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ODE, Jacobus (1698–1751)

Jacobus Odé was born on 11 December 1698 in Zutphen, in the province of Gelderland. He studied theology at Harderwijk University and became *professor extraordinarius* in philosophy at Utrecht University in 1723. From 1727 to 1736 he was *extraordinarius* in theology; and from 1736 to 1743 *ordinarius* in philosophy, teaching astronomy, mathematics, and physics. On 22 July 1748, three years before his death, he married a bride of sixty-two; Van der Aa (*Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden*, vol. 5, p. 7) somewhat superfluously assures us that the marriage remained without issue.

Odé's versatility in teaching was matched by the diversity of his publications. As a theologian, he was drawn into a protracted polemic in which he defended his colleague F.A. Lampe (1683–1729), who had been accused of sympathizing with H.A. RÖELL's heterodox views concerning the eternal generation of the Son of God. Odé sympathized with a rational natural theology, but this did not stop him from producing a voluminous 1068-page *Commentarius de angelis* (1739) in which the names, numbers, and natures of good angels and evil demons are discussed at great length.

Odé's most interesting contribution to philosophy is his inaugural lecture, the *Oratio de laudabili priscorum hominum philosophandi methodo* (Oration on the Praiseworthy Method of Philosophizing of the Ancients, 27 September 1723), in which he defends a very

diluted kind of Cartesian method. Since DESCARTES's metaphysics had received more opposition than his physics, many early Cartesians (e.g. J. de RAEY) had looked for ways of salvaging the latter by sacrificing the former. In later decades this trend was to be reversed, and Odé is a good example of this reversal. He is an adherent of Cartesian metaphysics in so far as this metaphysics pertains to the method of doubt, the *cogito*, and clear and distinct ideas, but largely rejects Cartesian physics (pp. 35–48). However, Odé defends his method by presenting it as the most recent development in a venerable tradition. Ancient philosophers had not limited themselves dogmatically to any one text: according to Odé, Plato had used Italian, Egyptian, Persian, and even Mosaic sources and the same open-mindedness had characterized Aristotle; Descartes had used the same method, and the Frenchman was therefore justified in writing (*Principia*, IV. 200, trans. CSM I, p. 286): 'I have used no principles in this treatise which are not accepted by everyone; this philosophy is nothing new but is extremely old and very common.' Odé then argues that the use of doubt was already defended by Aristotle; that Cicero taught us to turn away from the senses; and that the *cogito* had already been formulated by Augustine (pp. 17–19). In a similar way, Odé tries to obtain Cartesian clear and distinct ideas by studying and comparing different texts by different philosophers – which of course is more properly eclectic than Cartesian.

Odé's *Principia philosophiae naturalis* (1727) forms the self-confessed application of his 'Cartesian' method to physics (see the dedication). This textbook can be read as a critique of the physics of Descartes and of some of his Dutch followers, notably R. ANDALA, in favour of the physics of Newton and his followers. The *Principia* is written as a geometrical treatise with definitions, propositions, hypotheses and *scholia*. Nevertheless, the result is oddly conventional. Although Odé defends Newtonian physics, he does not consult nature itself. He remains a scholastic philosopher who compares texts rather than experiences. Thus his inaugural lecture can be considered a retrogressive answer to the inaugural lecture (*Oratio de certa methodo philosophiae experimentalis*) held only fourteen days earlier by his colleague in Utrecht, P. van MUSSCHENBROEK, who was a vigorous proponent of Newtonian experimentalism.

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ONDERZOEKER, DE (1768–72) / DE OPMERKER (1772–8)

De Onderzoeker appeared in weekly issues between 1 November 1768 and 19 October 1772 and was succeeded by *De Opmerker*, which appeared from 26 October 1772 until 12 October 1778. The two periodicals should be considered as one whole: they were both published by Johannes van Schoonhoven in Utrecht, and written by the same, anonymous author. The change of title was probably for economical reasons. It was common practice that when people subscribed to a periodical of which a number of issues had already been published, they were obliged to buy the earlier volumes too. Because of the change of title, new subscribers could easily enter without having to pay a large amount of money at once. The complete run of *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* consists of 10 volumes, containing a total of 520 issues of eight pages each.

