

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nederlandsche Letter-verlustiging, bestaande in taal- en oordeelkundige aanmerkingen over duistere schriftuurplaatsen en andere nuttige weetenschappen, als mede in zaakelijke uittrekzels uit de beste schriften van beroemde in- en uitlandsche geleerden, waar achter komt een beredeneerde naamlijst van de voornaamste, sederd onlangs, alomme, uitgekomen boeken, de Godgeleerdheid inzonderheid betreffenden, onder de zinspreuk 'Ex omnibus utile et dulce' (Amsterdam, 1762–4).

Other Relevant Works

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Further Reading

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MRW

NEUFVILLE, Christina Leonora de (1714–81)

Christina Leonora de Neufville was born in Amsterdam on 4 January 1714 into a wealthy Mennonite family. She was the youngest child

of Alida Oosterling and Leendert de Neufville, a patron of the arts and collector of coins and medals. Christina grew up in an inspiring environment that enabled her to develop her talents for studying and writing. She never married; she died on 30 March 1781 and was buried in the New Church of Amsterdam.

De Neufville became well-known both as a poetess and as a philosopher. In 1738 she published a tragedy, *Childerik*, a translation of a French play by Pierre de Morand. In 1741 her *Bespiegelingen voorgesteld in dichtkundige brieven* appeared, consisting of six philosophical letters in verse, the first three of which were adaptations of Voltaire's *Discours en vers sur l'homme* (1738). A second, revised and augmented edition was published in 1762, under the slightly altered title *Bespiegelingen in dichtmaatige brieven*. A seventh letter about the immortality of the soul had been added as well as numerous footnotes in prose, which give evidence of De Neufville's erudition and broad knowledge of the natural sciences. Besides referring to the writings and ideas of Isaac Newton, Théophile DESAGULIERS and John Ray, she mentions well-known Dutch authors such as Balthasar BEKKER, Christiaan HUYGENS, Bernard NIEUWENTIJT, and Petrus van MUSSCHENBROEK.

The seventh letter, in which De Neufville strongly argues against materialism, is of special interest. She had become acquainted with the work of the German philosopher and mathematician Christian Wolff (1679–1754). Using his a priori, deductive method she argues that matter is an inactive substance, while the soul is an active substance that is indivisible, immaterial, and immortal. In order to explain how matter and soul co-operate, she introduces the Leibnizian-Wolffian idea of a *harmonie préétablie*, which claims that God has pre-established a perfect co-ordination between the two substances. The other six letters display typical aspects of Enlightenment thought. She argues, for instance, that reason is to prevail over passion in all human activities.

De Neufville's *Bespiegelingen* is remarkable for two reasons. First, she was one of the few writers in the Dutch Republic who used the Wolffian deductive method in order to prove the immortality of the soul. Second, her position as a woman philosopher was unique, as only few women possessed such a thorough knowledge of contemporary philosophy and natural sciences. Amongst them were Petronella Johanna de TIMMERMAN, wife of the Utrecht professor Johann Friedrich HENNERT, and Elizabeth WOLFF-BEKKER, one of the most famous Dutch novelists of the eighteenth century. Wolff-Bekker deeply admired De Neufville, whose influence can be traced in Wolff-Bekker's *Bespiegelingen over het genoegen* (1763).

De Neufville was also praised by other contemporaries. Jean des Champs, a propagandist for Wolff's philosophy and translator of his writings into French, called her 'la Sapho d'Amsterdam' and 'grande Wolfienne'. Positive reviews of her *Bespiegelingen* appeared in periodicals such as *De Nederlandsche-Letter-Courant*, *VADERLANDSCHE LETTER-OEFENINGEN* and *De DENKER*.

De Neufville was praised for her cleverness, learnedness and graceful style. Present-day critics, however, pointing to the abundance of footnotes written in prose, argue that she should be remembered as a poetic philosopher rather than as a philosophical poetess.

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LJ

NIEUHOFF, Bernard (1747–1831)

Bernard Nieuhoff was born in 1747 at Lingen (in Westphalia near the Dutch border). In 1762 he went to the local Illustrious Grammar School and in 1769 he matriculated at Leiden as a student of theology and philosophy, attending the lectures of ALLAMAND and D. van de WIJNPERSSE. In 1773 he obtained his doctorate from the latter and became an ordinand. In 1775 he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the ILLUSTRIOUS SCHOOL OF DEVENTER and in the next year he became Professor of Philosophy, Mathematics, and Astronomy at HARDERWIJK. In 1780 and 1789 he acted as *Rector magnificus*. According to the *ordo lectorum* of 1788 he gave lectures on logic and mathematics, on 'the precepts of happiness and the foundations of moral philosophy', on Seneca's doctrine of providence, on physics and on metaphysics. Fourteen theses were defended under his supervision. They dealt among other things with personal identity, imagination, national character, the