, that some remedies' effects do not depend on their primary qualities. However, why should it not be possible that one and the same remedy is specific to a particular affliction through its occult qualities and at the same time – through its manifest qualities – useful and convenient in the case of other illnesses:

> […] l'experience nous fait voir en plusieurs cures admirables, qu'il y [*sic*] des remedes dont les effets ne dependent pas des premieres qualitez […]. Mais rien n'empesche qu'un mesme remede soit specifique à une affection particuliere par ses qualitez ocultes, & neantmoins utile & convenable à d'autres, par ses qualitez manifestes […].[251]

The speaker refuses to believe that there are substances which only act against a certain illness and cannot be used in the treatment of any other affliction. For him, therefore, there are no *spécifiques* in the strictest definition of the term.[252] In arguing thus, the *conférencier* appeals to a general kind of experience. He even uses the phrase "l'expérience nous fait voir", so rare in the discussions of medical questions. Yet, again, as his argument concerns pharmacological matters, only those of the medical profession can truly assess his claim.

In his contribution, this *conférencier* aims at bringing together manifest and occult qualities. What might appear as an attempt to bridge quite an extensive gap ultimately proves not that far-fetched. Galen himself was indeed of the opinion that certain substances do not act by way of their primary or secondary qualities (or faculties); those substances, in his view, function according to their particular composition – which he calls their third faculties. A *conférencier* in the debate concerning specific remedies sums up Galen's understanding of the three faculties in the following manner:

> Les premieres viennent de la seule mixtion des quatre qualitez, selon la diversité de laquelle le composé est ou chaud comme le poivre, ou froid comme la mandragore, ou humide comme l'huile, ou sec comme le bol d'Armenie, non en acte, mais en puissance. Et par cette seule premiere faculté qui suit la temperature, le medicament agist principalement sur le temperament des corps. Leur seconde faculté vient du divers meslange de ces mesmes qualitez avec la matiere. Car un temperament chaud joint à une matiere disposée selon le degré de chaleur sera aperitif, incident, corrosif, ou caustique, […]. Et c'est par cette seconde faculté seulement que les medicamens agissent sur la matiere. […] La troisiéme faculté des medicamens est celle qui ne vient point de leur qualité, ou de leur matière, mais de leur forme & vertu specifique & occulte, telle qu'est au sené la faculté de purger la melancholie, à la terre sigilée ou Lemienne de

251 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 809.
252 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 808.

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> fortifier le cœur contre les venins: comme aussi de ce que le scorpion tuë de sa queuë, que certains poisons font mourir sans alterer le temperament.[253]

As the *conférencier* explains, the primary faculties result from the mixture of the four qualities (hot, cold, wet, dry) alone. It is this specific mixture which makes composite substances – for example, hot like pepper, cold like mandrake, wet like oil, and dry like Armenian bole – not in act but in potency. Through this first faculty alone, which affects temperature, medicaments act on the body's temperament. A remedy's second faculty stems from the diversity of mixtures of the first qualities with matter (i.e., physical properties). A hot temperament combined with matter of varying degrees of hotness will either stimulate appetite or be inflammatory, corrosive, or caustic, and so on. It is only through this second faculty that a medicament acts on matter. The third faculty of medicaments comes not from their qualities or their matter but from their form and specific and occult virtue. Example of this kind included the faculty of senna leaves to purge melancholy and the certain earths' ability to fortify the heart against poisons. In the same manner as the scorpion killing with his tail, certain poisons kill without altering the temperament.

As the speaker explains, poisons especially do not act according to the rules of humoral pathology. Galen therefore established that such poisons worked according to their third qualities, resulting from their total substance. Accordingly, the idea of substances acting through their specific corporeal composition was not novel to the fifteenth century or exclusive to the Paracelsians. It can be traced back as far as to Galen (or even further) and was advanced by many Medieval and Early Modern thinkers and physicians.

For example, Johannes Reuchlin and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim argue that certain things, such as the digestion of food, functioned according to unknown virtues, which they called occult.[254] Agrippa also names other instances where occult virtues are at work, such as the case of magnetism, remedies against poisons, and the ostrich's ability to digest iron.[255] Those phenomena remained inexplicable and could be discovered only by way of experience.[256] In the domain of medicine, the physician Arnaldus of Villanova suggests that certain remedies "act by an intrinsic unknown quality",[257] which he believes to descend from the stars.[258]

According to Pagel, this idea was later taken up by Fernel, who extensively applied himself to the study of occult qualities in his work *De abditis rerum causis*. This text, a medical dialogue, was published in 1548 but most certainly was

253 Vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, pp. 810–811.
254 See Pagel 1982, p. 158.
255 See ibid.
256 See ibid., pp. 158–159.
257 Ibid., p. 254.
258 See ibid., p. 256. See also McVaugh 2006, p. 63.

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written earlier.[259] In it, Fernel aims to investigate occult qualities, a phenomenon which, in itself, came close to a complete confession of medical ignorance.[260] Yet for Fernel, occult qualities were not merely a way out of an uncomfortable argumentative position; he truly tried to examine them as closely as possible, in order to facilitate treatment of illnesses provoked by inexplicable causes. In his understanding, three kinds of diseases are caused by occult qualities: poisonous, contagious, and pestilent ones.[261] As Fernel sees it, those do not affect the humours and their balance but rather afflict the body in its entirety. Consequently, Fernel calls them illnesses of the "total substance".[262]

While many physicians before him accepted that poisons act according to occult qualities,[263] Fernel's conception of illnesses of the total substance was somewhat more controversial. It was criticised by several orthodox Galenic physicians such as Jean Riolan *père* and Jacques Aubert.[264] Aubert saw Fernel's proposition as a deviation from all the other authorities' conceptions of disease.[265] Riolan aimed to quell Fernel's innovative views by explaining away occult qualities through traditional Galenic humours. In doing so, he carefully avoided openly contradicting Fernel, as the historian of medicine Linda Deer Richardson argues.[266]

Others such as Gui Patin, however, were less subtle. In a letter to his friend Belin (*père*), dated 28 October 1631, Patin declared that he did not believe in any occult qualities in medicine. Fernel, according to Patin, was entirely and utterly wrong to claim they existed:

> Je ne crois point aux qualités occultes en médecine, et pense que vous n'y en croyez guère plus que moi, quoi qu'en aient dit Fernel et d'autres, de qui toutes les paroles ne sont point mot d'évangile. Je les puis détruire par plus de cinquante passages d'Hippocrates et de Galien à point nommé, et par l'expérience même qui témoigne que ce sont bourdes que tout ce que les Arabes en ont dit; […]. En notre religion chrétienne, je crois comme nous devons croire, beaucoup de choses que nous ne voyons point […] mais c'est par le moyen de la foi, qui nous y oblige […] mais en fait de médecine, je ne crois que ce que je vois […].[267]

259 See Henry and Forrester 2005, p. 13.
260 See ibid., p. 25. See also Siraisi 1987, p. 349.
261 See Henry and Forrester 2005, p. 24.
262 See ibid.
263 See ibid., p. 25. Fernel aimed at linking his theory of poisons and remedies affecting the total substance of the body back to Galen. In *De abditis rerum causis*, Fernel's Eudoxus, after discussing Galen's primary and secondary qualities, describes the tertiary qualities: "And besides these, there are tertiary ones, derived from the total form […]. It is these whose whole kind Galen records as proceeding from the total substance, explaining this quite sparingly, uneasily and cryptically" (Fernel 2005, p. 675).
264 See Deer Richardson 1985, p. 187.
265 "Indeed, all physicians, both ancient and more recent, excepting only Fernel […] claim only one particular form of disease in the similar parts of our body, that is, simple or composite temperamental imbalance" (Jacques Aubert in ibid., p. 188).
266 See ibid., p. 189.
267 Lettre à Belin *père* du 28 octobre 1631, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 9.

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Patin boasted that he could refute Fernel's theory with more than fifty passages from Hippocrates and Galen as well as through experience itself, showing that what Patin qualifies as the 'Arabs' opinion' (on such matters) is utterly wrong.[268] Most interestingly, this boast shows that *expérience* is invoked both by those claiming that occult qualities exist and by those who, like Patin, challenged this view. Everyone appeals to their own experiences which, fundamentally, remain mediated through one's personal theoretical convictions. In this spirit, Patin closes with a – for him fundamental – differentiation between theology and medicine: in religious matters, we are well obliged to believe in things which we cannot see, he claims; faith compels one to do so. But in medicine, Patin professes to believe only what he can see with his own eyes. In a decidedly anti-speculative manner, Patin does not put any trust in ideas which cannot be proven. He judges that *qualitez occultes* should be left only to those who are, according to him, insufficiently educated in medical matters: "Il faut laisser les qualités occultes aux apothicaires, aux chimistes, aux charlatans et autres ignorants."[269]

As Patin's example shows, there were indeed certain physicians who thought Fernel had gone too far. For some, occult qualities were too unprovable, diseases of the total substance were incompatible with their view of humoral pathology, and Fernel's Platonic tendencies were irreconcilable with their Aristotelianism.[270] Yet, essentially, Fernel remained true to the Galenic legacy.[271] His *De abditis rerum causis* was "not in any way iconoclastic", as historians of science and medicine John Henry and John M. Forrester explain. As a result, it was readily accepted by numerous physicians,[272] less orthodox than the members of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine such as Riolan *père* and less sceptical than Patin.

That Fernel remained true to the principles of Galenic medicine becomes more evident when we look at his explanation of specific, occult remedies able to heal occult illnesses. Eudoxus, who is considered to be Fernel's spokesperson in *De abditis rerum causis*, clarifies:[273]

> […] as in other cases, so here the basis of therapy is completed by the principle of contraries. […] every defect of temperament has a contrary defect; in the

268 For a more detailed analysis of Patin's rejection of the occult qualities, see Thorndike 1958, vol. VII, pp. 526–532.

269 Lettre à Spon du 26 mars 1655, in Patin 1846, p. 162. On another occasion, Patin furthermore proclaimed that it was a profession of ignorance to see occult qualities everywhere, as his declared enemies, the Chemists, did: "C'est profession de l'ignorance et trop relever *in scientiam veterum academicorum*, que de mettre partout des qualités occultes, comme font les chimistes aujourd'hui dans leurs puants écrits […]" (Lettre à Belin *père* du 11 juin 1649, in ibid., p. 448).

270 As Hirai asserts, it was Fernel's goal to reconcile Galenism with Christianity, through Platonism. See Hirai 2011, pp. 47 and 77–79.

271 See Henry and Forrester 2005, p. 17.

272 Ibid., p. 21.

273 See, for example, Deer Richardson 1985, p. 180.

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> same fashion, a disease of total substance is defeated by medicaments that are contrary to the property of the total substance.[274]

As we can see, the fundamental principle according to which Fernel argues remains *contraria contrariis curentur* – illnesses must be healed through their contraries. Consequently, occult diseases also must be treated through what is contrary to them – occult remedies. A *conférencier* brings forward this exact same argument:

> Comme il y a des choses qui font les maladies par des qualitez occultes & inconnuë, telles que sont la pluspart des deleteres & venins: il doit y avoir des remedes pour combatre ces maladies & en préserver les hommes, dont les raisons soient cachées & connuës par la seule experience.[275]

Everyone seems to agree to the fact that poisons act according to inexplicable, occult qualities. Therefore, according to the logic of contraries, the remedies for those same poisons must also operate through occult qualities – symmetry is achieved. Fernel's argument aimed at convincing his contemporaries that the search for new, specific (and even chemical) remedies was necessary for the advancement of medicine.[276] At the same time, he did not fundamentally challenge Galenic humoral pathology. After all, even Galen had presented certain remedies of mineral origin,[277] even though his Early Modern Parisian followers objected against such treatments with the utmost vehemence in the examples cited above.[278]

Overall, the difference between the occult qualities Early Modern Galenist physicians believed in and the Paracelsian conception of 'invisible forces' is a crucial one, as Pagel points out: "The former authors basically remain Galenists: their occult quality is still opposed to a mixture of humours and qualities – however difficult to grasp."[279] Paracelsus, on the other hand, supplants humours and qualities outright with something that works entirely differently: a "specific substance."[280] In the Paracelsians' understanding , something is occult because it is invisible – but the Paracelsian physician can make it visible through chemical processes. For (Galenic) physicians like Fernel, it is occult "because it cannot be grasped by reason".[281]

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274 Fernel 2005, p. 721. The Latin version of this citation reads: "[…] ut enim in caeteris, ita in his curandi ratio contrariorum lege completur. […] omnísque intemperies intemperie contraria: six totius substantiae morbus, medicamentis profligatur totius substantiae proprietate contrariis" (ibid., p. 720).

