

his devotion to the philosophy of Kant, according to which the character of the phenomena on the one hand and its connection with the realms of truth, beauty and virtue on the other can be explained with perfect harmony. It is a popular and verbose plea for Kantianism, again without any reference to experimental physics or chemistry. It is obvious, however, that Deiman was well informed about the latest developments both in the natural sciences and in philosophy.

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## DENKER, De (1763–74)

*De Denker* appeared between 3 January 1763 and 26 December 1774 in weekly issues of eight pages each. Just as its predecessor, *De Philantropie* (1756–62), *De Denker* belonged to the so-called 'spectatorial papers' or 'spectators', modelled after *The Tatler* (1709–10), *The Spectator* (1711–12) and *The Guardian* (1713) of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. This type of periodical became popular in the Dutch Republic with the publication of Justus van EFFEN's *De Hollandsche Spectator* (1731–5) and was especially successful during the sixties and seventies. Some of the titles suggested a specific interest in philosophical matters: *De Hollandsche Wijsgeer* (1759–63), *The Dutch Philosopher*, *De Filosooph* (1766–9), *The Philosopher*, *De ONDERZOEKER* (1768–72), *The Investigator*, its successor *De Opmerker* (1772–8, *The Observer*) and, of course, *De Denker* (*The Thinker*) itself. However, only the last three (partly) covered philosophy; the first two were mainly filled with essays on social and moral topics.

The main purpose of *De Denker*, like that of other spectators, was to enlighten its readers, propagate moral behaviour and improve society. Any form of extremism was rejected; freethinkers as well as dogmatic Calvinists were the object of criticism. However, occasionally there was also room for some dissident and radical thought in *De Denker*. It was not as polemical as, for example, the belletristic periodical *De RHAPSODIST* (1771–83); but *De Denker* was deviant enough to be watched carefully by the representatives of the orthodox Reformed Church. Some of the editors and contributors belonged to circles of dissenters.

*De Denker* was directed by four different editors. The first two volumes were edited by the Amsterdam lawyer Nicolaas Bondt (1732–92), and then the Mennonite clergyman Cornelis van Engelen (1722–93) took over for one year. He was forced to leave at the end of 1765 due to a conflict with the heirs of the publisher, Frans Houytuyn. Van Engelen imme-

diately founded a rival periodical, *De Filosooph*, which he had to end three years later due to ill health. Van Engelen's departure may have been connected with an older hostility towards the next editor of *De Denker*, Abraham Arent van der Meersch (1720–92), professor in philosophy and literature at the Remonstrant Seminary in Amsterdam. He stayed in charge for six years. An unknown editor was responsible for the last three volumes (1772–4).

The editors wrote many articles themselves, but could also count on the writings of others. Amongst the Mennonite contributors were A. HULSHOFF, the clergyman P. Loosjes, the merchant S. de Vries, the German immigrant O.C.F. Hofhamm, J. Nomsz (author and translator of many plays), the clergyman J.F. MARTINET and the jurists J. Sels and A. Camhuysen. During the first three years a considerable number of articles were written by the physician Petrus CAMPER (1722–89). A remarkable fact is that his contributions to *De Denker* (and other spectators) are still kept in manuscript in the library of LEIDEN UNIVERSITY.

The shifts in editorship are reflected in the contents of *De Denker*. In the first three volumes priority was given to social and moral issues. Only marginal attention was paid to philosophical matters (in average two articles per year). During Van der Meersch's editorship the quantity of philosophical and especially theological contributions grew significantly. The contrary is true of the last three volumes, which, except for two articles, contain no philosophical contributions at all.

In general, *De Denker* had an anti-authoritarian, eclectic way of treating philosophical subjects. The views of the 'great' philosophers were judged on their merits, regardless of their reputations, because 'the authority of the wisest man cannot count as sufficient proof'. Most contributions were written in a witty, sometimes even satirical style, and presented in the form of dialogues or (possibly fictitious) correspondence. During the editorship of Bondt and Van Engelen, some very radical views were

espoused. The philosophical discussion was centred on the question of whether the essence of the soul was thinking, as Descartes claimed, or whether the soul sometimes existed without thought, as Locke argued. At first the dilemma seemed to remain unsolved, but the discussion took a very radical turn in a concluding letter of a reader, who claimed that most human beings, judging by their behaviour, spent their lives without thinking at all and that they merely acted mechanically. His contribution could be read as a clear defence of Lamettrie's *L'Homme machine* (1748). Also interesting is a letter on freemasonry by a 'profane' reader, who tried to correct the negative image of the freemasons. According to him their main aim was only 'to develop reason and common sense, to divest themselves of prejudices, to avoid errors, and to stimulate cheerful and social virtue and generous friendship in particular'. Reason and virtue were presented as the pillars of society, while religion was completely left out.