De Onderzoeker and *De Opmerker* belong to the group of so-called 'spectatorial papers' or 'spectators' that copied the popular formula of *The Tatler* (1709–10), *The Spectator* (1711–12) and *The Guardian* (1713) (by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele). In this type of periodical, which was introduced to the Dutch Republic by Justus van EFFEN, a fictitious author would comment in a moralistic and witty way on a wide range of social issues with the aim of improving the behaviour of his fellow citizens. In accordance with the specta-

torial tradition the author of *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* presented himself as a well-educated, unmarried, middle-aged man, who now led a life of leisure. He claimed that he was born in Amsterdam in 1713 (the year in which 'the peace of Utrecht was signed'), that he was trained as a lawyer, and that he had earlier written some contributions to the periodical *DE DENKER*. There are good reasons to assume that this character was modelled on Johannes PETSCH, one of the most active propagators in the Dutch Republic of Leibniz-Wolffianism. His intellectual interests seem to match well with the Leibnizian, anti-orthodox and enlightened content of *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker*. Other clues are the references in both periodicals to translations of the works of Mendelssohn, Töllner and Spalding by Petsch, the critique in *De Onderzoeker* of Allard HULSHOFF's ideas about moral principles (Petsch also criticized Hulshoff's ideas in two other publications, which were also printed by Van Schoonhoven), and a series of essays in *De Opmerker* on religious tolerance, which remind one of Petsch's defence of the Wolffian David Kleman during the controversy about the latter's book *De orde des heils* (1774).

In *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* many typical spectatorial themes were treated, such as education, religion, love and all kinds of vices and virtues. However, both periodicals differed in one crucial aspect from other spectatorial papers: they were far more learned and philosophical. A substantial part of the issues was dedicated to philosophical subjects and written in an abstract style. The author obviously had a profound knowledge of contemporary philosophical discussions and did not hesitate to include long (translated) fragments of the original works. He was aware of the distinctive character of his publications: he often apologized for his theoretical, philosophical approach and made great effort to meet the wishes of a broader audience. The incompatibility he feared with the taste of the general public remained a recurring subject until the end. However, in the last issue he

claimed that from the beginning it had been 'persons with a philosophical mind' he had most tried to please, as he had come to the conclusion that most of his readers were to be found in these circles.

Most contributions to *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* were probably written by Petsch himself. Only three other contributors are known: the Amsterdam merchant and poet Hendrik Riemsnijder, who wrote some short poems and a piece of prose; W.E. de PERPONCHER, the author of a translated fragment of Plato's *Republic*; and the prominent promulgator of Leibnizianism Abraham PERRENOT, most likely the author of a poetical piece signed by 'Arnobius Philomusus'.

The aim of *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* was to present an ethics, based upon a sound philosophical foundation. In the context of the debate on 'the moral sense' this was a polemical statement in itself. In the Dutch Republic this debate was occasioned by a prize-winning essay by Hulshoff of 1766, who, following sceptics like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume, claimed that moral principles were founded in 'the moral sense'. However, Petsch and Perrenot, amongst others, were of the opinion that moral principles were ultimately based upon reasoning. The author of *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* also supported this view, which was a necessary ingredient of his optimism and belief in progress through education. According to him human beings had the capability to strive for moral perfection through the development of their intellects. He was convinced of the excellence of his own century: no other century had brought so much progression in the field of the arts, sciences and philosophy. In the controversy between Ancients and Moderns, the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, he argued in favour of the contemporary practitioners of the arts and sciences, who, in his opinion, were superior to those of the ancient classics. Yet at the same time, he admitted that the eighteenth century was an age that had seen a sharp increase in unbelief. *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker*

made very clear which free-thinkers or *esprits forts* were to be condemned: Pyrrho, Ocellus, Lucanus, Lucretius, Cherbury, Shaftesbury, Collins, Morgan, Toland, Tindal, Bolingbroke, Hume, SPINOZA, Berkeley, Hobbes, d'Holbach, Lamettrie, Rousseau and, especially, Voltaire, although he admired the literary talents of the latter. The journal passed more positive judgements on, amongst others, DESCARTES, LOCKE, Newton, Mendelssohn, Haller, Fontenelle, Euler, Wolff, Bonnet, Reid and, most of all, Leibniz, whose idea of 'the best of all possible worlds' was extensively praised.

