

## Exploring the Republic of Letters

German Travellers in the Dutch Underground, 1690-1720

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Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen

## Exploring the Republic of Letters *German Travellers in the Dutch Underground, 1690-1720*

### Geographies of the Republic of Letters

To early moderns, the European Republic of Letters was a lived experience. The bonds that connected scholars across confessional and geographical boundaries were not just woven with words, but products of personal relationships and mutual trust (Goldgar 1995, Miller 2000, Shelford 2007). These connections not only enabled a feeling of community, but also established reliable channels for the exchange of information, arguments, and discoveries (Shapin 1995, Licoppe 1995, Chartier 2007). A normal starting point of an academic career was therefore a European journey. During their journey, young scholars established friendships for life, initiated correspondences, and positioned themselves in the Republic of Letters. Unlike students on the *peregrinatio academica*, academic travellers seldom remained at one university, but instead visited several important venues of learning and scholarship. The route normally included large libraries and manuscript collections, botanical gardens and anatomical theatres, cities with many or important scholars, and famous universities and academies (Becker 1980, Sauerland 1983, Dibon & Waquet 1984, Beyrer 1985, Kulczykowski 1989, Siebers 1991, Stagl 1995, de Ridder-Symoens 1996, Boedeker 2002, Roche 2003: 569-666). Thus, the primary destinations were not the ruins, osterias, and landscapes of Italy that attracted so many nobles on the *grand tour*: Early modern scholars, especially during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, instead preferred Holland, with its many universities, academies, bookshops, printers, publishers, and journals.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1705, the later Göttingen professor Christoph August Heumann travelled through Northern Germany and Holland together with his friend, the

1 For a bibliography of early European travellers to Holland, see Jacobsen-Jensen 1919:39. For German academic travellers, see esp. Schneppen 1960, Bientjes 1967, with a bibliography of travel journals 248-93, and Laeven 2005. For French and English academic travellers, see also Morris 1925, van Strien 1993, 1998.

mathematician Bonifacius Henrich Ehrenberg. In some ways, Heumann's journey resembled those of hundreds of young academics before him. He travelled to Holland shortly after defending his magister degree in Jena in 1703. He visited all major cities and universities, but only remained at each location for short periods of time. He met with important representatives of Dutch late humanism, such as Jacob Gronovius and Jacob Perizonius, but also encountered exiled Huguenots, such as Pierre Bayle and Jacques Basnage. Heumann's travel journal, published in part by Andreas Cassius in 1768, also reveals his attempts at establishing personal relationships and mutual trust (Cassius 1768: 32-137). Heumann briefly described which topics, books, and scholars had been discussed and noted how his conversation partners treated him. He catalogued friendly scholars as "polite," "very polite," or "humane," according to their willingness to engage in academic dialogue and to share information. He also noted if his encounters were impolite or uncommunicative. For example, Heumann scribbled this about the theology professor Salomon van Til in Leiden:

It appeared as if he only wanted to show me, how it fitted a theologian with a long tobacco pipe in his mouth: Thus, he remarked that he soon again had to lecture in his private collegium; therefore he did not converse, and was also not humane (Cassius 1768: 69).

The majority of the notes in Heumann's journal, however, did not resemble those of other seventeenth-century academic travellers. Heumann travelled to Holland not only to prepare his future academic career, but also to explore and experience firsthand the notorious Dutch underground. As a diligent fieldworker, he collected as much information as possible and filled his journal with detailed minutes of conversations with religious and intellectual dissenters. He often recorded exchanges word-by-word and noted questions as well as answers.

A few similar journals from the Early Enlightenment have survived. The authors of these journals were all recent candidates of Protestant German universities and probably all connected to the Thomasius circle in Halle. They travelled together, in pairs, and visited either just Holland or Holland and England. The most voluminous of these journals is that of the later Jena professor Gottlieb Stolle, who used more than a thousand manuscript pages to detail his encounters in Holland, 1703-1704. Other examples are the journals of Johann Burkhard Mencke, 1698-99, Christoph August Lämmermann, 1709-11, Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, 1709-11, and Johann Gottlieb Deichsel, 1717-19. These travellers all wrote notes in the same meticulous style as Heumann, and often followed the same routes and visited the same

scholars, but their interests differed.<sup>2</sup> Mencke almost exclusively visited academics and representatives of the moderate Enlightenment, probably preparing himself to inherit his father's position as editor of the *Acta Eruditorum*, the most significant academic journal in Protestant Germany. Stolle wrote lengthy comments regarding the clothing and manners of academics and about the Spinozistic underground. Uffenbach was especially interested in manuscripts, books, and curiosity cabinets (see also Franke 1965, Laeven 2005, Mulrow 2007: 67-86). Heumann also had his own particular interests and the most extensive notes, which have survived in Cassius' selection, record conversations with lay preachers, mystics, and sectarians.

