



Pierre Bayle's Society of Atheists

A Thought Experiment?

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Abstract: Is Pierre Bayle's conjecture of an atheist society a liberal thought experiment, aiming at severing politics from religion? Such an interpretation might rely on a certain resemblance with Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. But this interpretation is misleading: Bayle's conjecture is based on a skeptical, historical, and critical method, which contests the very principle of thought experiments. The separation of politics from religion does not rely on a liberal argumentation either.

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