275 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 173, p. 780. The *conférencier*'s argument is similar to what Fernel has Eudoxus voice in *De abditis rerum causis*: "if occult diseases appear anywhere, there must also exist remedies that are their contraries and occult" (Fernel 2005, p. 673).

276 See Debus 1991, p. 14.

277 According to Neuburger, Galen used most remedies of mineral origin only externally and internally administered only certain earths or alums. See Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, p. 398.

278 The specific *querelle* surrounding antimony is discussed in more detail in part 7.3.3.

279 Pagel 1982, p. 311.

280 Ibid.

281 Ibid. See also Siraisi 1987, p. 348.

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As we have seen, there exists a special connection between *expérience* and occult qualities. It is experience which reveals that certain illnesses and medicaments act according to occult qualities, some physicians and *conférenciers* argue. Those of the opposing view similarly claim that experience proves that no such inexplicable qualities exist. Experience, therefore, is a weapon that can be used in both directions. Opposed parties simultaneously believe that it proves *them* right.

Whereas speakers in the *Conférences* generally seem to adhere to an Aristotelian notion of *experientia*, speakers in the medical *Conférences* display a slightly more specialised conception of the term. The *expérience* they mostly appeal to is the experience of medical men, which requires knowledge of a highly specialised field. It is still quite general, in the sense that other physicians should always be able to follow it, but it is no longer generic and comprehensible for just anyone. Moreover, some debaters of medical questions seem to appreciate the distinctions between various kinds of experience and also differentiate between *experientia* and *observatio*. This does not mean, as part 7.2.1 aimed to show, that such medical experience is necessarily personal experience; it can still be acquired through the study of authoritative texts.

The *conférenciers* often oppose *expérience* to *raison*. In such cases, they surprisingly hold that *expérience* prevails while rejecting reason, as demonstrated in part 7.2.2 The following part, however, revealed that this in no way means that the *conférenciers* rejected the authority of the ancients and especially of Galen. I have pointed out that even their preference for *expérience* turns out to be a citation from authoritative sources.

In cases where reason and experience do not accord, the *conférenciers* often argue on the basis of occult qualities, which might indicate an accumulation of anti-Galenic ideas in the *Conférences*. Yet my analysis in this part of the chapter has shown that arguments concerned with occult qualities do not automatically mean that the speakers position themselves against Galen. Galen does not specifically denominate qualities as 'occult', but occult qualities can be seen as a derivative of the tertiary qualities in his system of primary, secondary, and tertiary qualities. He acknowledges that the latter act in a way which he cannot explain.[282] Through this incorporation of unexplainable qualities into Galen's system, any incomprehensible effects medicaments possess can, up to a certain point, be integrated into humoral pathology. If something acts in an unexpected manner, it is always possible to point to the third qualities without otherwise endangering the system.

Like many other physicians before them, some *conférenciers* clearly seem to have been inspired by certain aspects of Paracelsian medicine, notably in the case of chemical remedies. Yet, in most cases, they continued to adhere to a system of medicine that remained compatible with Galenic humoral pathology. Nevertheless, displays of such minor Paracelsian inspiration already made the *conférenciers* radicals in the eyes of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, whose members ap-

282 See Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, p. 398.

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pear to have observed Galenic doctrine more strictly than even Galen himself. Consequently, they were hostile to Renaudot, his *consultations charitables*, and the (medically) unrestricted debates that took place at the Bureau d'Adresse. The ensuing conflict between the Maison du Grand-Coq and the Faculty of Medicine had far-reaching consequences for all parties involved, as the next section of the chapter explores.

7.3 *Natura gaudet paucis* or *grands secrets de chimie*: The Case of Chemical Remedies

The medical *Conférences*' connection to what happened in the Parisian medical scene of the seventeenth century emerges when we more closely examine the case of chemical remedies. While Renaudot and many other physicians from the Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier were in favour of chemical medicine, the Parisian physicians were heavily opposed to it, as I will show in part 7.3.1. The latter only approved of an extremely small number of well-tried and benignant medicaments and discredited the more adventurous Chemists as dangerous charlatans: *natura gaudet paucis*.[283]

Given this tense situation, it is most intriguing that the medical *Conférences* present such a wide variety of opinions and different points of view regarding chemical remedies. In part 7.3.2, I illustrate this point using the example of the debate on "S'il est bon de se servir de remèdes chymiques".[284] Even though Renaudot held a definite position in the quarrel about chemical medicine then raging in Paris, he did not prevent the *conférenciers* from presenting opposing opinions. The medical *Conférences* prove most clearly that a genuine freedom of expression reigned at the Bureau d'Adresse. Renaudot readily printed the opinions of speakers against chemical remedies and in accord with the views of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine. As the example of Renaudot's medical questionnaire *La presence des absens* (1642) shows, he was truly committed to a project of popularising medicine, to allow as many people as possible access to medical care. In line with this idea, he also ran the *consultations charitables* at the Bureau d'Adresse, where medical doctors from faculties other than Paris attended to the poor. The *consultations charitables* considerably enraged the Parisian physicians. Firstly, the consultations opened a backdoor for non-Parisian doctors, normally banned from practising medicine in the French capital, to treat patients. Secondly, Renaudot's doctors prescribed chemical remedies, which the Parisian faculty abhorred.

At a broader level, the conflict about chemical remedies reached its climax in the *querelle de l'antimoine*, which, after starting in the sixteenth century, reared up one last time in the first half of the seventeenth century, before the Parisian phy-

283 Patin voices this motto in the lettre à Belin *père* [not dated, ca. 1632–1633], in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 23.

284 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 97–107.

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sicians finally had to accept antimony as a medicament in 1666.[285] From the 1640s onwards, Renaudot and the Parisian faculty were engaged in a long-lasting series of court battles, as part 7.3.3 illustrates. As long as King Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu were alive and protected him, Renaudot could brave the faculty. After their death, however, the Parisian doctors forced the closure of most of his endeavours. Renaudot was prohibited from further pursuing any of his medical projects; yet he was allowed to continue with the *Gazette*, the only one of his 'innocent' inventions that had absolutely nothing to do with medicine.

7.3.1 Argumentative Armamentarium: The Parisian Faculty of Medicine versus Renaudot

In this part of the chapter, I delineate the opposing positions of the *chymistes* – as exemplified by Renaudot – and the orthodox Galenists of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine. This allows me to subsequently locate the *Conférence* "S'il est bon de se servir de remèdes chymiques"[286] in the broader medical debates of the seventeenth century. Regarding remedies, the Parisian physicians were all for experience but against experiments (in today's understanding of the terms). They opposed what they perceived as trials with hazardous chemical substances and defended their own, well-proven way of administering medication. Their hatred of chemistry certainly acquired the dimension of a professional rivalry with the Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier, where chemical medication was part of the curriculum. The Parisian faculty did everything possible to prevent an influx of foreign doctors to the French capital but was powerless regarding the physicians attached to court, who often came from Montpellier. The adverse positions of the two faculties resulted in conflicts, quarrels, and legal proceedings, and this situation ultimately contributed to Renaudot's downfall.

In the analysis of their antithetical views concerning chemical remedies, it is not my goal to identify the Chemists' party with progress while classifying the orthodox Galenic-Aristotelian position as antiquated and obsolete.[287] As historian of medicine Andrew Wear has pointed out, this position would simply be wrong, as both the Galenists' and Chemists' methods of treatments were equally unsuccessful.[288] Wear illustrates this using the example of antimony, to which we will later turn in more detail: "antimony (the chemical remedy of the 'moderns') could kill just as much as bleeding (the treatment of the 'ancients')."[289] It is especially relevant

285 See Debus 1991, p. 98.
286 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 97–107.
287 As Brockliss has pointed out discussing the stance of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine (and the rest of the University of Paris): "17th-century Aristotelianism was a plastic and flexible natural philosophy that could easily incorporate new material provided certain fundamentals – such as hylomorphism and the essential division between the sub and the superlunary universe – remained unquestioned" (Brockliss 2002, p. 116).
288 See Wear 1982, p. 118.
289 Ibid.

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to point out this reality, as scholars often discuss the frictions around Renaudot and the Faculty of Medicine in a manner which one can only identify as biased.

This tendency particularly counts for the early evaluations of the conflict: Michel Emery, writing in 1888, for example, is a fierce defender of the Faculty of Medicine of Montpellier and of Renaudot, whom he elevates against the – according to him – doctrinally backwards physicians of Paris.[290] In 1846, Joseph-Henri Reveillé-Parise, the editor of Gui Patin's letters, on the other hand, is rather convinced that the chemical physicians were charlatans, in agreement with the Parisian Faculty of Medicine during the times of Renaudot. He frequently expresses this view in his comments on Patin's writings. Concerning one of Patin's rather violent outbursts against chemistry, he writes, for instance: "si l'on réfléchit à l'état de la chimie au siècle de Gui Patin, science qui ne consistait qu'à chercher la pierre philosophale, à trouver des secrets, des compositions pour guérir toute espèce de maladies, et favoriser le plus vil charlatanisme, on comprendra la fière indignation de l'auteur."[291]

Contemporary scholars are more careful, but they nevertheless sometimes profess a somewhat romanticised perception of Renaudot and his chemical endeavours.[292] This standpoint is perhaps spurred by the fact that Patin's letters offer so much insight into the mental world of Renaudot's sworn enemy. In his letters, Patin certainly does not refrain from satirical or malicious comments about Renaudot and his sons, or about other physicians with whose views he does not agree. Certain of the superiority of the Parisian faculty and its methods, Patin would like to crush the Chemists, and he makes no secret of it.

Accordingly, the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, in which a review of a volume of Patin's letters appeared, already warned in April 1684: "Il est bon que les Lecteurs soient avertis, que tous les bons mots, ou tous les contes qu'il rapporte, ne sont point vrais. Il y en a où il paroit une effroyable malice, & une hardiesse prodigieuse à donner un tour criminel à toutes choses."[293] Patin's malignity raises sympathy for Renaudot, who appears all the more as the underdog as he ultimately lost the legal proceedings in which the faculty entangled him. Unsurprisingly, the Parisian physicians – and notably Patin – did not hesitate to cry out their triumph.

Importantly, the Parisian Faculty of Medicine of the seventeenth century was constituted of not only university professors (of whom there were only two until 1634) but also all the medical doctors (trained and residing) in Paris.[294] In the middle decades of the seventeenth century, their number amounted to about one

290 "Confiné dans sa vanité et ses préjugés immuables, Paris méprisait tout ce qu'il ne comprenait pas; Montpellier, au contraire, à l'affût de toutes les découvertes nouvelles, les étudie, les scrute, prend le bon et rejette l'erreur" (Emery 1888, p. VII).

291 Patin 1846, vol. 3, pp. 47–48, comm. Reveillé-Parise.

292 Kathleen Wellman, for example, ascribes a "medically avant-garde character to the conferences". However, she is quick to acknowledge that "medicine as discussed there is not exclusively or even predominantly chemical" (Wellman 2003, p. 191).