Many issues were dedicated to distinguishing the 'real' from the 'delusionary' philosophers. The 'real' philosophers possessed love for the truth, diligence, percipience, the capacity to learn and cautiousness. Unlike the 'delusionary' philosophers, they never treated subjects they did not understand themselves nor did they dispute certain issues by using irony. *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* attached great importance to the right way of practising philosophy for two reasons: first, true knowledge made up the foundation of virtuousness and progress. Second, it was the most effective weapon against unbelief and atheism. As for the first, the author of both periodicals attached great value to religious tolerance. He sided with the tolerants in the so-called 'Socratic war', a controversy during the years 1769-70 about the question whether virtuous pagans (like Socrates) could go to heaven (see HOFSTEDE and NOZEMAN). He argued that a 'natural ethics' existed besides a 'Christian ethics', which implied that people of other religions could also live virtuously. His liberal attitude also became evident from his plea for the freedom of the press. Atheist books should not be forbidden, although they could be harmful to young readers. Only in extreme cases should books be censored, such as offending or pornographical literature.

The best weapon against superstition (such as the belief in ghosts, spirits, angels and devils), unbelief or atheism was an analysis of their causes. According to *De Onderzoeker*

and *De Opmerker* one of the greatest causes was the fact that the Christian religion supposed the occurrence of supernatural events, while these had not been witnessed during the contemporary period. This, however, did not imply that miracles had never happened. Just as it was certain that God had once revealed himself to the people, it should be asserted that miracles had once happened. However, the author claims that there is no reason to assume that God nowadays still intervenes in his perfect creation. Consequently he argues that disasters and evil should not be interpreted as punishments by God. Instead he referred to Leibniz's *principe de la raison suffisante*: all that is, has its sufficient ground for existing. He maintained this polemical point of view when discussing actual disasters, such as the plague of cow disease in 1769.

Because of the significant role of true knowledge *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* also offered an extensive epistemological framework. Sceptical tendencies in knowledge (and consequently in morals), as in particular put forward by Hume and Berkeley, were strongly rejected. The author of both periodicals was an adherent of the principles of common sense, as formulated in *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* by Thomas Reid, the founder of the Scottish School of Common Sense. For the more technical elaboration of the way human beings formed their ideas, *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* relied on the *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme* (1760) by Bonnet, who claimed that human cognition depended upon the physiological features of the nervous system. Sensory perceptions caused movements in the nervous system, which resulted in sensations of pleasure or pain. The soul would prefer the first type of sensations, enlarge its 'attention' and act free upon the senses. Thus, the soul was not merely a passive substance, but it possessed various active faculties, such as feeling, perceiving, choosing, desiring and acting. The author of *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* deferred judgement on the precise connection between

soul and body. However, in both periodicals, questions like the mind-body problem remained subordinate to ethical topics.

In 1778 *De Opmerker* ceased to exist, because the author felt that he had exhausted his material. He also complained that spectacular papers in general had little influence on the moral behaviour of people: Steele, Van EFFEN, *De Philantropie*, *De Denker* and *De Filosooph* obviously had not managed to effectuate real changes in society. This was not caused by a lack of readers, but by the fact that most people followed the customs and prejudices they had learned in their youth, instead of the prescriptions of reason – once more an argument for the importance of a proper education. Yet, at the same time, the author of *De Onderzoeker* and *De Opmerker* must have been convinced of the value of his own work, since he had continued his weekly efforts to uplift the people for such a long time. His parting words, quoting the last words imputed to the Roman Emperor Augustus, were: 'I have ended my part, clap your hands.'