The interest of the Thomasius circle in the Dutch radical underground is not an indication that the Republic of Letters was splitting into two, as Dena Goodman argues (1994: 22), or even into "an indefinite number of overlapping mini-Republics," as L. W. B. Brockliss claims (2002: 390). It is more likely that the minute accounts of interviews with dissenters in these travel journals indicate that the ideal of the Republic of Letters was changing from one of community into one of transparency. During the last decades of the seventeenth century, Thomasius, following Pufendorf's theory of functionalist personae, redefined the Republic of Letters as a realm of disembodied arguments (Eskildsen 2004, 2008). Here, every argument counted and should be heard, regardless of its origins. Only the free exchange of opinions could secure the vitality and integrity of scholarship. Thus, the voices of the underground deserved attention, even if the dissenters were of little help to the future academic careers of their German visitors. It is possible that the confrontation with the Dutch underground was even an integrated part of Thomasius' educational program aimed at transforming budding professors into tolerant and open-minded philosophers.

### Travel Guides

Before leaving Jena, Heumann prepared for his journey. He studied the Dutch intellectual and religious landscape, carefully planned a route, and selected where to stop and whom to meet. His notes indicate that his most important source of information was Heinrich Ludloff Bentheim's *Holländischer Kirch- und Schulen-Staat* (1698). Bentheim, born in Celle near Hanover, was a Lutheran theologian and later superintendent in Harburg (Kniggen 1727). His book was based upon years of

<sup>2</sup> Not all German scholars of the period wrote in this style. Other academic travel journals only contained short descriptions of destinations, libraries, and curiosity cabinets; see, for example, [Erndl] 1711 and Curtius 1891.

study and two journeys to Holland, in approximately 1686 and 1693. It contained a comprehensive historical and institutional overview of the Dutch intellectual and religious life, but also offered practical advice to students and academics visiting Holland. Benthem even presented his book as a travel guide and had it printed in a handy *octavo* format, in two volumes, that allowed travellers to take a copy in their luggage; several of the German travellers did.<sup>3</sup>

The most obvious advantage of Benthem's book was the recommended travel route that ensured that one visited "the most significant places in these countries, in particular all universities, in the right order" (Benthem 1698: I:24). The route was accompanied with recommendations excursions to locations "where something remarkable can be seen, or great artists and scholars reside, or where people with unusual opinions in matters of religion can be encountered" (Benthem 1698: I:27). Some of Benthem's destinations were merely tourist sites of particular interest to scholars. A prominent example of such a site, and an obligatory stop on most academic journeys, was the statue of Erasmus in Rotterdam that immortalized the founder of the *respublica literaria*. Celebrating the shared European humanistic heritage while demarcating the academic tourist's view from that of common plebs, Benthem passionately described the site:

A scholar rejoices, when he here on the great bridge sees the statue of Erasmus ... He stands in his doctor robe on a marble column and has a book in his hand, as if he was reading and wanted to turn the page. Boys have thrown many small stones on it. One tells children and fools that Erasmus turns a page whenever he hears the bell ring and that when he turns the last page the world will end (Benthem 1698: I:120).

Heumann and Ehrenberger more or less followed Benthem's route, as did many other German academic travellers. Heumann also followed Benthem's recommendations about interesting scholars and places of knowledge. For example, Benthem explained that after the visit to the Erasmus statue, one could also find many well-stocked libraries in Rotterdam and that "that of the polite mister Henrici is not among the worst" (Benthem 1698: I:121). Heumann noted this remark in his journal and visited Henrici and his library (Cassius 1768: 47). On his way back to Jena, Heumann also briefly visited Benthem in Uelzen, but unfortunately Cassius' selection tells us nothing about their conversation.