During the editorship of Van der Meersch this kind of radicalism vanished, but there was still room for dissident thought. Van der Meersch put a clear Remonstrant stamp on the magazine and propagated an enlightened form of Christianity, based upon a harmony of reasonableness, feelings and consciousness. He also actively participated in debates on religious tolerance. *De Denker*, for example, took the tolerant side during the so-called 'Socratic war', a controversy between the Remonstrants and the Contra-Remonstrants during the years 1769–70. The Contra-Remonstrants were parodied in a sharp satire in the style of Voltaire, entitled 'The beginning of the war amongst the philosophers in China', a fictitious serial about the dispute between 'precise philosophers' and the 'eclectics' or 'free searchers for truth' in early China.

The liberal attitude of *De Denker* had by then already been severely criticized in a leaflet by the orthodox reformed clergyman Johannes Barueth (1708–82). In 1766, he directed his criticism at two specific issues concerning

religious education, and claimed that *De Denker* stimulated libertinism and deism by subordinating Revelation to reason. Van der Meersch put much effort into refuting these accusations. He repeatedly emphasized the harmony of Revelation and reason and pleaded for a more nuanced judgement about deism, as the word was used far too easily for any dissenting opinion. Van der Meersch's position can perhaps best be described as that of a moderate or providential deist, as can be illustrated from the main philosophical debate in *De Denker*, on the problem of free will. Several issues were dedicated to conversations with a nephew, an *esprit fort*, who asserted that human beings were nothing more than puppets who acted like machines in a world where vice and virtue did not have any meaning. He was refuted by the argument that his deterministic view was in conflict with Revelation and the essence of Holy Scripture. In his turn, the nephew stated that many Christian dogmas were incompatible with common sense. He denied the plausibility of Revelation, claiming that the writers of Holy Scripture were nothing but 'mugs, who lacked any philosophical knowledge'. The series ended with the conversion of the nephew, who blamed his education for his errors and now strongly emphasized the harmony of reason and Revelation and the responsibility of human beings for their own actions.

There is no dissident thought in the last three volumes of *De Denker*. The new editor concentrated on social issues and refrained from polemical topics. Only two contributions had a philosophical content. One article was directed against LaMettrie's mechanistic view of human beings; and in the other Voltaire was condemned for his anti-Christian views. In 1774 publication of *De Denker* was stopped, not because of any lack of success – a couple of thousand people read the magazine every week according to the editor – but for the reason that 'there was a time to work and a time to rest'. However, *De Denker* was continued on the same footing by *De Vaderlander* (1775–8).

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DESAGULIERS, Jean-Théophile (1683–1744)

Jean-Théophile (or John Theophilus) Desaguliers was born into a Protestant family in La Rochelle, France, in 1683 but was taken to England before the age of three. He entered Christ Church, Oxford, in 1705 and stayed on after receiving his Bachelor's degree in 1709 to deliver courses in experimental physics at Hart Hall. He took Anglican orders in 1710 and moved to London in 1712 where he made a living giving public lectures on natural philosophy. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1714 and co-operated with Isaac Newton. By 1716 he was curator of experimental research for the Royal Society. He was also chaplain to the Earl of Carnarvon, later Duke of Chandos, and advised him on construction projects at his estate and elsewhere. In 1717 he gave a course of lectures to George I and was appointed chaplain to Frederick, Prince of Wales. In 1718 or 1719 he received the degree of Doctor of Law.

A lifelong Newtonian, Desaguliers's major work was *A Course of Experimental Philosophy* (1734, 1744), which took the reader through a large number of experiments confirming Newton's theories. He also translated several scientific works from the French and published some fifty-five articles in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society. He had a special interest in hydraulics, steam engines and air pumps.

Desaguliers was also active in Freemasonry, serving as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in London in 1719 as well as other offices. He was involved in the publication of *The Constitutions of the Free-masons* (1723). It has been argued that Desaguliers assimilated Lockean and Newtonian philosophy into this foundation document of the Freemasons.

Desaguliers was important for Dutch philosophy for two reasons. He translated or introduced English translations of works by Dutch philosophers such as Bernard NIEUWENTIJT and Willem Jacob 's GRAVESANDE, assuring their