293 Bayle 1684, p. 115.

294 See Solomon 1972, p. 163.

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hundred.[295] The Parisian university awarded its medical graduates with the right to practise in Paris and in every other part of the realm – *hic et ubique terrarium* – a privilege they shared with graduates from the Montpellier faculty.[296] Nevertheless, the Parisians did not allow any medical doctors from other universities to practice in the French capital.[297] Outsiders could exercise their art in Paris only after receiving approval from the faculty[298] or else when they were appointed *médecins du roy*. According to Allen G. Debus, eighty to one hundred doctors were attached to the court during Louis XIII's reign.[299] Of those, many were from Montpellier.[300]

This arrangement alone would be enough to explain the animosity between the physicians from Paris and from Montpellier. Yet the two faculties were not only in disaccord about the scope of their privileges and their respective influence at court – they also heavily disagreed on medical matters. Unlike the Parisians, who placed the greatest importance on Galenic and Hippocratic doctrine,[301] the Montpellier faculty cultivated an interest in chemical medicine,[302] even though it did not accept doctors who were too Paracelsian in their ideas.[303] Moreover, Montpellier accepted Protestant students, while only Catholics could study in Paris.[304]

The fact that the faculty comprised all the Parisian doctors – not only a small teaching body – indicates that its position vis-à-vis medical practice and especially chemical remedies was anything but monolithic. The physicians naturally held divergent opinions, which led to regular conflicts at the heart of the faculty. In his letters, Patin discusses the case of "le jeune Chartier", for example, who was disowned by the faculty because he refused to submit to their jurisdiction a pamphlet in favour of chemical medicine that he had written.[305] Jean Riolan *fils*, another

295 See Debus 1991, p. 50. In 1651, Riolan *fils* asserts that the Parisian faculty counted "six-vingt Docteurs" (Riolan 1651, p. 22).

296 See Solomon 1972, p. 166. On the faculty's refusal to accept that the *hic et ubique terrarum* allowed the physicians from Montpellier to practice in Paris, see Riolan 1641, p. 28.

297 "L'an 1347, le Pape Clement VI. defend sous peine d'excommunication, à toute personne de pratiquer la Medecine dans la ville & faux-bourgs de Paris, s'il n'est Docteur dudit lieu, & approuvée de l'Eschole, & à tous les bourgeois soubs mesme peine de se servir d'autres que des Medecins de Paris" (ibid., p. 15). Subsequently, this was confirmed by King Henry III and the Parliament of Paris. See ibid.

298 See ibid., p. 16.

299 See Debus 1991, p. 82.

300 See ibid., p. 51.

301 See Solomon 1972, p. 163.

302 See Debus 1991, p. 90, and Emery 1888. Riolan *fils* states that "[…] la pratique de Montpellier estant toute contraire en beaucoup de maladies, à celle de Paris […]" (Riolan 1641, p. 38).

303 Bernard Joly points out that in 1614, Montpellier did not accept the doctorate of Pierre-Jean Fabre, "[p]our le motif qu'il avait défendu des thèses paracelsiennes et empiriques" (Joly 1997, p. 303).

304 Debus 1991, p. 90. See also Wear (1982 p. 120), summing up the relation of the two faculties in the following manner: "Opposition to Paris orthodoxy came from many quarters. Institutionally, it frequently originated at Montpellier. Huguenots were taught there – they were barred from Paris – and chemical remedies and philosophies as well as new discoveries such as the circulation were espoused".

305 Lettre à Belin *fils* du 16 novembre 1652, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 186.

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heavyweight of the faculty, mentions a number of other physicians banned from Paris because they were overly interested in chemistry.[306] This shows that those governing the faculty in Renaudot's times (such as the two Riolans and Patin) did everything they could to eradicate what they believed to be chemical heresy. Therefore, it is possible to speak of *the* position of the Parisian faculty. While not every Parisian doctor held views as radical as Riolan's or Patin's, the official line was nevertheless dictated by them (for a certain period). Those who stepped out of line were quickly disciplined or excluded.

This hard-line approach is illustrated by the case of the faculty's *Antidotaire* (1576), which, due to disagreements, was extremely long in the making.[307] It was composed by generations of Parisian physicians and meant to provide guidance to the apothecaries: the remedies assembled in it were officially approved by the faculty. Furthermore, it supplied explanations on how best to prepare those remedies.[308] Curiously, the Parisian dean who finally managed to publish the *Antidotaire*, Philippe Harduin de Saint-Jacques, added one substance destined to bring him the eternal ire of Patin and the like: antimony.[309]

That Harduin de Saint-Jacques added the *vin émétique* to the codex is all the more remarkable since the Parliament of Paris had decreed the *condemnation solonnelle* of this substance in 1556.[310] This proves once more that not all Parisian physicians were convinced of the opinion vis-à-vis chemical medicine that dominated the faculty up to the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Jean Fernel, who I discussed above, is another (earlier) example. Patin, however, was utterly enraged by the *Antidotaire* and claimed that most of the Parisian physicians agreed with him: "Notre école n'a jamais approuvé ni recconu pour sien cet antidotaire que Saint-Jacques fit imprimer de son doyenné: aussi est-il trop chétif et fautif, et tout-à-fait indigne de l'aveu de notre Faculté."[311]

In its official communications, the faulty evidently faced a problem regarding the fact that the *Antidotaire* approved of antimony. How could it condemn something it had already authorised without losing face? In the *Defense de la Faculté de Médecine de Paris* (1641), the physician René Moreau argues in the name of all that it was right to be weary of the dangerous substance. It could be like a spear in the hand of a furious person when the ignorant were allowed to use it at their discretion. Referring to the *Antidotaire,* the text mentions that the faculty allows the use of antimony in certain cases, but only in the right hands: their hands.[312]

306 See Riolan 1641, pp. 36–37.
307 See Bergounioux 1927, p. 383.
308 See ibid., p. 377.
309 See ibid., p. 386.
310 The first condemnation of antimony by the faculty in 1566 as well as a second condemnation from 1615 can be found in the first volume of Patin's letters: Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 191, comm. Reveillé-Parise.
311 Lettre à Belin *fils* du 16 décembre 1652, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 188.
312 See Moreau 1641, pp. 55–56.

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Overall, the two Riolans, Patin, and most of their *confrères* despised chemical remedies and used only treatments such as bloodletting and a few plant-based laxatives, including syrup of pale roses, as well as preparations from cassia, manna, and rhubarb.[313] *Natura gaudet paucis*.[314] Or, in the explanation of Riolan (*fils*): "L'excellence & la richesse de la Medecine ne dépend pas de la grande multitude & varieté des remedes, mais de peu & de bons, bien choisis & approuvez […]."[315] Assembled under this maxim, the faculty simultaneously proceeded against the Chemists and against the apothecaries, who, according to the physicians, were eager to sell their expensive and exotic remedies and chemical preparations.[316] Yet, as Patin puts it, chemistry is only the false currency of the physicians' profession: "La chimie n'est que la fausse monnoie de notre métier."[317]

Renaudot, on the other hand, was convinced that chemical remedies were beneficial for the successful treatment of many illnesses. He probably acquired a taste for chemical medicine during his studies at Montpellier – Renaudot could practise in Paris only because of his status as a *médecin du roy*.[318] Under the protection of Richelieu, Renaudot not only prescribed chemical medicaments to his clients[319] but also dispensed them to the poor at the *consultations charitables*.[320] Moreover, Renaudot even possessed his own *fourneaux*, his own laboratories, which allowed him to produce chemical remedies. Consequently, Debus even goes so far as to qualify him as the "new champion of chemicals" in the Paris of the 1630s.[321] Still, Renaudot does not seem to have been a Paracelsian in the mystical dimension of the term;[322]

313 See Reveillé-Parise's introduction in Patin 1846, p. XV. Brockliss asserts that "[a]lthough all Galenic physicians used phlebotomy frequently as a part of an arsenal of remedies that were developed to fight virtually every disease, Paris faculty physicians were particularly prone to gild the lily" (Brockliss 2002, p. 123).

314 Lettre à Belin *père* [not dated, ca. 1632–1633], in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 23.

315 Riolan 1651, p. 250.

316 Patin explains that "[…] pour bien faire la médecine il ne faut guère de remèdes, et encore moins de compositions, la quantité desquelles est inutile, et plus propre à entretenir la forfanterie des Arabes, au profit des apothicaires, qu'à soulager des malades, lesquels un simple purgatif opère quelquefois autant qu'une médecine où y entreront trois ou quatre compositions" (Lettre à Belin *père* [not dated, ca. 1632–1633], in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 23). He adds to this that "[l]e miel commun, le séné et le sirop de roses pâles sont les vrais et très certains moyens de les ruiner" (ibid., p. 219).

317 Lettre à Falconet du 2 mars 1655, in Patin 1846, vol. 3, p. 47.

318 See Debus 1991, p. 85. Wear specifies that "Montpellier physicians were often selected as royal doctors and in this way they gained a foothold in Paris, for otherwise only Paris graduates were licensed to practise in the capital" (Wear 1982, p. 120).

319 Gui Patin describes an episode where Renaudot chemically treated a patient with little success. See Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 281.

320 See Emery 1888, p. 38.

321 Debus 1991, p. 84.

322 From what we know of Renaudot and his medical practice, he was interested in chemical remedies and their preparation, and, more broadly speaking, in the 'vulgarisation' of medicine. He was no Paracelsian who fervently fought against ancient authorities, eager to replace their medicine with a completely new system. On the more radical Paracelsians, see Debus 1991, pp. 8–13.

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rather, he was what François Nivelet would qualify as a medical eclectic (just like the majority of the *conférenciers* in favour of qualities of the total substance).[323] Either way, Renaudot could be sure of Patin's and the faculty's hatred. With the *querelle de l'antimoine*, in which Renaudot's son Eusèbe (also a physician) became embroiled, the question of chemical medication developed into a family affair.

7.3.2 "S'il est bon de se servir de remèdes chymiques?"

While the faculty was eager to silence anyone who disagreed with their opposition to chemical medication, Renaudot muzzled no one, as the debate concerning the question of chemical remedies in the *Conférences* shows. He does not seem to have given preferential treatment to speakers who presented opinions in accordance with his own but enabled a true freedom of expression. Accordingly, the speakers in the medical discussions present divergent beliefs, like in an open-ended dialogue: from a total denunciation of chemical remedies to their enthusiastic approval. Given the personal interest Renaudot had in this debate, this is quite remarkable.

The first speaker debating "S'il est bon de se servir de remèdes chymiques"[324] immediately presents an opinion that does not at all agree with Renaudot's. After differentiating various kinds of substances, which he groups into aliments, poisons, and medicaments, the *conférencier* then discusses the latter.[325] Their case shows why experience is of central importance when it comes to remedies:

> Tous ces remedes ont esté premierement inventez par l'experience qui a donné lieu à la plus ancienne secte des Medecins, dite Empirique, inventée par Acron […] Enfin, ils ont esté authorisez par la raison, jointe à l'expérience, qui a donné lieu à la plus authentique secte, appellée des Dogmatiques ou Rationels & Galeniques de leur autheur, fondé sur Hippocrate: qui guérissent les contraires par leurs contraires; au lieu que les Chymiques, appellez aussi Hermetiques d'Hermes Trismegiste ou Spagiriques de la fin de leur art, qui est de séparer & d'assembler les corps, guérissent les semblables, par leurs semblables, qu'ils disent agir par une proprieté de toute la substance contre les maladies, & non par leur temperature ou divers meslanges des qualitez contraires, qui sont neantmoins seules actives, l'action ne pouvant estre entre des choses entierement semblables, puis qu'une chose n'agist sur une autre que pour la rendre semblable: de sorte que si elle est desja telle, il ne se fera aucune action.[326]

The *conférencier* claims that remedies were first invented by experience; from this was born the first sect of physicians, the Empirics, founded by Acron. Yet,

323 According to Nivelet, the Eclectics are those who "tout en suivant les dogmes de Galien, accueillaient aussi, dans la pratique, les idées et les applications nouvelles. Ce sont ceux que Gui Patin gratifie sans cesse des titres d'empiriques, charlatans, chimistes, paracelsistes, semi-dogmatiques" (Nivelet 1880, p. 30).