3 On the preparations for the journey, see esp. Uffenbach 1753-1754: I:XLII, CXII.

Benthem's book, together with his *Engeländischer Korb- und Schulen-Staat* (1694), probably also influenced the particular note-taking practices of German travellers. One important inspiration for seventeenth-century travel journals was the emergence of diaries, in which the author wrote short notes every evening concerning the events of the day, even if nothing particularly noteworthy had happened (Tschirnhauf auf Hackenau 1727: 124-127, Fosterhill 1974, Hartmann 1991, Sherman 1996: 29-76, Bekker 2007). Benthem also recommended that his readers write down their impressions every night, after returning to their lodgings. To remember the content of academic conversations, however, even daily note-taking was not enough. Academic travellers, Benthem admonished, must therefore always keep a "small tablet at hand" and "already in the presence of the learned man write observations down" (Benthem 1694: Vorbericht). Benthem realized that the practice was unusual and therefore recommended that his readers ask permission first. But even the restrictions of academic decorum could be circumvented. Thus, Uffenbach developed "a particular skill" to write secretly with a pencil in a notebook hidden in his pocket and "to record memorable conversations and important relations" (von Uffenbach 1753-1754: I:LI) without his conversation partners noticing.

The German travellers did not always follow Benthem's advice. Benthem's book was more than a historical and institutional handbook and a travel guide for students and scholars in Holland; it was also a contribution to the reconciliation between Lutherans and Reformed in Brandenburg-Prussia. Benthem supported this effort in several of his writings. He even dedicated the *Holländischer Kirch- und Schulen-Staat* (1698) to Elector of Brandenburg Friedrich III and, in this dedication, expressed his hope and conviction that the protestant Churches could be reunited "through the ties of doctrine and love." His travel guide therefore also portrayed Reformed Holland as positively as possible and his route traversed an enlightened landscape in which Brandenburg scholars would feel at home.

Benthem openly admitted that his guided tour was selective, designed according to his own convictions. He wished "before we fully embark on the journey to show the bad and the good in the United Netherlands so that [the traveller] better can avoid the former and embrace the latter" (Benthem 1698: I:2). Students and young scholars should not only shun Dutch inns and whores, but also avoid the many sectarians, Jews, and Spinozists who had found refuge in the country. Benthem praised Dutch liberty and claimed "that so many scholars live in the United Netherlands because one not only provides well for them, but also allows everyone to speak, write, and live as suits him best" (Benthem 1698: II:169). He was nevertheless critical of the excessive religious freedom in the country. Tolerance and reconciliation between Lutherans and Reformed should not lead to tolerance of radical dissent, and Benthem lamented

“that it is very difficult to combine the large freedom of religion in Holland with the rules of the school of Christ” (Bentham 1698: I:6). In his preface, he even expressed a pious hope that his book could serve the “defense against and extermination of [religious] enthusiasm” (Bentham 1698: I:Vorrede).

Heumann ignored Bentham’s warnings. His travel journal only briefly mentioned the Jewish community in Holland, but he carefully recorded numerous conversations with Mennonites, Socians, radical Pietists, Labadists, and Quakers. Short remarks in Bentham’s book, even if this was not the author’s intention, also delivered clues to how and where one could find members of this religious underground. For example, there is a brief mention of the locations of the Quakers and Mennonites in Amsterdam (Bentham 1698: I:52-53). Heumann followed these hints and visited both congregations. Bentham also remarked that one could read and buy Quaker writings in Jacob Claus’s bookshop in the Prinsenstraat in Amsterdam (Bentham 1698: I:621). Jacob Claus was not only a book dealer; he and his older brother Jan were key figures in the Dutch Quaker community. They had previously lived in England and accompanied William Penn and George Fox during their travels in Holland in 1677 and 1684 (Kannegieter 1971: 135-54, 206-208). Heumann sought out Jan Claus, had a two hour conversation with him, and wrote lengthy notes about the history and faith of the Quakers.

Bentham’s book was not Heumann’s only guide to the underground. In 1700, Gottfried Arnold published the second volume of his controversial *Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, which detailed the history of heresy in the modern age and included comprehensive descriptions of religious sects in Holland. Arnold’s book, especially his anti-clerical sentiments, resonated for Thomasius, who recommended it to his students as “the best and most useful book” in the genre (Thomasius 1705: I:227). Not surprisingly, the travel journals, especially those of Heumann and Stolle, frequently referred to Arnold. The travellers also utilized personal contacts and random encounters in Holland to track down interesting conversation partners. For example, Uffenbach, an ardent bibliophile, sought out local book dealers and asked them if “here among the preachers or others is a connoisseur of studies and books” (von Uffenbach 1753-1754: II:271). The future theologian Heumann instead employed his contacts in the Dutch Lutheran community. When he arrived in a new city, Heumann first visited the Lutheran minister, who often delivered important clues to local controversies and radical dissenters. The Lutheran minister in Rotterdam mentioned the quarrel between Pierre Jurieu and Pierre Bayle, and Heumann afterwards visited both. The Lutheran minister in The Haag praised the exemplary life of the radical Pietist Friedrich Breckling, but critiqued his problematic theology and Chilastic ideas. Heumann’s next visit was to Breckling. The Lutheran

minister in Leiden warned Heumann against Thomas Crenius, a pseudonym for Brandenburg philologist Thomas Theodor Crusius, who had immigrated to the city and earned a paltry living as a textbook writer. The minister declared that Crenius “doesn’t attend divine service, doesn’t receive the Eucharist, and is a true rabble-rouser, who reject all our theologians and criticizes everyone” (Cassius 1768: 64). Heumann immediately went to Crenius.