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OOSTEN DE BRUYN, Gerrit Willem van (1727–97)

Born in Amersfoort on 17 October 1727, Gerrit Willem van Oosten de Bruyn combined in his surname the names of his parents, Cornelis de Bruyn, a minister of the Reformed Church, and Elisabeth van Oosten, scion of a wealthy family. His extended surname was intended to reflect a certain social standing. Van Oosten de Bruyn attended the Latin school at Haarlem after his family had moved there in 1739. Later he read law at Utrecht, where he obtained the juridical doctorate with a dissertation on suicide. In this work Oosten de Bruyn adopted the Wolffian definition, and argued that suicide is against civil and natural law. He defended the concept of natural religion. After his studies Oosten de Bruyn settled in Haarlem. Wealthy enough to live off his own means (having married also into a well-to-do merchant family in 1754), he was free to pursue his personal interests, which included law, philosophy, history and neo-Latin poetry. He fulfilled several honorary offices; in 1778 he became a director of Teyler's Second Society, which was established by the will of the Mennonite merchant Pieter Teyler (1702–78) to promote the studies of the sciences.

His appointment as town historian in 1758 resulted in a well-informed volume on the late medieval history of Haarlem. A manuscript treating the sixteenth century was never published, probably because of Van Oosten de Bruyn's political leanings. A pupil of the

Orangist Petrus Wesseling, whose lectures he had attended at Utrecht, Van Oosten de Bruyn shared his tutor's political preferences. Other pupils of Wesseling, such as Meinard Tydeman, Adriaan KLUIT, and Jona Willem te Water, similarly supported the stadholderist regime. Anticipating Kluit's historical work, Van Oosten de Bruyn in his history of Haarlem implicitly rejected the traditional claim of the (anti-stadholderist) States Party that the sovereignty of the States dated back to the Middle Ages. Not surprisingly, William V made Van Oosten de Bruyn a member of the town council after the restoration of his regime in 1787. He fulfilled the office of burgomaster in 1789 and 1790. Dismissed by the new, revolutionary regime in 1795, Van Oosten de Bruyn retired to his estate Randenbroek near Amersfoort, where he died.

In 1758, Van Oosten de Bruyn was one of the six victorious contributors to an essay competition organized by the *Legatum Stolpianum* at Leiden, concerning the contribution of 'heathen' philosophers to moral thought. In the first half of his award-winning essay, making good use of Johann Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae*, he discussed the ethical notions of the 'best authors' of pagan antiquity, in particular Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and the Stoics. These philosophers, according to Oosten de Bruyn, outlined the powers of natural reason. Although he put great store by the achievements of these philosophers, he pointed out, in the second half of the essay, that due to the intrinsic weakness of natural reason only the teachings of Christ were able to provide man with true tranquillity of mind and the capacity to face death without anxiety. On the one hand this ambiguous phrase 'intrinsic weakness' enabled Van Oosten de Bruyn like Van der MARCK to side with Voltaire, whose *Poèmes sur la loi naturelle* he repeatedly quoted with admiration, and BAYLE, who is referred to with respect to human fragility. According to Oosten de Bruyn Christianity is merely the accomplishment of natural religion and Revelation teaches man

nothing essentially new. On the other hand he remained in accordance with Calvinism – at the end of the essay a long quotation of Calvin is to be found – since in practice man needs Revelation. The ambiguity in Oosten de Bruyn's essay induced the governors of the *Legatum Stolpianum* to hold a new competition dealing explicitly with the need of Revelation.

Van Oosten de Bruyn also wrote two essays on native Dutch (as opposed to Roman) law for the Groningen-based society *Pro excolendo iure Patrio*. He possessed a significant personal library, auctioned only in 1860, which included a number of medieval manuscripts and incunabula, and many rare books.

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De stad Haarlem, en haare geschiedenissen, in derzelver opkomst, aanwas, vergrootingen, en lot-gevallen, uit d'oudste gedenk-stukken, en eigene stads-registers, nagespoord en beschreeven (Haarlem, 1765).

'Jus Batavorum de gradibus, matrimonia, ratione sanguinis, vel adfinitatis prohibentibus sive Commentarus, ad politicae hollandorum legis caput IV, et