324 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 97–107.

325 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 97–98.

326 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 98–99.

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according to the speaker, this was only the first step in the evolution of medicine. Physicians later joined reason with experience, leading to the establishment of what he believes to be the most authentic sect of all: the *dogmatiques* or *rationels* and *galeniques*, who are named after their creator, Galen. Founded on Hippocratic thought, their medicine cures contraries with contraries. The speaker assesses that it is best to base medicine on both reason and experience. Thus, he presents an argument similar to one we already encountered earlier, in the debate concerning the conflict of reason and experience. As the *conférencier* indicates, the Galenic physicians believe that only they can unify *expérience* and *raison*.

The Galenists' principle of healing through contraries stands in opposition to the method of the *chymiques*, who are also called *hermetiques*, after Hermes Trismegistus, or *spagiriques*, in accordance with the goal of their art: to separate and assemble subject matter. The chemical physicians cure similar with similar, and they are certain that those similars act with the property of all their substance against illnesses, the speaker assesses. They do not administer cures according to the temperament of the remedies or according to the variety of mixtures of contrary qualities, which are, the speaker is sure, nevertheless the only thing active in a remedy. This is the case because a substance only acts on another in order to assimilate it; between two similar things, no action can occur.

All in all, the first speaker sums up a number of ideas which are of great importance in the medical setting of seventeenth-century Paris. Like many others, he assumes that medicine was born from experience but could reach perfection only when that experience was joined by reason (or, to put it in Aristotelian terms, when a number of singular experiences were grouped together in order to create reasonable, abstract principles, which resulted in the establishment of medical theory).

The *conférencier* then divides up various medical sects that play a role in the thought of seventeenth-century physicians: the Empirics, the Galenists or Dogmatics, and the Chemists. While the Empirics base their knowledge solely on experience, the Dogmatics rely on experience and on reason; finally, the Chemists base their treatments on methods opposed to those of the Galenists. How the Chemists relate to experience, the speaker does not explain. Overall, his sympathies lie firmly with the Galenists. He is sure that similar cannot act on similar and therefore rejects the guiding principle of the chemical physicians. According to the speaker, only contraries can work on contraries. As he does not elaborate on this any further, it is not clear what he thinks about the idea that medicaments could act through their total substance. However, most likely he would reject this idea together with the Chemists' belief in similars. This viewpoint would make him more orthodox than physicians like Fernel, who, as we have seen, did believe in qualities of the total substance while remaining inside the framework provided by Galen.

In his definition of illness, the first speaker again proves that he steadfastly believes in the principles of humoral pathology. According to him a "[…] maladie est dans l'excez ou dans le defaut, qui fait définir la Medecine détraction &

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addition, pource qu'elle retranche ce qui est de trop, & ajouste ce qui manque."[327] Illnesses, the *conférencier* assumes, result either from the excess or the lack of certain humours. Consequently, medical treatment works by way of withdrawal or addition. The physician has to take away what is superabundant or to add what is lacking. Ascribing to this principle of treatment, which the speaker takes from ancient medicine,[328] results in the conviction that the Chemists' conception of medication cannot possibly work. Adding what is similar would merely exacerbate the abundance of certain humours and cannot give the body what it lacks. As a consequence, the *conférencier* firmly rejects chemical medication.[329]

This argument does not convince the second speaker, who defends the contrary position. He champions chemical medication and points out that regarding the question of similars, the Galenists have misunderstood the Chemists: "Car lors que les Chymiques disent que les semblables se guérissent par leurs semblables; ils n'entendent pas parler des maladies comme font les Galeniques […]."[330] The second speaker argues that the Chemists heal with remedies similar to the afflicted organ, not to the illness itself.[331] Here, he seems to refer to treatment according to signature theory, which, as previously discussed, ascribes healing properties to plants that resemble certain body organs.[332] Nevertheless, he apparently ignores that certain physicians in the Paracelsian tradition believe that poisons can be cured with poisons.[333] Furthermore, treatments with minerals also aim to cure like with like, in the literal sense.

Accordingly, the third speaker points out that chemical remedies have many dangers. Minerals, metals, and fossils, which are used in chemical medication, possess poisonous and malignant qualities. Therefore, they are much more hazardous than remedies taken from plants or animals, which are alive like humans: "[…] les mineraux, metaux, & tous les fossiles dont la Chymie nous fait user, ayans des qualitez malignes & veneneuses, sont beaucoup plus dangereux que les remedes ordinaires pris des animaux & des plantes, qui ont une vie comme nous."[334]

This speaker's opinion is comparable to the position held by many members of the Parisian faculty. The Parisian physicians believed that chemical and mineral substances theoretically could be useful in medicine but that their employment was extremely dangerous. Concerning certain substances such as opium, for example, they argued that, given the lack of alternatives, the potentially lethal substance had to be used. In the case of antimony, on the other hand, they were convinced plenty more gentle purgatives were available, and they therefore vehemently de-

327 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 99.
328 See Pagel 1982, p. 128.
329 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 99.
330 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 99.
331 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 99–100.
332 See pp. 215–217 of this chapter.
333 See Debus 1991, p. 14.
334 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 100.

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fended the (continuous) interdiction of this remedy. Overall, Chemists and Galenists agreed that poisonous substances were of potential use in healing processes. Yet while the Chemists were certain they could render the poison harmless through their preparations, most of the members of the Parisian faculty were not so sure.[335] They preferred benign medicaments which had been proven to work over centuries and they condemned insufficiently confirmed chemical preparations.[336]

In the faculty's denouncements of chemical substances, the keyword is, in many cases, once again 'experience'. Giving advice to the son of his friend Spon, a student of medicine, Patin writes, for example: "ne vous laissez point emporter au courant de tant de promesses que font les antidotaires qui sont destituéz de l'expérience."[337] Do not let yourself be carried away by all the promises of the *antidotaires*, which are destitute of experience. Here, experience can be understood as the collective knowledge that doctors of medicine amassed over centuries. In another instance, *expérience* means exactly the opposite for Patin. Criticising a fellow physician, Gorris, he claims that the latter is a "très malheureux praticien, qui en a bien tué avec les expériences qu'il a voulu faire."[338] Gorris is an unfortunate practitioner who has killed through his experiences. Here, 'experience' is meant in the sense of 'experiment' or 'trial'. With his chemical experiments, Gorris poisoned his patients. In today's understanding of the terms, the Parisian faculty therefore proves to favour experience as the accumulated, proven, and collective knowledge of the medical profession, but it is against singular and personal experiments with novel substances. As Riolan *fils* puts it: Only the ignorant and the vulgar think that medicine is a game of chance.[339]

But back to the third speaker debating the question of chemical remedies: like other critics of chemical medicaments, he is certain that distillation and other preparation methods used by the Chemists destroy the healing powers of plants. Since the healing properties become separated from the plant's matter, they lose all their force and virtue.[340]

This line of argument is taken up by the fourth *conférencier*, who, again, defends chemical medication. According to him, it is because chemical remedies are free

335 Patin explains: "[…] on donne quelquefois de l'opium par nécessité, combien qu'il soit infailliblement poison; c'est que nous n'avons pas de meilleur ni plus certain narcotique, mais nous avons bien d'autres et de meilleurs purgatifs que l'antimoine. […] je pourrois jurer que tous les plus dangereux poisons sont bons et utiles remèdes, pourvu qu'ils soient bien préparés et bien donnés, et même le sang d'aspic, le sublimé, etc. Mais c'est le point de les bien préparer et bien remuer […]" (Lettre à Belin *fils* du 7 septembre 1654, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 209).

336 As Riolan *fils* puts it: "On voit quelquefois les plus temeraires & ignorans donner des remedes aussi dangereux que des poisons […] ce que n'eust pas osé entreprendre un Medecin prudent, qui ne hazarde rien. Mais ces gens-là en font plus mourir qu'ils n'en reschappent […]" (Riolan 1651, p. 138).

337 Lettre à Belin *fils* du 24 octobre 1646, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 130.

338 Lettre à Falconet du 6 janvier 1654, in ibid., vol. 3, p. 21.

339 "[…] il semble aux vulgaires, & à quelques Medecins ignorans, que la Medecine soit un jeu de hazard […]" (Riolan 1651, p. 138).

340 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 101.

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from the impurities that reside in matter that they work better and faster than other remedies.[341] He refutes the allegation that chemical remedies are unnatural. As he points out, the ancients used them, too. Galen himself employed certain medicaments taken from crude minerals, as the ancients did not know of any preparation methods: "[…] Galien se servoit de l'acider, sandaraque, aërain bruslé & tels autres médicamens pris des mineraux tous cruds & sans aucune préparation, qui estoit ignorée de son temps."[342] The fourth speaker then names a number of other, more contemporary physicians who have used chemical medication. In enumerating Guillaume Rondelet, Girolamo Cardano, Pietro Andrea Mattioli, Conrad Gessner, and Gabriele Falloppio, as well as the chemical treatments they employed, the speaker displays an extensive knowledge of medical literature.

It is indeed true that Galen and his followers used certain chemical remedies, as Max Neuburger has pointed out. They predominantly applied these remedies externally and only rarely administered them internally.[343] Nevertheless, Galen's chemicals illustrate that some of the seventeenth-century Galenists, such as Patin, were even more cautious than their master. This makes sense only when one remembers that the question of chemical medicine was never solely about conflicting methods of treatment. As I will explore in more detail in part 7.3.3, it was also a fight for dominance in the medical field.

Like the speaker before him, the fifth *conférencier* is in favour of chemical medication. In accordance with Fernel, he argues that chemistry can be of great use in the quest for more *spécifiques*.[344] According to the speaker, the Chemists use specific substances in a purified form in order to cure illnesses. Other – as he calls them – "medecins vulgaires" use so many ingredients when composing their medications that they destroy and render inefficient the specific virtues of the individual substances.[345]

Altogether, two of the five *conférenciers* are against chemical remedies and three are in favour of them. Those against chemistry present views similar to those held by the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, while those in favour hold an opinion closer to Renaudot's. Therefore, the balance slightly shifts in Renaudot's favour in this specific debate. Yet in discussions of other topics that were just as contested in the first half of the seventeenth century, no such balance was attained.

The debate concerning "De la saignée",[346] for example, sees most of the *conférenciers* argue in favour of bloodletting. They proclaim themselves sympathetic to the therapy so highly acclaimed by Patin and his *confrères*. The "sainte et salutaire saignée",[347] as Patin calls it, was not as appreciated by early proponents of chem-

341 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 102.
342 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, pp. 103–104.
343 See Neuburger 1906–1911, vol. 1, p. 396.
344 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 106.
345 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 107.I, p. 105.
346 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 105.I, pp. 65–72.
347 Lettre à Spon du 29 avril 1644, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 330.

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istry like Guy de La Brosse. The latter was the founder of the Parisian *jardin des plantes*, where the first official courses in chemistry in France were taught.[348] De La Brosse, in all probability a physician by profession as well,[349] called bloodletting "le remède des pédants sanguinaires".[350] According to Patin, de La Brosse would have preferred to die rather than suffer venesection.[351] Even if Patin probably exaggerates, this example illustrates the level of antipathy at play in the question of bloodletting. Riolan *fils* asserts that bloodletting was the central point of critique put forward by the faculty's adversaries.[352]

Despite this, Renaudot does not seem to influence (or to edit) the debate to give more emphasis to the opinions of the Chemists. All speakers debating here are convinced that bloodletting is beneficial to patients; only two present certain limitations. The first speaker vehemently refutes all those against the practice.[353] The second is certain that bloodletting helps when an illness is causing a superabundance of blood, but that it should also be used in the treatment of illnesses provoking a lack of it.[354] He then specifies which vein to open in the case of which (humoral) disturbance.[355] The third speaker presents some reservations, yet only in the case of specific illnesses. In general, venesection receives his praise.[356] According to the fourth, bloodletting is beneficial to illnesses of the blood, yet it is important to adapt the frequency and extent of the *saignée* to factors such as the nature of the illness, the forces of the patient, their age, and so on.[357] Ultimately, no speaker fundamentally criticises the practice. This proves that Renaudot did not shy away from printing opinions totally in line with the methods of the Parisian faculty.

