

Understanding Early Modern Philosophy through Reception: the case of Jean Bodin's *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*

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The analysis of the reception and circulation of texts offers a fundamental tool for understanding the formation and evolution of philosophical thought in relation to historical contexts and intellectual dynamics. Through this perspective, it becomes possible to observe and understand how the interpretation of an author is adopted, reworked, or even distorted over time. The circulation of a work responds to specific historical conditions and is embedded within an intellectual framework that either promotes or hinders it. In this sense, particularly striking are cases where the dissemination of a text is interrupted and later re-emerges in a different context with new purposes, contributing not only to the preservation of a work but also to the redefinition of philosophical concepts.

This approach is particularly helpful for investigating the early modern period, when heterodox, anti-Christian or secularizing ideas could only circulate clandestinely and in manuscript form. The close cooperation between religious and political authorities restricted the printing of such works, prompting intellectuals and writers to conceive strategies for evading control and censorship. These circumstances encouraged the development of marginal intellectual networks operating outside official channels such as churches or universities. An emblematic example is the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*, a text attributed to Jean Bodin, a prominent Renaissance author. It was discovered and popularized posthumously by Gabriel Naudé, who began sharing it with his closest friends – including Guy Patin, Jean Descordes, Charles Guillemeau, and Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc – in 1627. Considered by Naudé as the prototype of clandestine philosophical manuscripts, the *Colloquium* had an intense period of circulation in the late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, gaining more interest in Germany than in France. A pivotal moment in its spread occurred in 1683, when Johann Diekmann, a Lutheran theologian and superintendent of the duchies of Bremen and Verden, published his *De naturalismo*. This work, conceived as a refutation of Bodin's dialogue, marks the first public discussion on the *Colloquium* and includes the transcription of excerpts from Bodin's text – a remarkable novelty for a seventeenth-century printed work. The significance of *De naturalismo* consists in two main aspects: on the one hand, it provides the first systematic account of the concept of naturalism; on the other hand, it consolidates some of the most recurrent criticisms in the intellectual debates of the time, establishing connections between Bodin's Renaissance naturalism and the reflections of thinkers such as Vanini, Hobbes and Spinoza.

But why did the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* inspire so much interest? In Germany, Bodin's work was at the center of vibrant intellectual debates, fueled by a strong interest in Renaissance authors and a growing focus on heterodox philosophical and religious issues. Diekmann engaged with Bodin not only because of his reputation, but also because he identified in his work a pivotal source for the heterodox currents of the seventeenth century. However, the Lutheran theologian selectively emphasized themes most relevant to his contemporaries, excluding topics such as demonology and superstition, which had become peripheral to philosophical discourse in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In this way, Diekmann recontextualized Bodin, making him a significant figure for contemporary philosophical and religious debate and applying interpretative categories belonging to modern philosophy of religion to his works. The popularity of *De naturalismo* had a direct impact on the dissemination of the *Colloquium*. Diekmann's dissertation stimulated an increase in demand for new manuscript copies, especially in Germany, where a large number of versions were produced in the late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries. These copies frequently included not only Bodin's text, but also the commentary of prominent early readers, such as Grotius, Naudé, Patin, Conring, Thomasius (*Judicia*). This renewed interest shows that Bodin's reception was not merely a matter of preservation, but a genuine cultural reactivation that reshaped the meaning of his thought in the context of modern philosophy. Studying the circulation and impact of the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* sheds light on philosophically significant issues at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as on the role and importance of reception during this crucial period in the formation and development of modern thought.