### History as Fieldwork

Many of Heumann’s conversation partners, even among lay preachers and sectarians, knew the historical literature and had strong opinions about Bentham’s and Arnold’s descriptions of Dutch religious life. From the dissenters’ point of view, the books were not impartial accounts of historical facts, but interventions in an ongoing battle between the Dutch Reformed majority and different religious minorities (see also Israel 1995: 637-676, 1019-1037, Marshall 2006: 138-193). Shortly after Heumann’s arrival in Holland, Friedrich Breckling informed him that Bentham “on his Dutch journey had enjoyed himself, and often drunken a glass of wine with the Reformed, and, thus, was lured into judging according to the surface in his book and to pay no attention to the true condition of the Church, which he also did not realize” (Cassius 1768: 64).

In Holland, Heumann experienced how the production of books was part of the process of interpretation. The people he encountered often argued that an author’s personal preferences and convictions had influenced the content of a book, but they also pointed to the significance of informers, readers, translators, and printers. One example is the interpretation of Quaker history. Bentham did not write much about the Quakers, but instead referred readers to Gerard Croese’s *Historia Quakeriana* of 1695 (Bentham 1698: I:623, also Hull 1933: 115-144). During his long conversation with Jan Claus in Amsterdam, Heumann asked about this book. Claus reported that Croese had consulted him to find material for the book. Claus had agreed to help, and wrote to England to acquire copies of relevant sources, but Croese disappointed him. He had not allowed the Quakers to read the book before publication and had suppressed the truth, because, Claus claimed, he feared the reaction of the Synod. Claus, however, recommended the Latin edition over the German translation, which was even more hostile (Cassius 1768: 92-94).

The recent publication of the second volume of Arnold’s *Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie* had especially stirred emotions among dissenters in Holland. Heumann also asked Jan Claus about Arnold’s account of Quaker history. Claus had not yet read it, but reported that the book had provoked controversy in the city and that one prominent member of the congregation, Casper Kohlthans, had written a letter to Arnold

with grievances. Breckling, on the contrary, complained about German efforts to censure the book and had encouraged leading Pietists, Philipp Jacob Spener and Johann Winckler, to intervene on Arnold's behalf. Another interesting example is Heumann's conversation with a Labadist teacher, Thomas Varmod, in Franeker:

I also asked if Arnold's history [of the Labadists] was accurate and recorded in accordance with the truth. He said that in the beginning Arnold had written many falsehoods, because he had trusted the reports of evil people. However, when his history of heretics was translated into Dutch and should be printed in Amsterdam, the printer, who was their friend, had informed them about this. Then, Arnold also himself had contacted them, and made an appendix based upon exacter information, and corrected everything: so that now the true history of the Labadists could be found in [Arnold's book] (Cassius 1768: 105).

Heumann explored the Dutch underground, but not the Spinozist underground that has recently attracted so much attention (Israel 2001, 2005, van Bunge 2003, Wielema 2004). Spinoza and Spinozism were familiar topics in the Thomasius circle and also interested some of the travellers, especially Gottlieb Stolle (also, Mulsoo 2002). But in Heumann's journal the notorious philosopher was only a minor concern. Neither was Heumann particularly interested in the controversies over Cartesianism, although Bentham described these over many pages in the second volume of his book (II: 55–116). Cassius' selection of Heumann's journal, for example, did not even mention Balasar Bekker's *De Betoverde Wereld*. Heumann instead investigated religious ideas and beliefs that were less known in Germany and not easily available in print. For example, he had several conversations about the mystic Jacob Böhme, whose influence upon Dutch religious life Bentham had ignored. The minutes of some of these conversations even indicate that Heumann had prepared a questionnaire before leaving Jena. One remarkable example is the conversation with Albert Jansen, a shoemaker and Mennonite lay preacher in Emden who had troubles answering Heumann's questions and therefore repeated himself:

I asked what he thought of Jacob Böhme's writings, to which he answered that he sometimes looked into them. However, he could not judge them since they were very unclear and hard to understand. He would also not condemn them, since he did not know if they were condemnable as he did not understand them, and maybe God had granted Böhme a larger light than himself, and he therefore could not understand them. He thus could not say that he agreed with Böhme, as he did not understand him (Cassius 1768: 129).