All in all, both the question of the *saignée* and the *Conférence* on chemical remedies exemplify that a true *liberté de raisonnement* reigned at the Bureau d'Adresse. Not only did Renaudot print the opinions which pleased him personally, he also gave space to those in disagreement with him. While the Parisian Faculty of Med-

348 See Howard 1978, p. 308.
349 See ibid., p. 302.
350 Lettre à Belin *père* du 4 septembre 1641, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 82.
351 See the Lettre à Belin *père* du 4 septembre 1641, in ibid., p. 82.
352 "Ces ignorans & calomniateurs, qui nous reprochent la trop grande saignée, qui est la pierre d'achopement de nos Adversaires […]" (Riolan 1651, p. 242). As Brockliss has pointed out, it is evident that "the faculty's therapeutic identity was closely bound up with the frequent use of the therapy" (Brockliss 2002, p. 124).
353 "[…] Avicenne & tous ses sectateurs ennemis de la saignée sont ridicules […]" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 105.I, p. 66).
354 "[…] il [i.e., le sang] doit estre promptement évacué du corps, non seulement dans la plénitude où la nature ne demande qu'à estre déchargée; mais aussi dans la dépravation du sang par le meslange des autres humeurs corrompus […]" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 105.I, p. 68).
355 Vol. 3, *Conférence* 105.I, pp. 68–69.
356 "Le 3. dist, que la saignée est le plus grand des remedes; […] Mais elle me semble impertinente & inutile à la cacochymie sans repletion, laquelle demande des purgatifs pour purifier la masse sanguinaire & non ce remede sanglant" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 105.I, pp. 69–70).
357 "Le 4. dist, Que la saignée est utile en tout vice du sang […] Toutesfois avec précaution qu'il faut avoir égard à la maladie, aux forces du malade, au temperament, à l'aage, sexe, air, coustume & nature d'un chacun" (Vol. 3, *Conférence* 105.I, p. 71).

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icine tried to smother anyone they deemed guilty of chemical heresy, all kinds of opinions could be expressed at the bureau. Certainly, Renaudot had the means to be generous. As long as Richelieu lived, the faculty could do him no harm. Yet his opposition to the faculty would ultimately prove to be his downfall, as I outline in the next part of the chapter.

7.3.3 The Rise, Fall, and Afterlife of Renaudot's Medical Endeavours

Renaudot not only disagreed with the Parisian physicians on an intellectual level – he also practised according to his opposing principles. He prescribed and even produced chemical medications in order to dispense them in Paris. Renaudot's views on the 'vulgarisation' of medicine, as exemplified by his *La presence des absens* (1642), presented another point of discord with the faculty, whose physicians were eager to maintain their sovereignty of interpretation over medical questions. With the medical *Conférences* and his teaching hospital project, Renaudot decidedly endangered the Parisian faculty's hegemony in medical matters. In the end, the question of chemical remedies and anything connected with them was simultaneously a question of power.

As we know, after the death of Renaudot's patrons, the faculty no longer had to tolerate Renaudot's attacks on their authority. They embroiled the *gazetier* in a lawsuit that he, deprived of Louis XIII's and Richelieu's support, ultimately lost in 1644. Subsequently, Renaudot was prohibited from practising medicine in the French capital ever again.

What a triumph for Patin and the orthodox Galenists! Yet chemical medicine, after all, would get the better of them. The *querelle de l'antimoine,* raging for many decades, was finally decided in antimony's favour in 1666. Renaudot would not live to see this, but his son Eusèbe, long maltreated by the faculty because of his father, found himself on the winning side. In the following years, the Parisian faculty, which had fought so hard against chemistry, had to accept it as a part of the curriculum.

To provide medical treatment to the poor, Renaudot assembled a number of physicians from provincial towns – notably from Montpellier – around him. Concerning their identity, Reveillé-Parise writes in one of his comments to Patin's letters: "il s'associa plusieurs docteurs de la Faculté de Montpellier ou d'autres universités provinciales."[358] Every Tuesday, these doctors spent half a day running the *consultations charitables*, which took place in the *grande salle* of the Bureau d'Adresse. There they received all the sick who came to see them.[359] Renaudot claims that the number of those in need was so great that the physicians often had to extend their examinations to other days of the week.[360]

358 Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 201, comm. Reveillé-Parise. See also Riolan 1651, fol. [a iij^{v}].
359 See Renaudot, *Consultations charitables* 1640, p. 4.
360 See ibid.

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Overall, the *consultations charitables* posed a threefold problem for the Parisian faculty. First, the faculty was of course against the prescription of chemical remedies as dispensed at the Bureau d'Adresse. Secondly, the physicians assembled there wrote their prescriptions in Latin, as Renaudot explains in his *Consultations charitables pour les malades* (1640).[361] This practice was strictly opposed by the faculty, which addressed apothecaries and surgeons only in French.[362] The faculty's goal was to prevent them from charging the population for unnecessary and overly expensive (and in their eyes, ineffective) preparations.[363] In terms of its stance on Latin, Renaudot and his associates were, in the faculty's eyes, inappropriately designating the two other medical professions as the physicians' equals. The Parisian faculty, eager to keep surgeons and apothecaries in their place – that is to say, under the control of the physicians – was not amused.[364] Thirdly and most importantly, Renaudot's privileges heavily undermined the faculty's rights. They allowed him to do whatever he deemed necessary for the relief of the poor.[365] Effectively, he could bring in as many doctors as he wanted from out of town, who otherwise were forbidden from practising in Paris.[366] Yet at the Bureau d'Adresse, they were out of the faculty's reach.[367]

What the faculty faced with Renaudot and his associates was a corporation of doctors that actively prescribed chemical medicaments in their immediate vicinity. Moreover, Renaudot, from 1640 onwards, was even able to produce chemical remedies himself. He was allowed to install *fourneaux* at the Bureau d'Adresse, as the "Lettres patentes du Roy, en faveur des pauvres. & particulierement des malades" (1640) show.[368] According to the *lettres patentes*, Renaudot could conduct

361 See ibid., p. 10.

362 See Riolan 1641, pp. 31–32. See also Solomon 1972, p. 173.

363 In one of his letters, Patin tells the younger Belin: "Si vos apothicaires demandent que vous ne fassiez point d'ordonnances qu'en latin, c'est qu'ils en savent bien la conséquence; c'est le vrai moyen de les mettre à la raison et c'est la raison que les familles soient soulagées, et les malades délivrés de cette dépense effroyable et inutile" (Lettre à Belin *fils* du 8 octobre 1655, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 214).

364 See Solomon 1972, p. 173. Patin's letters make abundantly clear what the Parisian faculty thought about surgeons and apothecaries. In a letter to Spon, he wrote: "Je vous assure que nous haïssons à Paris les chirurgiens à l'égard et peut être plus que les apothicaires […]" (Lettre à Spon du 21 avril 1655, in Patin 1846, vol. 2, p. 170). The faculty was in control of the guilds of apothecaries and surgeons. For example, they presided over their examination processes, and were eager to keep it that way (see ibid., p. 172).

365 See the "Arrêt du Conseil du Roi accordant à Théophraste Renaudot la charge de commissaire général des pauvres, tant malades que valides et mendiants, du royaume", from 3 February 1618, in Jubert 2005, p. 32.

366 Effectively, Riolan, in the *Advertissement a Theophraste Renaudot* (1641), calls the *consultations charitables* "une usurpation & attentat contre nostre Eschole" (p. 50). In the same text, he accuses Renaudot of wanting to establish a new medical school in Paris: "Vous pretendez, en establissant vos assemblées & consultations de Medecins charitables ramassez dans vostre Bureau, d'en former insensiblement une Eschole de Montpellier pour contrequarrer la nostre […]" (p. 34).

367 See Solomon 1972, p, 179.

368 The "Lettres patentes" are reprinted in Renaudot, *Consultations charitables* 1640, pp. 11–12.

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all kinds of chemical operations at the Bureau d'Adresse. Remedies prepared in the manner of the Chemists proved highly useful in the healing of illnesses when administered according to the principles of medicine, the *lettres* claim.[369] Effectively, this decree equalled an embrace of chemical preparations by the king's officials, which, one can presume, further angered the Parisian faculty. Moreover, while the faculty annually inspected the apothecaries' shops,[370] the Bureau d'Adresse and its chemical preparations did not fall under their jurisdiction.

Renaudot clearly also ate away at the all-powerful position of the Parisian physicians with another one of his projects. In 1642, he published a small book: *La presence des absens*. It aimed to facilitate access to medical care for those living outside urban agglomerations and therefore far away from companies of physicians.[371] Renaudot and the physicians of the *consultations charitables* designed the book so that whoever could read, even simple "femmelettes", would be able to fill out the questionnaire it contained. No knowledge of medical matters was necessary.[372]

The book takes the following structure. It first presents various possible answers to questions providing general information about the patient. Later, the book's user can select details about their specific affliction that would allow a physician to determine how to treat them. Concerning the constitution of the patient, *La presence des absens* asks, for example: "Quant à sa constitution, elle est robuste, médiocre ou foible. Est de stature fort haute, moyenne, petite ou fort petite."[373] As can be seen, the person completing the questionnaire simply had to underline what was applicable – no writing skills were required.[374] First, there is a general part concerning both men and women, followed by two sections which apply only to each sex. The volume finishes with a section concerning surgical matters. Furthermore, the book provides images to help accurately identify painful parts of the body.[375]

369 "Et d'autant qu'une partie des experiences qui s'y font sont des remédes tirez des plantes animaux & mineraux: pour la préparation desquels il est obligé de tenir toutes sortes de fourneaux, alambics, matras, recipiens & autres vaisseaux & instrumens de Chymie ou Spagyrie, pour extraire par les operations dudit art toutes sortes d'eaux, huiles, sels, magistréres, extraits, quintessences, chaux, taintures, regules, précipitez, et generalement tous les outres effets dudit art de Chymie, lesquels se trouvent fort utile à la guérison des maladies, lors qu'ils sont methodiquement administrez selon les préceptes de la Medecine […]" (ibid.).

370 See Solomon 1972, p. 169.

371 "Par ce moyen plusieurs pauvres malades ne seront plus destitüez de conseil, comme ils sont, dans la campagne & dans les lieux écartez des grandes villes […]" (Renaudot, *La presence des absens* 1642, p. 6).

372 *La presence des absens* was formulated in a manner "[…] tellement familier, que non seulement l'Apothiquaire & le Chirurgien des champs, & celuy qui aura la moindre connoissance des maladies & de leurs accidens, mais jusques aux simples femmelettes & enfans, moyennant qu'ils sçachent lire […]" could use it (ibid., p. 5).

373 Ibid., p. 18.

374 See ibid., p. 15.

375 Ibid., p. 16.

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As the medical historian Alexander Wenger points out, we unfortunately know almost nothing about the actual usage of *La presence des absens*.[376] According to Wenger, a central problem was that the questionnaire had to be dispatched to patients far away, who then had to send it back to Paris. After that, the physician's evaluation had to reach the patient by post again. The postal service at the time hardly allowed these exchanges to take place in a time frame adequate for the treatment of illnesses.[377] Moreover, it was expensive: poor people living in rural areas would not have been able to pay for the postage.[378] *La presence des absens* therefore most probably could not perform the function for which it had been primarily designed.

