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DEURHOFF, Willem (1650–1717)

The merchant and philosopher Willem Deurhoff was born in Amsterdam on 11 March 1650, and died there on 10 October 1717. His life and work are typical of the great interest of laymen in the Dutch Republic in philosophy. He was brought up in the business of his father, Abraham Deurhoff, who made and sold trunks, baskets and cases. He did not receive any formal higher education and knew no Latin, but learned philosophy by reading GLAZEMAKER'S Dutch translations of SPINOZA and DESCARTES. His philosophical interest was probably also encouraged by his grandfather Arnold

SENGUARD, professor of philosophy in the Universities of UTRECHT and AMSTERDAM, and his uncle, Wolphard SENGUARD, who taught philosophy at LEIDEN UNIVERSITY.

Deurhoff managed to combine the operation of his father's business with a very active intellectual life. His first publication appeared in 1682, a commentary on and revision of Descartes's six *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, which he reduced to five. In the years that followed he published a large number of works in which he created his own philosophical system by combining ideas from Descartes, Spinoza, Arnout GEULINCX and other thinkers. Two years before he died, his six major works were collected in *Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zaamenstellinge van de H. Godgeleerheyd* (Metaphysical and Scriptural Theology, 1715).

Deurhoff has often been characterized by contemporaries as a Spinozist, but the relationship between Deurhoff and Spinoza requires circumspect judgement. On the one hand Spinoza's philosophy was behind many of Deurhoff's assertions. For example, Deurhoff did not distinguish between God's will, intellect and power, but considered God's acts necessary and indifferent. He further called the human mind a modification of the substantial thought of God and valued the intellectual love of God as the highest virtue. He also put much emphasis on the primacy of reason in the interpretation of the Bible. According to him miracles, for instance, were never against reason, but only pointed to the limits of our understanding. On the other hand, the differences between Deurhoff and Spinoza are too great to call him a Spinozist. Contrary to Spinoza Deurhoff did accept the occurrence of miracles, but he maintained a strict form of 'naturalism' by claiming that all events in the world, being caused by God, were natural and could thus be explained by reason. And although he considered all acts of God necessary, he claimed, in contrast to Spinoza, that God had created the universe in a voluntary act. And, most significantly, he made a clear-cut distinction between

the Creator and his creation: finite, changeable things should not be regarded as parts of one, unique substance.

He held on to the Cartesian idea of two entirely separate and distinct substances that did not interact. In order to explain how body and soul co-operated he used occasionalist arguments, by claiming that God had arranged the world in such a way that body and soul appeared to interact in a causal way. Deurhoff's philosophical position can perhaps best be typified as that of a pseudo-Cartesian (a polemical term used by Ruardus ANDALA, professor of philosophy at the UNIVERSITY OF FRANEKER), or as a radical Cartesian, as he combined Cartesian principles with unorthodox religious ideas (naturalism and rationalism with respect to religion and the Bible). On that score he possessed a fundamental affinity with Spinoza.

Deurhoff's writings provoked many critical reactions. Besides being accused of Spinozism – which in some cases may be dismissed as a rhetorical strategy by his opponents – Deurhoff was also criticized for his unorthodox ideas on theological topics as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Ascension of Christ and the action of prayer. Amongst his critics were very learned persons, such as Andala and Salomon van TIL, professor in the Illustrious School of Dordrecht. Other opponents were the physician Paulus BUCHIUS, the visitor of the sick Jacobus Schuts, and Johannes DUIJKERIUS, who in 1687 wrote *De geoopende deure tot de heilige godgeleerdheid* (The Open Door to Sacred Theology), in which he directed his criticism at Deurhoff's first two major works, *Beginzelen van waarheid en deuchd* (Principles of Truth and Virtue, 1684) and *Voorleeringen van de heilige godgeleerdheid* (Introduction to Sacred Theology, 1687). Deurhoff defended his ideas in *Overtuigende kracht der waarheid, of verantwoording van de Beginzelen van waarheid en deuchd en Voorleeringen van de heilige godgeleerdheid* (Convincing Power of Truth, 1688).