Other travellers were also interested in the religious underground, although no-one was as focused as Heumann. Stolle, for example, constantly interrogated theologians and lay preachers about Arnold's and Böhme's writings. The travellers also found inspiration and guidance in one another and sometimes repeated the same experiences in Holland. Collected information was not necessarily lost, but often transmitted from person to person. One example is Johann Gottlieb Deichsel's visit to Uffenbach in Frankfurt am Main in 1718: Uffenbach was not particularly interested in religious matters, but he nonetheless followed Bentham's hints and attended the divine services of the Mennonites and Quakers in Amsterdam. He also acquired manuscripts relating to the religious underground. Deichel visited Uffenbach on his way to Holland and England and studied his manuscript collection. He was particularly fascinated by Uffenbach's "beautiful collection of very many Quaker writings, mostly English, which he had bought collected from a Quaker in Rotterdam" (Deichsel 1786: 182–183). In Holland, Deichsel himself visited the divine services of Armenians, Quakers, Socians, and Mennonites, and interviewed members of these congregations.

### Fieldwork as History?

After his return from Holland, Heumann became known as one of the most prominent historians of scholarship in protestant Germany. He founded the *Acta philosophorum*, the world's first journal for the history of philosophy, published in Halle between 1715 and 1723. His short 1718 *Conspectus reipublicae litterariae* served as the standard textbook for the history of scholarship at German universities for most of the eighteenth century. In this work, Heumann advocated a view of history that fitted Thomasius' redefinition of the Republic of Letters as a realm of disembodied arguments. *Historia litteraria*, according to Heumann, should deliver a multitude of arguments that the eclectic philosopher could choose between to formulate his own philosophy. The institutional and personal authority of scholars, and their friendships and personal connections, were irrelevant for this purpose and belonged in an entirely different realm. In *Conspectus reipublicae litterariae*, Heumann therefore also clearly demarcated the history of scholarly ideas from the political history of scholars. In his Halle lectures on Heumann's book, Nikolaus Hieronimus Gundling explicated the ideal:

We must ... show the origin of truth and opinion. This is the soul [*anima*] of the *Historia litteraria*. Thus, one examines who had the opinion, by whom and how it has been contradicted, etc. The rest, when you tell something from the author's life, is only accidental. He who thinks he understands the *Historia litteraria* when

he can account for the lives of many scholars deceives himself badly ... He has, in this way, only a corpse without soul (Gundling 1734-1736: I:17).

Many of Heumann's travel notes did not fit these ideals of *Historia literaria*. His commitment to eclectic philosophy may explain his interest in diverging opinions, but the undocumented anecdotes and personal impressions in the journal had little relevance to other eclectic philosophers. It was perhaps because of this that Heumann, like all the other travellers from the Thomasius circle, refrained from publishing his journal. It was only after his death in 1764 that Cassius (1768) discovered "a voluminous journal in manuscript" among the papers on his desk.

Heumann did not even recycle information that he had collected during his fieldwork in his later scholarly writings. In his historical works, he discussed scholars whom he had encountered in Holland with the same academic detachment as those he had never met. For example, in Rotterdam Heumann had a lengthy discussion with Pierre Bayle about the relationship between reason and revelation. A decade later he discussed the accusations of atheism against Bayle in *Acta Philosophorum* and, despite its immediate relevance, did not mention this conversation. Instead he emphasized that the "accusation is, so far as I can judge from his writings, false" (Heumann 1715-1723: I:604). In his first draft of a history of scholarship in *Acta philosophorum*, Jacob Böhme only surfaced in passing as one among other "dreamers and enthusiasts" (Heumann 1715-1723: I:582).

Neither did his many encounters in the religious underground influence Heumann's later theological writings (also, Mager 1987, Sparr 1988, Lehmann-Brauns 2004). Late in life, he claimed that as early as 1704, shortly before his journey to Holland, he had adopted the Reformed interpretation of the Eucharist (Heumann 1764: 78). In his theological writings, Heumann, like Bentham, defended the reconciliation of Lutherans and Reformed. He developed a historical-critical method of exegesis and a rationalist theology. The frontispiece of the first issue of his *Acta philosophorum* even depicted theology and philosophy sitting together under the motto *Concordia crescit*. Heumann's rationalism was not only opposed to Lutheran orthodoxy, but also to the mystical and spiritual theology that filled the pages of his travel journal. The Dutch encounter that left the most lasting impression on his theology was probably that with Jean Le Clerc and his *Ars critica* of 1697. In his journal, however, Heumann only referred to a brief conversation with Le Clerc about his quarrels with the Wittenberg theologians.