Besides providing access to medical care to the poor and far away, *La presence des absens* also had another objective. It provided a grid for medical observation and could guide physicians' perception. Additionally, as the medical doctors using it were meant to write down their judgement at the end of the questionnaire, it could make their diagnoses trackable and controllable.[379] The fear of lost reputation would render physicians more careful in their pronouncements, Renaudot was sure.[380] The *méthode* contained in *La presence des absens* could be a means to separate the good from the bad physicians, he hoped.[381] The sociologist Justin Stagl explains that it is the first actual questionnaire (not merely a list of open questions) he knows of.[382]

Renaudot's questionnaire could also prove useful to the physicians in another way. *La presence des absens* provided them with the possibility to track the evolution of a particular case over a period of time. Like astronomers, they could every

376 See Wenger 2009, p. 249.

377 See ibid.

378 See ibid.

379 "Les Médecins mesmes absens, desquels on demande l'avis par cette méthode, seront necessitez de se rendre plus exacts à la connoissance & discernement des maladies, & en la description de leurs remédes: pource que mettans, comme ils seront tenus de faire, leur avis au pied du Livret, où le malade & la maladie seront naïvement dépeins & décrits; les defaux de leurs ordonnances, s'il y en avoit, seroient bien plus remarquables" (Renaudot, *La presence des absens* 1642, p. 8).

380 See ibid., pp. 14–15.

381 "De sorte que cet ouvrage sera desormais une pierre de touche pour discerner les bons Médecins d'avec les autres: ceux-cy n'apprehendans rien tant sinon que l'on s'en serve, & de la méthode qui y est contenuë: pource qu'on pourra aisément connoistre par ce moyen les fautes qu'ils auront commises au traitement des maladies, & mesme juger par là s'ils les auront bien connuës […]" (ibid., p. 14).

382 Stagl 2002, p. 178. In the context of his study of eighteenth-century *historiae morbi*, Carsten Zelle explains that "[t]he patient's body, bodily functions as well as his or her mental and social condition are surveyed on the basis of a catalogue of questions that guide and condition the physician's attention. This guidance of attention refers to the exact empirical physical inventory and the precise documentation of the examination results stand in a close, reciprocal constitutional relationship with each other" (Zelle 2013, p. 468). Much earlier, *La presence des absens* could be used in a similar manner, guiding the attention of the physician using it as a grid for his observation.

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now and then take notes of a patient's condition: "[…] ils pourront arrester en chacun de ces livres l'estat présent de leur malade, à l'imitation des Astrologues qui arrestent de temps en temps l'estat du Ciel sur le papier […]."[383] That Renaudot explicitly points out the parallels to astronomers' *observationes* underlines his interest in the theoretical developments in the field of medicine, where authored, detailed observations became *de rigueur* in the course of the sixteenth century.[384]

Conducting *observationes* (even though Renaudot did not call them such) by way of the grid provided by *La presence des absens* would solve an urgent problem still faced in the seventeenth century: the considerable lack of uniformity among *observationes*.[385] The case studies created through filling out the grid would produce homogeneity, making it easier for physicians to compare medical cases. Unfortunately, we do not know if they ever used the questionnaire in this manner. In any case, Parisian physicians such as Patin emphatically denied that it had any value: "La Présence des absents ne vaut pas le diable, et encore moins que son auteur même; il ne vaut pas le papier bleu dont il est couvert: c'est un petit in-octavo que le bureau d'adresse vend cinq sols; dès que vous l'aurez vu, vous en serez dégouté."[386]

In the end, the last straw for the faculty was not *La presence des absens* but Renaudot's plan to open a new teaching hospital. It appears that the medical *conférences* were so well frequented by students of medicine that Renaudot wanted to specifically cater to their education in a separate context.[387] In 1642, he submitted plans to build a *maison des consultations charitables* in the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine, envisioning it as a hospital where he could teach students and treat patients at the same time. This meant that the moment the king ratified his plans,[388] Renaudot had "all of the elements necessary to establish a rival faculty."[389]

The members of the Parisian faculty did everything they could to prevent Renaudot from going through with his plans. They wrote pamphlets against the *gazetier* in which they denied his medical qualifications,[390] and they mounted a legal proceeding against him.[391] Yet it was only after the king's death in 1643 that the *lieutenant civil* put a halt to the plans for the *maison des consultations charitables*.[392]

383 Renaudot, *La presence des absens* 1642, p. 9.
384 See Pomata 2011, pp. 57–58.
385 See Daston 2011, pp. 88–89.
386 Lettre à Spon du 2 mars 1643, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 276.
387 See Coquillard 2013, p. 879.
388 See Solomon 1972, p. 174. See also the "Avis donné par les trésoriers de la France au sujet de la construction à Paris, par Théophraste Renaudot, d'un hôtel des Consultations charitables sur les terrains de la contrescarpe du boulevard de la Porte Saint-Antoine" from 24 October 1642, which also provides a plan of the site, in Jubert 2005, p. 304.
389 Solomon 1973, p. 175.
390 See Riolan's *Advertissement a Théophraste Renaudot* (1641).
391 See Coquillard 2013, p. 879.
392 See the "Sentence du lieutenant civil au Châtelet de Paris portant défense à Théophaste Renaudot et aux autres médecins de la faculté de Montpellier d'exercer ci-après la médecine ni de faire aucune conférence, consultation ou assemblée dans le bureau d'adresse dud. Renaudot ou autres lieux de la ville de Paris et de ses faubourgs, ni de traiter ou panser aucun

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From that moment on, it only went downhill for Renaudot. Anne of Austria, the regent, was not sympathetic to Richelieu's *créature*; the new principal minister, Cardinal Mazarin, was not as invested in Renaudot as Richelieu had been.[393] Ultimately, the faculty was granted a parliamentarian *arrêt* which ordered Renaudot to close down all of his endeavours, except the Bureau d'Adresse in its original dimension as a clearing house and the *Gazette*, which he continued to publish.[394]

Patin triumphed. He recalls the end of the lawsuit in many of his letters and, in 1644, he wrote the following to his friend and colleague Belin (*père*):

> Un grand et solennel arrêt de la cour donné à l'audience publique, après les plaidoyers de cinq avocats, et quatre jours de plaidoieries, a renversé toutes les prétentions du gazetier, et a aussi abattu son bureau où il exerçoit une juiverie horrible, et mille autres infâmes métiers.[395]

Patin even composed a satirical poem on Renaudot's defeat, even though he did not admit in his letters that he had authored it: "Quand le grand Pan quittera l'écarlate, / Pour Zopire venu du côté d'Aquilon / Pensera vaincre en bataille Esculape; / Mais il sera navré par le Talon."[396] As Emery points out, the poem has to be interpreted in the following manner: the great Pan, exited, is Richelieu, who can no longer protect his *créature*. Renaudot is represented by Zopire, a mutilated character from Virgil (assumedly because of Renaudot's *nez camus*, which had been deformed by syphilis and was a frequent target of Patin's mockery). Bataille was the name of Renaudot's advocate in battle with the faculty, personified by Aesculapius, the Roman god of medicine. But Renaudot's scheme to overthrow the faculty did not succeed; Omer Talon, the *avocat général*, saw to it.[397]

While the faculty managed to defeat Renaudot in court, their quarrels with the physicians from Montpellier were not yet over. Renaudot's lost lawsuit subsequently led to a conflict between the Parisian physicians and the Montpellier

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malade sous quelque prétexte que ce soit, à peine de 500 livres d'amende" from 9 December 1643 in Jubert 2005, p. 369.

393 See Solomon 1972, p. 198.

394 See the "Arrêt du Parlement interdisant à Théophraste Renaudot d'exercer la médecine et de faire aucune conférence, consultation ni assemblée dans son Bureau d'adresse, ni d'y vendre ou prêter sur gages" from 1 March 1644 in Jubert 2005, p. 372. See also the "Lettres patentes de Louis XIV portant confirmation à Théophraste Renaudot et, après lui, à son second fils, Théophraste, sieur de Boissemé, conseiller en la Cour des Monnaies, du privilège exclusif de composer, imprimer, vendre et débiter les gazettes, les nouvelles tant ordinaires qu'extraordinaires, les relations et autres impressions du Bureau d'adresse" from March 1644 in ibid., p. 404. For a more detailed account of the various pamphlets published by the faculty and by Renaudot, as well as for the stages of the legal proceedings between them, see the sixth chapter of Howard M. Solomon's *Public Welfare, Science, and Propaganda in Seventeenth Century France* (1972), pp. 162–200.

395 Lettre à Belin *père* du 14 mars 1655, in Patin 1646, vol. 1, p. 111. See also Lettre à Spon du 8 mars 1644, in ibid., p. 322.

396 Ibid., p. 324.

397 See Emery 1888, p. 81.

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faculty that would last ten years. The two faculties fought over which of them was the more ancient institution and over their right to practise medicine in all the realm.[398] While the physicians from Montpellier accused the Parisians of being overly conservative, the Parisians castigated their counterparts for their use of chemical remedies.[399]

On a broader level, the debate about chemical medicine had already raged for quite a while in the form of the *querelle de l'antimoine*. Of all the chemical medicaments, antimony was the "most debatable substance".[400] In the periodic table, it is the fifty-first element, with the symbol "Sb", from the Latin *stibium*. While some scholars voiced the assumption that the French *antimoine* meant *anti-moine* (anti-monk), the chemist Claire Hansell explains that the French name more likely comes from the Greek ἀντίμόνος (antimonos), "meaning against aloneness, reflecting the fact that element 51 is rarely found naturally in its metallic state."[401] Antimony indeed is not a true metal but a metalloid.[402] In the Middle Ages, it was administered in the form of little pellets to induce purgative effects.[403] Later, it was mostly given to patients in the form of *vin émétique*, wine that had sat for a time in an antimony cup[404] or that had been infused with an antimony preparation.[405]

In France, the *querelle* surrounding it had already begun in the sixteenth century, with an exchange between the physicians Loys de Launay and Jacques Grévin.[406] In his *De la faculté & vertu admirable de l'antimoine* (1564), the former presents the opinion that antimony is not a poison but an admirable cure for various kinds of illnesses. The latter refutes this opinion in his *Discours sur les vertus & facultez de l'antimoine* (1566), where he insists on the fact that antimony is a toxic and highly dangerous substance.[407]

Most interestingly, their debate centred on the question of experience. Launay stresses that antimony worked not because of its primary or secondary qualities but according to its total substance. Such effects could be encountered only through experience: "Laquelle [i.e., la similitude de toute leur substance], le plus souvent, ne se congnoist que par experience, & dont la raison ne peut estre baillee."[408] Debating the case of specific remedies, the *conférenciers* would later make use of the

398 See Brockliss and Jones 1997, p. 332.
399 See ibid.
400 Debus 1991, p. 14.
401 Hansell 2015, p. 88.
402 Ibid.
403 As Hansell explains, the pellets left the body whole and could be reused. See ibid.
404 See ibid.
405 "Le vin émétique pour l'ordinaire n'est ici que l'infusion du *crocus metallorum* dans du vin blanc. Pour le gobelet d'antimoine, il y a plus de vingt ans que j'en ai vu ici, et même feu M. Guenaut en avoit un, dont il se servoit quelquefois aussi […]" (Lettre à Spon du 8 janvier 1650, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 514). The *crocus metallorum* is obtained when one mixes equal parts of pulverised antimony and nitre. See Macquer 1758, vol. 2, p. 15.
406 See Joly 1997, p. 301.
407 For an analysis of both treatises, see ibid., pp. 305–314.
408 Launay 1564, fol. [e iiij]^{r}.

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exact same argument.[409] To fortify his claims, Launay then presents a number of particular experiences with antimony.[410] Some he took from the writings of other physicians,[411] whereas others resulted from his own treatment of patients:[412] "[…] j'en diray ce que j'en ay experimente […]."[413] According to Launay, all these experiences and experiments prove that antimony is salutary and not at all detrimental to the body.[414]

Concerning the drug's internal use, Grevin doubted that Launay's experiences were enough to confirm its harmlessness.[415] As Grevin points out, experience, according to Aristotle and Galen, had to be based on a number of occurrences of the same phenomenon, which were then committed to memory. It was then possible to transform this experience into the general rules of the arts and sciences.