In the years 1692–3 Deurhoff was involved in several controversies. With Willem van BLIJEN-

BERGH, a correspondent of Spinoza, Deurhoff exchanged a series of letters that were published in *Klaare en beknopte verhandeling van de natuur en de werkinge der menschelijke zielen, engelen en duivelen* (Clear and Concise Treatise on the Nature and Action of Human Souls, Angels, and Devils, 1692) and *Vervolg van de klare en beknopte verhandeling* (Sequel to the Clear and Concise Treatise, 1693). This correspondence was occasioned by the controversy caused by the publication of the first two volumes of Balthasar BEKKER's book on spirits and witchcraft, *De Betoverde Weereld* (The World Bewitched, 1691–3). Deurhoff argued that angels and devils could not act on any body or spirit outside themselves, because only God acted on bodies in the world. Nevertheless the Bible was correct in ascribing to angels and devils all the actions that they did – even bad actions – and, unlike Bekker, Deurhoff made use of occasionalist arguments to explain the activity of spirits in the world. Deurhoff was also opposed by the Calvinist preacher Jacobus KOELMAN, who in 1693 published *Het vervolg van 't vergift van de Cartesiaansche filosofie* (Sequel to the Poison of Cartesian Philosophy), in which Deurhoff was one of his main targets. In the same year, the Utrecht Reformed minister Henricus BRINCK denounced Deurhoff to the Reformed Church Council of Amsterdam for holding Socinian ideas. Deurhoff wrote an account of this dispute that lasted for nearly two years, entitled *Geloofs-onderzoek van de eerw. kerken-raad van Amsteldam, over de godgeleerde leerstukken van de heilige Drie-eenheid* (The Inquisition by the Consistory of Amsterdam concerning the Theological Dogmas of the Holy Trinity).

One of Deurhoff's most fierce opponents was the Amsterdam Reformed minister Taco Hajo van den HONERT, who criticized his ideas in the second edition of his *De waarachtige wegen, die God met den mens houdt* (God's True Ways with Man, 1706). Deurhoff immediately responded by publishing *Nootzaakelykheid en onverschillendheid der werkinge Gods*

(Necessity and Indifference of God's Action), to which he added a refutation of Van den Honert's objections. Van den Honert then published *Willem Deurhoffs hardnekkigheid en verlegenheid in het bemaneten van sijne heilloose gevoelens* (Willem Deurhoff's Obstinacy and Embarrassment in Covering up his Impious Feelings, 1707). He also persuaded the Amsterdam consistory to request the city council to forbid the weekly discussion meetings held at Deurhoff's home. When they did not react, Van den Honert sent the Reformed Church Classis of Amsterdam and the Synod of Enkhuizen extracts from Deurhoff's books in order to get his writings prohibited, but the States' deputy, Anthony Heinsius, replied that that body had more serious matters to deal with. Deurhoff did not keep quiet in the meantime, but published another defence against Van den Honert, entitled *Godvruchtigheid der ouden, vertoond in den drie- en zeeventigsten Psalm. Met eenige aanmerkingen op het boek van Tako Hajo van den Honert* (The Piety of the Ancients, Demonstrated in Psalm 73. With Some Comments on Tako Hajo van den Honert's Book, 1708).

Deurhoff's ideas may have encountered much opposition, but he also gathered a circle of passionate adherents around him. From the 1680s on he held weekly meetings at his home, in which philosophical and theological themes were discussed. From 1699 until his death he focused on the interpretation of various books of the Bible. The discussion group included Johan van de Velde, the brothers Cornelis en Pieter van Loon, Pieter and Cornelia van Doorn, his nephew Arent Haak, and his uncle Anthony Sergeant, who later defended Deurhoff's ideas in a letter of 1701 to Henricus Brinck.