There are nevertheless some important parallels between Heumann's travel journal and his later writings, especially his histories of philosophy and scholarship. The purpose of such histories, he explained in *Acta Philosophorum* and later in

*Prolegomena historica*, was not only philosophical, but also educational. Intellectual tolerance, impartiality, and open-mindedness were not just abstract principles, but had to be personally acquired and demanded practice. Confrontation with the historical plurality of contradictory arguments would develop such intellectual and moral habits (also, Scattola 2007). Prolonged engagement with the history of philosophy and scholarship habituated readers to "endure the brightness of paradoxical truths" (Heumann 1715-1723: I:26). Even the history of unsubstantiated arguments, faulty judgments, and wrong hypotheses served an educational purpose. The recollection of the mistakes of the past ensured that "we do not become stubborn in our opinions" and prepared the readers for "modesty in disputes" and tolerance of disagreements (Heumann 1715-1723: I:32-33).

The educational purpose of travelling was similar to that of historical studies. In *Engeländischer Kirch- und Schulen-Staat*, Bentham described academic travelling as a road to self-knowledge (Bentham 1694: Vorbericht). Thomasius and his followers shared this opinion. Even if their travel journals were unsuitable for publication, the experiences of their journeys and the process of writing of such journals served personal edification. If the most important virtues of the eclectic philosopher were open-mindedness and tolerance of dissent, no destination was more appropriate than Holland. Here, young promising academics encountered not only Dutch Reformed clergy, as Bentham wanted, but also a plurality of opinions that questioned their fundamental assumptions and beliefs. Heumann may have been asked to interview mystics and sectarians not only to gather new information and to verify recent historiography, but also to counter his personal inclinations towards rationalist theology. This may also help explain Heumann's many conversations with dissenters about the inner light, mystical and spiritual understanding, and the relationship between reason and revelation.

In the preface to *Acta philosophorum*, Heumann himself suggested the parallels between the educational benefits of travelling and those of historical studies. If the history of philosophy undermined philosophical authorities, Heumann argued, travels through the confessional landscape of Europe was the best antidote to religious intolerance:

Thus, we learn from the history of philosophy that philosophers are human and can make mistakes ... In this way we realize that eclectic philosophy is the best form of philosophy, yes I would even say, that no-one deserves the title philosopher, who is not an eclectic. He who is inexperienced in the history of philosophy, he binds his entire reason to the authority of one particular philosopher ... It is the same as with religion. He who never has set his foot

outside of Spain or Italy, he imagines that Lutherans are cursed heretics and already burning in hell, and he barely believes that they are real human beings. However, when he sees the world and through travels learns to know members of all kind of religions, then his eyes open. As he before believed that the Lutherans could make mistakes, he now starts to believe that also in the Roman Church the *Errare humanum est* is more than true (Heumann 1715-1723: I:20-21).

### The Prince of Pedants

Another interesting example of the educational purpose of the journey is Heumann's encounter with Thomas Crenius in Leiden. Despite the severe warnings of the local Lutheran minister, quoted above, Heumann did not find an exciting freethinker in Crenius' house. Crenius, Heumann noted, had nothing "thorough" to say and "constantly contradicted himself" (Cassius 1768: 65). The philologist was nevertheless interesting as an example of a faulty, pedantic, and outdated academic and Heumann filled his journal with comments about Crenius' flaws. He was egocentric, arrogant, and convinced "that apart from himself there is no real erudite man in world." He mistakenly thought, "that he is the highest, yes, the only theologian" and "constantly boasted about himself." He preferred style and method to scholarship and arguments and demanded to be addressed as "Your Excellency." Crenius was, Heumann summarized, "the prince of that kind of scholars that the French call pedants" (65).