> Experience, selon Aristote et Galien, est une memoire des choses lesquelles sont apparues souventesfois en une mesme manière, tellement que plusieurs memoires d'une mesme chose engendrent une experience, sur laquelle on puisse former quelques reigles propres à bastir un art & une science, laquelle comprenne generalement ce que l'experience a trouvé en particulier.[416]

As this passage shows, Grevin strictly adheres to Aristotle's four-step programme, which leads from sense perception via memory and experience to the principles of the arts and sciences.[417] In this logic, the fact that physicians such as Launay had conducted singular successful experiments with antimony did not automatically mean that it was harmless for all patients. Insufficient cases had been studied to generate experience of the general Aristotelian kind, from which universal rules could be derived.[418] Moreover, while Launay and other physicians of his ilk were content with the argument that some substances worked according to their total substance or because of occult qualities, this reasoning was not sufficient for Gre-

409 See vol. 1, *Conférence* 49.I, p. 815.
410 See Launay 1564, fol. [f iij]^{v}.
411 Grevin points out that the first example Launay presents is taken from the writings of Pietro Andrea Mattioli. See Grevin 1564, fol. 27^{r}. Like Albertus Magnus, who uses the expression "expertus sum" when in fact referencing material he took from the writings of Arnoldus Saxo (on this matter, see Draelants 2011, pp. 100–110), Launay does not seem to differentiate between personally acquired empirical evidence and empirical evidence taken from books.
412 See Launay 1564, fol. [f iiij]^{r}.
413 Ibid., fol. [g i]^{v}.
414 "Or puis qu'il est ainsi, que par tant d'experiences on a trouvé l'Antimoine si salutaire: & sans faire nuisance au corps: comme peuvent tesmoigner ceux, qui en ont pris […]" (ibid., fol. g ij^{r}).
415 See Debus 1991, p. 25.
416 Grevin 1566, fol. 27^{v}.
417 See pp. 188–190 of the present volume.
418 Concerning Launay's cases of successful treatment with antimony, Grevin writes: "Encores n'est ce pas assez: car il faut que cette experience soit joincte avec la raison, pous que ce sont les deux instrumens, par lesquelles les arts & les remedes sont inventez […]" (Grevin 1566, fol. 28^{r}).

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vin. After all, what was at stake in the experiments with antimony was a person's life, he stresses in his text.[419]

Grevin's argument was taken up by the Parisian Faculty of Medicine,[420] which in 1566 banned the use of antimony in medical treatment.[421] But this, obviously, was not the end of the *querelle*. Several physicians in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century variously argued for and against the drug and published several pamphlets.[422]

What is more, some Parisian physicians prescribed antimony despite its prohibition, as Patin's letters show. The (ab)use of antimony in Paris led to Patin, by the early 1650s, developing a veritable obsession with the substance. He wrote about it in almost every single one of his (known) communications, and sometimes mentioned various distinct cases of antimony usage in the same letter.[423] Patin even kept a list where he noted all the people who had died of antimony (or so he was sure), which he called the *Martirologe de l'Antimoine*.[424]

Of all the chemical remedies, antimony was, for Patin, the worst of them. Accordingly, he proclaimed: "Les chimistes, les apothicaires et les charlatans sont les démons du genre humain en leur sorte, principalement quand ils se servent d'antimoine."[425] It appears that in the early decades of the seventeenth century, those charlatans using antimony were, primarily, the court physicians,[426] who were safe from the faculty's fervent prosecution. Yet in the 1650s, the fronts began to change. Guénaut, a physician from the Parisian faculty, openly prescribed antimony, which prompted Patin to bestow him with the name "grand empoisonneur chimique".[427] It appears that Guénaut practised with Renaudot's son Eusèbe, who, after many years of struggle, had finally received his doctorate from the faculty.[428] Punishing the children for the 'crimes' of their father, the faculty had long refused

419 See ibid., fol. 28^{v}.

420 See Debus 1991, p. 25.

421 See Patin 1846, vol. 1, p. 191, comm. Reveillé-Parise.

422 Debus provides an overview over the various stages of the debate in the seventeenth century. See Debus 1991, pp. 95–98.

423 In a letter to Spon from 30 December 1653, for example, he mentions antimony on three separate occasions. First, he discloses that the prince of Condé had taken it (p. 95). A few pages later, he speaks about Eusèbe Renaudot's *Antimoine triomphant* (p. 98). Finally, he mentions the case of a woman who, according to Patin, had died because of antimony (p. 99). See Patin 1846, vol. 2, pp. 95–99. There is also another letter to Spon, from 9 April 1655, where Patin mentions antimony and "les antimoniaux" on four separate occasions. See Patin 1846, vol. 2, pp. 163–168.

424 See Bayle 1684, p. 110.

425 Lettre à Spon du 9 juin 1654, in Patin 1846, vol. 2, p. 139.

426 See, for example, the Lettre à Spon du 9 décembre 1650, in ibid., p. 63, or the Lettre à Falconet du 5 juillet 1652, in ibid., vol. 3, p. 6.

427 Lettre à Belin *fils* du 14 janvier 1651, in ibid., vol. 1, p. 175.

428 "Tout le monde déteste ici l'antimoine, avec raison; et néantmoins Guénaut et le gazetier [i.e., Eusèbe Renaudot] en ont donnée depuis six jours à un nommé du Gué de Bagnols […] qui mourut le jour même" (Lettre à Belin *fils* du 19 mai 1657, in ibid., p. 226).

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to let Renaudot's children Isaac and Eusèbe graduate.[429] To receive their *grade de bacheliers*, they had to publicly swear that they would have nothing to do with the Bureau d'Adresse or their father's endeavours.[430] As it turns out, this oath could not keep Eusèbe from chemical medicine.

Others were to follow. In 1652, sixty-one members of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine signed a document asserting that antimony should be accepted in medical treatment.[431] The physicians declared that "[…] les qualités de l'Antimoine ayans esté par un long usage & une experiance continuelle, reconnuës de nous estre grandement convenable à la guerison de quantité de maladies, nous declarons que ce remede bien loing d'estre chargé d'aucune malignité veneneuse […]."[432] According to these doctors, the experiments made with antimony, which Grevin had not yet accepted, had become valid experience over the years. The anti-chemical faction gathered around Patin was livid.[433]

One year later, Eusèbe Renaudot published *L'antimoine justifie et l'antimoine triomphant* (1653), dedicated to Guénaut, where he maintained that antimony was not poisonous but a very useful medicament and defended those using antimony against the attacks of its opponents. He condemned those who were too attached to ancient routines to use antimony. In many cases, the substance would be able to save their patients:

429 As Patin complacently states, even Richelieu could not force the Parisian faculty to award Renaudot's sons with the doctoral bonnet: "Le plus puissant homme qui ait été depuis cent ans en Europe, sans avoir la tête couronnée, a été le cardinal Richelieu […] et néantmoins il n'a pu faire recevoir dans notre compagnie les deux fils du gazetier qui étoient licenciés, et qui ne seront de longtemps docteurs" (Lettre à Spon du 6 décembre 1644, in ibid., p. 347). For an overview of the various stages of the conflict between the faculty and the Renaudots, see Solomon 1972, pp. 178–185.

430 Emery reproduces the text of the document Isaac and Eusèbe had to sign: see Emery 1888, pp. 122–123. Jubert also only provides a copy; according to him, the original document was lost: "[…] Maistres Isaac et Eusebe Renaudot freres, […] ont promis à Messieurs de la faculté de medecine de cette ville de Paris qui l'ont ainsi requis d'eux qu'au cas qu'ils avent l'honneur d'estre reçus en la qualité de bacheliers de lad. faculté et autres degrés d'icelle, comme ils l'espèrent et les en supplient, ils n'exerceront point aucune des fonctions du Bureau d'adresse, ains s'adonneront entierement à l'exercice de la medecine" ("Promesse faite devant notaires par Isaac et Eusèbe Renaudot de n'exercer aucune des fonctions du Bureau d'adresse, au cas où la faculté de Médecine de Paris les recevrait au grade de bacheliers et aux degrés ultérieurs" from 21 March 1638 in Jubert 2005, p. 216).

431 See Debus 1991, p. 97.

432 "Le Sentiment des Docteurs Regents en Medecine de la Faculté de Paris touchant l'Antimoine", in E. Renaudot 1653, n.p.

433 Concerning the document, Patin writes: "[…] tous ces maîtres signeurs sont le fretin et la racaille de l'école […]. On travaille à répondre au gazetier [i.e., Eusèbe Renaudot], combien que tout son livre soit un si misérable galimatias, et qu'il ne mérite aucune réfutation. […] J'entends parler de distiques en vers latins contre les mêmes signeurs, tandis que le bonhomme M. Riolan écrit tout de bon contre cette gazette antimoniale et contre M. Guénaut, et même encore quelques autres qui sont du bon parti" (Lettre à Spon du 5 décembre 1653, in Patin 1846, vol. 2, p. 92).

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> […] ceux qui s'attachent opiniastrément à la vieille routine […] aiment mieux y laisser tomber leurs malades avec les formes anciennes, que se defaisants de leurs fausses maximes, employer ces grands & puissans secours que l'experience & la raison nous ont depuis quelques années fait decouvrir dans ce fameux remede de l'Antimoine.[434]

As he points out, not only experience but also reason confirms that antimony is a useful remedy. Unsurprisingly, the orthodox Galenists were not convinced. Eusèbe Renaudot's text was refuted in a number of replies from the faculty's conservative members.[435] The quarrel raged on.

It would, though, finally come to an end trough the miraculous cure of a particular patient. In 1658, the young King Louis XIV fell ill in Flanders. As other treatments did not provide relief, he was given antimony by Sassoy, a physician from the area, and was promptly healed.[436] Patin was convinced that Louis XIV had recovered *in spite of* the use of antimony, and not *because of* it. What was really responsible for this miraculous cure, he was sure, was *la divine saignée*, as well as *cassia* and *séné*, two of the (few) drugs approved by Patin. It certainly was not the despicable chemical, Patin maintained.[437] However, many others were sure that antimony had healed the king and heaped praise on the substance.[438] By now, most Parisian physicians were convinced of the drug's usefulness. Consequently, the Parliament of Paris and Parisian Faculty of Medicine decreed antimony safe to use in 1666.[439]

Renaudot *père* did not live to see the triumph of the Chemists. He died in 1653 and left the *Gazette* to his eldest son, Théophaste.[440] Yet his children – and particularly Eusèbe – could rejoice. Was 1666 finally the year that medical progress triumphed against the faculty's orthodoxy, as the Chemists' narrative leads us to believe? Most certainly not. Antimony is indeed highly poisonous when ingested or inhaled and it is also carcinogenic.[441] Nevertheless, the debate surrounding it helped to make chemistry a vital part of the study of medicine. In the course of the seventeenth century, many of the medical faculties of European universities

434 E. Renaudot 1653, p. 14.
435 See the Lettre à Spon du 30 décembre 1655, in Patin 1846, vol. 2, p. 98. See also the Lettre à Spon du 1 mai 1654, in ibid., p. 130, and the Lettre à Spon du 26 février 1656, in ibid., p. 237.
436 See Debus 1991, p. 98.
437 "[…] neuf saignées l'en [i.e., le roi] ont délivré, et n'a pris que le tiers d'une once de vin émétique dans un grand verre de casse et de séné […]" (Lettre à Belin *fils* du 24 août 1658, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, pp. 235–236).
438 See Debus 1991, p. 98.
439 See ibid.
440 See the Lettre à Belin *père* du 12 novembre 1653, in Patin 1846, vol. 1, pp. 201–202. See also Solomon 1972, p. 216.
441 See Hansell 2015, p. 88.

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installed chairs in chemistry.[442] The Paracelsians' cosmological ideas, which had been so closely associated with chemistry, however, were largely dismissed.[443]

In contrast to the other topics discussed at the Bureau d'Adresse, the medical debates were immediately connected to Renaudot's practice of medicine and to several medical projects he conducted in Paris. This becomes evident in the example of the conflict surrounding chemical remedies. While Renaudot and many physicians from Montpellier, as well as from other provincial faculties, were in favour of chemical medicine, most members of the Parisian faculty were completely against its use.

