

English summaries

The purge of 1924 at the Central Direction of Statistics

A. BLUM

This article examines in detail the history of the conflicts which occurred between 1923 and 1926 at the Central Direction of Statistics. It sheds some light on a series of important tensions and confrontations that are crucial in the history of stalinism, tensions between an emerging administration, the political center and the strong oppositions which arose. The article analyzes how a few internal social tensions were used to control administrations whose projects did not correspond with Stalin's expectations. It finally provides evidence for the opposition between a professional group of statisticians who believed that the Revolution allowed them to build a State managed on a scientific basis and some officials who made use of statistics in their political fights.

The will to quantify. Conceptions of measurement of medical practice

A. OGIEN

Because one usually admits that numbers give an objective and impersonal description of events and procedures, measurement is often thought of as an operation that fuels public debate and helps reaching an agreement. Considering the role devoted to quantification in modern policy making (founded as it is on public management principles), this article discusses the soundness of such an ideal view of measurement. Taking the example of French health policy, it describes how the will to quantify (e.i. the compulsion to justify a decision by appealing to the supposedly objective knowledge given by statistical figures) displayed by politicians and civil servants can be opposed by members of the medical profession who develop their own system of measurement to challenge the one the Government tries to settle up to cut the cost of health care. An analysis of this conflict, which incidentally sheds light on the consequences of the use of quantification on political reasoning, shows that measurement does not necessarily bring about consensus: it can also contribute to reinforce competing legitimacies.

The dedication of books in medieval Islam

H. TOUATI

More than any other culture of its time, classical and medieval Islam was a great civilization of the written word and of the book. The dedication of books was an essential gesture in the formation of one's library. In spite of the great importance which was given to it, no study so far has shed light on its role and function. The

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present article attempts to fill in this gap: it analyzes the “islamic” dedication as a ritualistic, socio-economic as well as “authorial” institution and compares it with its western counterpart.

Philosopher or writer? History of philosophy, history of literature and borderline cases, 1650-1850

D. RIBARD

This article is concerned with the concept of “French Philosophers of the 18th century” and shows how it was elaborated by academics, especially historians of philosophy and historians of literature, in order to exclude non-academic practices of philosophy from the “real” history of philosophy. People who considered themselves as philosophers have been characterized as “writers” and are now studied by specialists of literature, from a stylistic and rhetorical point of view. This article tries to show the complexity of non-academic philosophical practice from the Age of Descartes to the French Revolution. It analyzes how various historical models were successively produced to understand that practice, first by independent writers who tended to classify the philosophers of their time, then (after the Revolution and the reorganisation of academic life) by professors of philosophy and literature.

The concert as political propagande in France and the control of “performative context”

J.F. FULCHER

This article is about the endeavor of both nationalist leagues and other political groups to control the “performative context” of concerts for propagandistic purposes between the Dreyfus Affair and the First World War. As it shows, they already understood basic concepts concerning “performance” that would be articulated only much later by anthropologists and poststructuralist theorists. Primary among these is that performance is a cultural presentation rendered meaningful through context, or that it is “situated” socially, which determines the connotations of what is presented. To aid in the perception of such resonances, a specific performance can be consciously “keyed” to place it within a particular schema of comprehension or “interpretive frame”. Thus political groups, on both Right and Left, in order to communicate their conceptions of French culture, brought politically significant texts, as well as varieties of communal experience, to bear on the artistic statement.

The test of the Nouveau Roman—Six hundred and fifty reading notes by Alain Robbe-Grillet (1955-1959)

A. SIMONIN

*Alain Robbe-Grillet—writer, theoretician and “pope” of the Nouveau Roman—also served as the literary editor of the Éditions de Minuit. The singularity and interest of his position appears throughout the analysis of the six hundred and fifty reading notes he wrote between 1955 and 1959 which are kept in the Éditions de Minuit’s archives. A collection of unpublished comments made by a famous writer on the rough literature of his time, these reading notes can also be read as the first draft of an avant-garde theoretical discourse. Robbe-Grillet, a recognized enemy of “humanism” (cf. *Pour un Nouveau roman*, Éditions de Minuit, 1963), also appears*

in these notes as an enemy of the “naturalism” inherited from the 19th century. But if the literary revolution takes place in the name of “anti-naturalism” in the French literary scene dominated by Sartre and the “littérature engagée”, “anti-humanism” is the only “culturally relevant distinction”, the one which will be pushed forward in order to ensure the success of the esthetic break. There is no “Robbe-Grillet mystery” (Georges Pérec), but simply a writer with a scientific background who adapts his theoretical discourse to the state of reality he is confronted with and who successively examines the rough literature of his time as a literary editor and the French literary world as an avant-garde theoretician of the Nouveau Roman.