Heumann's remarks about the Lutheran philologist Crenius were harsher than his comments about any of his other Dutch encounters, including those with Catholics, Spinozists, and mystics. However, they were similar to descriptions of Crenius in other travel journals. In *Engeländischer Kirch- und Schulen-Staat*, Bentheim warned against notes such as "that Cöllbert Burnet during sermons gesticulates against the customs of the English and often takes his finger to his nose; that Isaac Vossius sleeps during the day and works at night; that Henry More smiles for every third word; that John Spencer doesn't have a beautiful face; that Edward Bernard eats more than usual before theater; and other similar useless things" (Bentheim 1694: Vorbericht). Such matters, however, vividly interested the young scholars in the Thomasius' circle. They all made notes about the customs and manners of scholars and Gottlieb Stolle, Martin Mulsow argues, even used Thomasius' doctrine of temperaments as a starting point for his fieldwork among Dutch scholars (2007: 69). While such observations were irrelevant in the disembodied realm of arguments of Thomasius' Republic of Letters, and therefore also in the history of scholarship, they offered valuable lessons as to how one should navigate in the world.

Crenius was portrayed more frequently and in more detail than any other scholar in Holland or England. Some travellers only visited him to witness his impolite and pedantic behavior. Uffenbach, for example, opened his description of Crenius with the comment that "people had made a fool's portrait of [Crenius] in conversations ... However, we found him even odder than we had imagined" (von Uffenbach 1753-1754: III:465). Christoph August Lämmermann in 1710 defended Crenius, but remarked that: "Strangers and others who visit him speak much about his odd temperament" (Lämmermann 1792: 102). Almost all the travel journals noticed and condemned Crenius' pedantic style, his dirty clothing, and his arrogance. Even sympathetic visitors, such as Stolle and Lämmermann, could not ignore his appalling appearance and bad manners. Lämmermann noted that "he is a very badly dressed man" (102). Stolle declared that one could learn much from Crenius, "only one must have patience with him" (Stolle forthcoming: 525).

The educational purpose of the visit to Crenius was clearly different from the purpose of the conversations with underground freethinkers and sectarians. These dissenters seldom dressed *à la mode* and their opinions were also not in perfect accordance with the writings of Christian Thomasius. However, for the habituation of tolerance and open-mindedness, these breaches of the rules of decorum and enlightened reasoning were of minor importance. The dissenters were interesting because of their unusual ideas, not because of their appearances or knowledge of contemporary philosophy. Crenius, on the contrary, presented himself as a scholar and demanded that visitors should honor him as such. He insisted upon the significance of appearances in academic dialogue and thus became a target of the fierce critique of pedantry of the early German Enlightenment (also, Koscinna 2003: 55-84). He served as the model of an antiquated scholar and exemplified the academic vices of the past that a young German scholar should learn to shun if he wanted to become an enlightened philosopher.

The journals especially ridiculed Crenius' demand to be addressed "Your Excellency." This small vanity violated some of the central principles of scholarly communication of the German Enlightenment. During conversations in his private study or in his collegium, a scholar entered the disembodied realm of arguments and should relinquish all privileges of rank and estate. The force of arguments should replace the authority of books, clothes, and titles. Thomasius therefore also immediately prohibited new students at the University of Halle from addressing him as "Your Excellency." Only outside the study or the private lecture hall should the normal rules of decorum be enforced and obeyed (Eskildsen 2008). Crenius' fondness for titles revealed his inability to change personae and this weakness interested the



Thomasius' followers. Uffenbach, for example, purposefully challenged Crenius' vanity:

He received us as a Stoic, and watched if we honored him adequately. In the beginning we diligently avoided to do so, to see if he would let us know, as he had others, that we must address him as Your Excellency. That happened immediately. He soon started to talk about his many titles, and how one had addressed him with this, another with that, while he each time said, 'he spoke to me: Your Excellency, what do you think of this book,' etc. After we had heard enough of this foolishness, we started diligently to call him Your Excellency, and he became much friendlier. Only there was no end to the bragging and boasting (von Uffenbach 1753-1754: III:465-466).

Uffenbach was not the only visitor who purposefully tested Crenius' vanity. Even Stolle noticed that if one failed to address Crenius as "Your Excellency," "then he soon comes up with a story about how an important prince or ambassador called him Excellency" (Stolle forthcoming: 528). As late as 1789, David Christoph Seybold's *Historisches Handbuch auf alle Tage im Jahre* published a short anecdote about Crenius' fondness of titles. The story recounted the experience of one German traveller, named Hauber, who visited Holland at the beginning of the century.<sup>4</sup> Like Uffenbach and Stolle, Hauber sensed that "Crenius liked no other title than Excellency ... However, [Hauber] on purpose did not address him so, to see how he would react" (Lämmermann 1792: 107-108).