Despite this acrimonious opposition, Renaudot did not print only those opinions that accorded with his own in the medical *Conférences*. He equally rendered the contributions of those siding with the faculty. This practice can be seen in the *conférenciers*' debates about chemical remedies as well as in the discussion concerning bloodletting. The case of the medical *Conférences* definitely shows that a real freedom of expression reigned at the Bureau d'Adresse.[444]

As long as Richelieu and Louis XIII lived, Renaudot of course had nothing to fear from contrary opinions. His endeavours were favoured and protected by those in power, and the Parisian faculty's attacks could not harm him. He was able to conduct the *consultations charitables*, where he treated the poor alongside a number of physicians from Montpellier and other provincial universities. Because these professionals were attached to the Bureau d'Adresse, they could practise in the French capital, which the Parisian faculty otherwise would have prevented. Renaudot later even installed furnaces that allowed him to produce his own chemical remedies. Other projects, like *La presence des absens*, attest to his interest in the 'vulgarisation' of medicine but also show that he was eager to break the Parisian Faculty of Medicine's dominance over medical matters. His ultimate goal was to build a *maison des consultations charitables*, where he would have been able to both practise and teach medicine and thereby install a rival faculty in Paris. Because of the great danger Renaudot posed to them, the faculty did everything in its power to incapacitate him. After the deaths of his protectors, their plans proved successful. Renaudot was ordered to end most of the activities conducted at the Bureau d'Adresse, particularly his medical practice. Yet this was not the end of the debate around chemical remedies. The long-raging *querelle de l'antimoine*, in which Renaudot's son Eusèbe was involved, finally was decided in favour of the chemical in 1666.

442 Universities in the German lands were the first to do so. The first professor of (medical) chemistry took up his work in Marburg in 1609. Jena, Wittenberg, Helmstedt, Erfurt, Leipzig, and Halle were to follow. Leiden appointed a professor in 1669, Oxford and Cambridge in 1683, Louvain in 1685. Unsurprisingly, the Parisian faculty was not exactly at the forefront of this development. They installed a chair of chemical and Galenic pharmacy in 1698, but it was only in 1756 that they appointed a professor for theoretical and practical chemistry. Montpellier had a demonstrator in chemistry from 1673 onwards, whose position was later transformed into that of a professor. See Debus 1991, pp. 141–144.

443 See Debus 1990, p. 195.

444 Aside from theological and political issues, obviously. See chapter 3.

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Conclusion: L'étude, nettoyée de la poussière?

While today someone with pearls to sell (or, more likely, an outdated electronic gadget) can simply register their goods on an internet sales platform, disposing of possessions one no longer wants (or needs to liquidate) was much more difficult in seventeenth-century Europe. Likewise, today we can easily find all kinds of job adverts online, but it was much harder to find work in the Paris of the 1630s. The Bureau d'Adresse that Renaudot installed on the rue de la Calandre on the Île de la Cité was meant to resolve all these difficulties and genuinely responded to the needs of the population. Its value for the inhabitants of Paris also becomes clear through the great attention paid to Renaudot's concept by social reformers such as Samuel Hartlib. In addition to helping those at risk of poverty secure work, the Bureau d'Adresse soon also functioned as a pawnshop, a medical clinic, a chemical laboratory, an editorial office, a printing workshop, and an academy (of sorts).

With the help of his patrons, Renaudot soon yielded a considerable amount of power – so much so that the *gazetier* started to threaten the foundations of traditional societal organisation. Unsurprisingly, then, those whose privileges he injured were all too eager to position themselves against him. Renaudot, as it were, had many enemies. Chief among them were the physicians of the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, who did not agree with Renaudot's chemical medicine and (rightly) feared he wished to install a rival medical faculty in the French capital. While his inventions were imaginative, they certainly were not 'innocent', as Renaudot so often emphasised.[1]

Renaudot's most ambitious goal was arguably to free learning from the dust of Scholastic methods via the *conférences* – to *nettoyer l'étude de la poussière*. Renaudot and the *conférenciers* set forth to build an academy where questions could be debated in a polite manner, far removed from the quarrelsome habits of the universities and their disputations. In a disputation, the participants' objective was to overpower their opponents and to hold on to their argumentative position at all cost. The *conférenciers*, on the other hand, were instructed to graciously present their opinions and then take a step back, allowing the public to decide which of the divergent possibilities presented to them was the best one to follow.[2] At the bureau, no conclusion was offered to facilitate the public's task. Renaudot was proud of this enterprise and did not stop short of declaring that no other place in the realm had hitherto enabled knowledge to be negotiated in so polite a manner.[3]

1 See vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, pp. 3–4.
2 Vol. 1, "Avis au Lecteur", n.p.
3 See vol. 1, "Preface sur les conferences publiques", pp. 1–6, p. 2.

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At his Maison du Grand-Coq, where the Bureau d'Adresse was located, Renaudot also edited and printed an early French periodical newspaper, the *Gazette*. His own printing presses furthermore produced the *comptes rendus* of the *Conférences*, which were meant to reach even greater a public than the one able to attend the debate meetings in person. Together with the Bureau d'Adresse, these two activities show Renaudot to be a full-blown European 'intelligencer', concerned with circulating information and finding new ways to make knowledge accessible. Moreover, Renaudot provided medical consultations for the poor through the *consultations charitables*, and he also installed a *mont-de-piété* – a kind of pawnshop – at the Bureau d'Adresse.

This is the environment in which the *conférences* took place. But who actually participated in them? In contrast to other academies with fixed membership, the *conférences* were public events and apparently attracted large crowds. Yet it is difficult to assess who really went to the Bureau d'Adresse to debate, as the printed *Conférences* anonymise the names of the speakers. The *conférenciers* most probably belonged to a similar class of population as the members of other academies; that is, they were almost certainly educated urban professionals – physicians, lawyers, and the like.[4] Overall, the *conférenciers* were eager to distance themselves from the 'vulgar' as much as from the Schoolmen, their declared enemies, whom they characterised as disagreeable and pedantic. They rather identified as urban *honnêtes hommes*.

However, the *conférenciers*' methods of knowledge negotiation often were not as far removed from Scholasticism as they so eagerly proclaimed. Certainly, the *conférences* were conducted in the more accessible French and not in Latin. Their printed versions also possess a number of novel features, like the fact that they were printed immediately after their associated meetings and contain no conclusions. Yet the participants gloriously failed to adhere to another rule they had given themselves: that they should not excessively refer to authorities. Their answers are indeed, in many cases, a compilation of authoritative opinions. Concerning this point, the participants remained firmly inscribed in traditional modes of knowledge negotiation.

With my consideration of disputation, declamation, and dialogue, I explored three genres which potentially influenced the debate meetings at the Bureau d'Adresse. The *conférenciers* often approached questions in the manner of disputants: they scrupulously defined terms and differentiated between them, they sometimes refuted their opponents point by point, and they apparently had difficulties stating their own personal opinions. Even though the *conférences* theoretically allowed participants to say what they themselves thought,[5] most followed the opinions of authorities. While the *conférenciers* decidedly denied any intellectual debt to disputation, they eagerly embraced the influence of declamation. Like in

4 See Mazauric 1997, p. 95.

5 Vol. 2, "L'ouverture des conferences du bureau d'adresse", pp. 1–16, p. 14.

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declamation, they frequently provided answers in the mode of praise and blame, in the rhetorical *genus demonstrativum*. This practice was especially prevalent in the case of moral-philosophical questions, where the *conférenciers*'s arguments did not necessarily match their actual personal opinions, since a good orator should be able to argue either side of a question.[6] Like certain forms of open-ended dialogue, the printed *Conférences* provide a plurality of views that stand next to each other without the need for comment or conclusion. This openness was also respected regarding questions about which Renaudot's own views were known to the *conférenciers* and where answers had political implications, as in the case of certain medical questions.

But why do the debates possess no conclusion? There are several reasons. One important aspect is the mediality of the debates – the fact that they were not only oral discussions that took place at the Bureau d'Adresse but also printed immediately. Crucially, the debate meetings were not identical to the printed *Conférences*. The latter were edited to a certain extent and not every opinion voiced at the bureau was published. In their printed form, the *Conférences* became accessible to a large and uncontrollable public. To prevent bad blood and quarrels, Renaudot and the *conférenciers* apparently opted for the conclusion-less form. Yet another important factor that might have influenced this decision is the close association between the *conférences*' founder and Cardinal Richelieu – an association all too well known among the citizens of Paris at that time. Publishing definite opinions to sensitive questions might have led to problems for Renaudot as well as for his patron.

My analysis of questions related to the *querelle des femmes* served to illustrate the rhetoricity of answers to moral-philosophical questions in the *Conférences* in particular, and in the *querelle* in general. Opinions in these debates about gender order cannot be directly equated with the personal views of the participants. As the *querelle* functioned according to the *genus demonstrativum*, contributions placing women above men cannot be understood as early feminism. Again: a competent orator should be able to argue both sides of a question in a convincing manner, even the paradoxical one – that is to say, in this case, that of women. The debate about men and women broke free of this format only when the question of 'superiority' was cast aside and debates began to instead focus on equality.

The medical questions functioned somewhat differently. Physicians were dissuaded from participating in *in utramque partem* discussion, engaging both sides of a question.[7] In the case of the *Conférences*, this renunciation of rhetoric nevertheless does not mean that participants necessarily argue from their own medical *expérience*. While experience in the *Conférences* is frequently similar to generic Aristotelian *experientia*, the medical debaters mostly invoke the collective experience of physicians. This type of experience, collected over centuries, enabled physicians to determine how to proceed when treating their patients. 'Experience' was

6 See Traninger 2014a, pp. 199–200.
7 See Maclean 2002, p. 104.

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also the keyword in the quarrel that finally led to Renaudot's downfall. Tensions ran high in the debate about chemical remedies, which preoccupied the Parisian medical scene in Renaudot's time. In contrast to the Parisian Faculty of Medicine, Renaudot and his associates approved of chemical medicaments. According to the former, there was no valid *expérience* showing that chemical remedies could be safely applied; according to the latter, the experiences developed through prescribing substances such as antimony clearly showed that they were effective and did not harm patients. Crucially, Renaudot's approval of antimony was not only lip service. He also practised chemical medicine with his associates at the *consultations charitables* – a fact the faculty did not appreciate. After the death of Richelieu and King Louis XIII, the faculty was finally able to act against their enemy. They arranged for the closure of most of the activities at the Bureau d'Adresse and had Renaudot banned from practising medicine in Paris.

My comparison of medical questions and *querelle des femmes*–related topics in the *Conférences* has shown that there were important differences in the way the *conférenciers* debated these questions. In choosing these two topics for my case studies, I have necessarily neglected other compelling topics that should receive more attention in future studies – the questions dealing with occult phenomena (of which I could only scratch the surface) and the natural-philosophical issues, for example. However, I believe that my study has shed some light on the way the *conférences* as events were organised, how they differed from the printed *Conférences*, and what consequences resulted from the shift from originally oral debates to widely circulated publications.

Nettoyer l'étude de la poussière. Regarding the sources the *conférenciers* used and the way they argued, Renaudot did not, in the end, manage to sweep away the dust of traditional forms of argumentation. Yet concerning the overall form the *Conférences* take, a different conclusion emerges: the fact that they were published immediately, that they feature no conclusions, that participants were anonymised in the *comptes rendus* and could send in their opinions via letter – all of this shows that Renaudot and the *conférenciers* did, overall, find a way to answer questions in a new way, thereby contributing to the establishment of a plurimedial public sphere. Over the centuries, the *Conférences* themselves have gathered dust, but they can still tell us something about the evolution of knowledge negotiation and communication in the seventeenth-century Republic of Letters.

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