



Immanence and Transcendence. Revisiting the Use of Nature in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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Abstract: Nature in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a deeply ambivalent topic. On the one hand, mechanism pulls it toward an autonomy emancipating it from the divine, while on the other hand, natural theology transfigures it into assured proof of divine benevolence. Diderot and Rousseau exemplify and amplify this ambivalence, the former by re-enchanting nature but without seeing any transcendence in it, the latter with a kind of back-and-forth between a transported self and an ever-uncertain divine presence.

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