#### From Fieldwork to Bildungsreise

Crenius' encounters with German travellers were not only encounters between different types of scholars, but also between two different concepts of the Republic of Letters. Crenius considered himself a representative and defender of a dying tradition that connected humanistic scholarship and Christian piety. "In Holland," he explained to Stolle, "one only appreciates paradoxical books," in particular Spinozistic books. The scholars in Germany, he lamented, "are truly donkeys, no professor is any good" (Stolle forthcoming: 472, 474-475). To the friendly Lämmermann he remarked "that barbarianism is again creeping into polite letters, thus only a few good men of letters can be encountered in Holland and Germany, very few in Italy, and none whatsoever

<sup>4</sup> Possibly the later minister in the Sankt Petri Church in Copenhagen. Eberhard David Hauber, who went on his academic journey in 1730 (see Osbentz 1976: 12).



Figure 1. The fruits of academic travelling separated from the personal experiences of the journey and collected in the study (frontispiece in Uffenbach 1753-1754).

in France" (Lämmermann 1792: 108). Disrespect of past authorities and ignorance of ancient languages undermined the Latin *respublica litteraria* that Erasmus of Rotterdam had envisioned in his *Antibarbarorum liber* two centuries earlier. To the travellers, however, Crenius' insistence upon the etiquette and values of the old *respublica litteraria* violated enlightened standards for free academic dialogue, and thus the principles of Thomasius' new eclectic Republic of Letters.

During the first decades of the eighteenth century, German scholars increasingly questioned the ideals of the Latin *respublica litteraria* and this critique also extended to the academic educational journey (see Eskildsen 2004). Another example of a young northern European scholar who sympathized with Thomasius and travelled to Holland during the early eighteenth century was the later Copenhagen professor Ludvig Holberg. Holberg visited Holland at the same time as Heumann, 1704-5, and returned again in 1714. Unfortunately his travel journals have not survived, but in his later writings Holberg often reflected on the significance of his journeys for his personal as well as scholarly development. By the 1740s, Holberg had convinced himself that travelling was of little or no academic significance:

On such journeys, one has the occasion to speak to one or another famous man. But the company of such men is not always easily accessible. For example, I visited Monsieur Le Clerc in Amsterdam a couple of times and was each time received lovingly. However, when I returned a third time, he knitted his brows. Thus, the so-called benefit only consists in the name, that one after returning can report that one has spoken with such a man. To enjoy this honor, one has squandered a large part of one's heritage and uselessly wasted a large part on mail-carriages. In libraries, one finds numerous rare writings that one cannot find in one's native country. That cannot be denied. However, for a tenth of the cost of the journey, one could become the actual owner of those writings that one otherwise only has the liberty to leaf through (Holberg 1865-1875: IV:91-92).

Holberg travelled constantly during his youth. He visited not only Holland, but also France and Italy, and lived for several years in England. Thus, his rejection of the value of travel should probably be read with some reservations. During the eighteenth century, academic travels remained not only a resource for the education of philosophers, but also a source of underground knowledge and an entry into the academic community. As late as 1752 the Jena professor Johann Andreas Fabricius recommended such journeys because "one here visits scholars, talk with them, sees their libraries, wins their friendship, and benefits from their oral teachings in [private] company, where these often are delivered more freely" (Fabricius 1752-1754: I:45). Professors at German universities continued lecturing on the proper rules for travelling to the end of the eighteenth century (Neutsch 1991).

Holberg's rejection of academic travelling, however, points to an important development in the history of scholarship. The ideals of eclectic and disinterested scholarship challenged the role of personal connections and mutual trust in scholarship. During the eighteenth century, academic specialization and the increasing importance of written communication and academic journals further undermined these early modern ideals. The emergence of new disciplinary communities fragmented the common European community of the Republic of Letters.

As scholars objectified knowledge in writing and within disciplines, the subjective experiences of the academic journey won new importance. Travel journals of European scholars increasingly focused on personal developments, impressions, and emotions, and consequently they found a new readership outside narrow academic circles (also, Kalb 1981, Brenner 1989, Sherman 1996: 149-268). Holberg's descriptions of his travels are clear examples of this development. In 1728, Holberg published the first volume of his memoirs and included a short account of

his visits to Holland. This account reported nothing about his conversations with Dutch scholars. He described the naïveté and arrogance of his youth, dwelled on his illnesses and his lack of money, and charted his way to self-knowledge, but he ignored Dutch libraries, universities, and bookshops. The only trace of the old center of the European Republic of Letters was a short description of the statue of Erasmus in Rotterdam. Holberg noticed the schoolboys throwing stones at the statue and wondered if even the citizens of Rotterdam had forgotten the merits of the humanist (Holberg 1969-1971: XII:63).

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