After Deurhoff's death his followers continued to spread his ideas. One of his most fanatical followers was the Amsterdam physician Johannes MONNIKHOF, who built up a large collection of 'Deurhoviana', containing publications by Deurhoff, notebooks of his lectures, and handwritten documents about his

life and thought. His own writings were also deeply influenced by Deurhoff. Deurhoff's disciples clashed several times with the authorities. Between 1738 and 1740 five people in Delft had to defend themselves against charges made by the consistory, especially about their ideas on the Trinity. Another clash was the so-called 'Deurhoff-trial'. In 1741 J. van de Velde took the initiative to print Deurhoff's lectures on the Book of Job, but the authorities intervened in the middle of the printing process: both Van de Velde and the printer, Christiaan Petersen, were given severe penalties. The well-known lawyer Hermannus Noordkerk, however, subsequently managed to get both men acquitted, and to refute the accusation that Deurhoff was a Socinian and a Spinozist (see Pieter BAKKER).

In spite of the detailed information that one can gather about Deurhoff's life and writings, it remains difficult to assess his exact position. As a completely self-taught thinker he seems to have been a rather isolated, eccentric figure, whose philosophy contained many obscure and contradictory elements. This has led present-day historians to qualify it as peculiar, obscure, and yet confused. Yet his influence should not be underestimated. His contemporaries at least took him very seriously, as becomes clear from his large following, from the great effort his opponents took to refute his ideas, and from the fact that the authorities considered him a serious threat to the establishment. The continued anxiety of the authorities, even after Deurhoff's death, suggests that his ideas had a radical potential and that this freethinker, who borrowed much from Spinoza, indeed belonged to a more radical undercurrent in Dutch Enlightenment.

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DEUSING, Antonius (1612–66)

Antonius Deusing was born in Mörs (in the region of Cleves) in 1612. He studied at the *Gymnasium Illustre* in Harderwijk (see UNIVERSITY OF HARDERWIJK) and was enrolled as a student in Leiden in 1631. At LEIDEN, he studied physics and logic under BURGERSDIJK, Arabic, Persian and Turkish under J. GOLJUS, and medicine under A. Vorstius and others. He became a doctor of medicine in 1637. In 1639, he became a physician in Mörs and a teacher of mathematics at the local gymnasium. At the end of the same year, he was appointed Professor of Physics and Mathematics at the *Gymnasium Illustre* in Harderwijk. From 1640 onwards, he also taught astronomy, and in 1642, he was appointed Professor of Medicine as well. In addition to this, he was the *archiater*

(first physician) of Harderwijk. In 1647, Deusing became Professor of Medicine at GRONINGEN, followed, in 1648, by a professorate in philosophy at the same university. He was the Rector of the Academy of Groningen in 1648 and 1653. On top of this, he was the *archiater* of the province of Groningen and the chief personal physician of William Frederick, Stadholder of Friesland. He died in Groningen in 1666.

In his inaugural oration at Harderwijk (1639), Deusing gave an account of the method of inquiry he deemed appropriate for the natural sciences. One should start with the Bible. Where the Bible is silent, one should be guided by the senses and reason. The opinions of the classical authors, particularly those of Aristotle, should always be kept in mind, but whenever these are in conflict with the Bible, the senses or reason, the latter are the final arbiters. Subjects that are capable of mathematical demonstration, on the other hand, should always be treated mathematically. Deusing's *Naturae theatrum universale* (1642) and *De mundi opificio* (1643) exemplify this methodology.

In 1643, one of Deusing's colleagues, the theologian J. Cloppenburg, a friend of Voetius, protested against some of Deusing's opinions about the soul, the relationship between God and His creation, and the nature and functions of the angels. Cloppenburg tried to have Deusing condemned for heresy, but he did not succeed and left Harderwijk in 1644.

Undeterred by Cloppenburg's objections, Deusing continued his philosophical work in his *De anima humana dissertationes philosophicae* (1645), in which he proposed a modification of Aristotle's view that the soul is the *entelecheia* of the body. He argued that, in man, one should distinguish between an *anima sensitiva* that cannot be separated from the body and an immortal *anima rationalis* that is attached to the body by mediation of the *anima sensitiva*. He elaborated this view in his *Oeconomus corporis animalis* (1661), an attack on Walter Charleton (1619–1717), in which he maintained, first, that the *anima*