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BERLINER MITTELALTER- &
FRÜHNEUZEITFORSCHUNG

Bettina Noak (Hg.)

**Wissenstransfer und Auctoritas in der
frühneuzeitlichen
niederländischsprachigen Literatur**

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Mike Keirsbilck

The tongue, the mouth and safeguard of freedom: Towards a governmental reading of Vondel's *Palamedes* (1625)

By the end of 1624, Vondel began to write *Palamedes*, a play that most critics have taken to be an allegory on the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, grand pensionary of the Dutch Republic, by Maurice, prince of Orange. Maurice and Van Oldenbarnevelt led the Republic through some turbulent times. By the year 1617, however, their collaboration turned into a bitter struggle for power. When Van Oldenbarnevelt undermined Maurice's military authority by appointing urban militias, Maurice had enough. In 1618, he made a coup and had Van Oldenbarnevelt, together with some of his most prominent supporters, arrested on grounds of treason. At his trial, which was in fact nothing more than a mock trial, Van Oldenbarnevelt was sentenced to death. By his actions Maurice came off best politically, but he lost his status with at least part of the people.¹ As we all know, Vondel chose the side of Van Oldenbarnevelt and strongly rejected Maurice's actions. As a result, he started working on *Palamedes* in order to ventilate his indignation. Due to the contemporary nature of the events it was, of course, impossible to give chapter and verse. Therefore, the poet made use of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with the tale of the wrongfully accused Palamedes.²

It is apparent that Vondel had political motives with his play. For the play's original audience it was abundantly clear that *Palamedes, oft Vermoorde Onnooselheyd* actually dealt with the »murder« of the innocent Johan Van Oldenbarnevelt. In times when the public opinion was shaped with pamphlets, treatises and plays, Vondel really made a stand. At first sight, Vondel tried to win the audience over to his view that Palamedes, or Van Oldenbarnevelt, was

1 For a comprehensive account of the events see BEN KNAPEN: *De Man en zijn Staat: Johan van Oldenbarnevelt 1547-1610*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 287-331; JAN DEN TEX: *Oldenbarnevelt*, Haarlem 1966, III, pp. 488-792; JONATHAN I. ISRAEL: *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806*, Oxford 1998, pp. 433-439.

2 PUBLIUS VIRGILIUS MARO: *Aeneis*, Amsterdam 2008, Book II, 77-104. And PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO: *Metamorphosen*, Amsterdam 2009, Book XIII, 30-70, 307-312.

wrongfully accused and died an unjust death.³ In the later criticism of the play, this is still the general consensus. In 1879, Theodoor Jorissen also came to this conclusion in his study on *Palamedes en Gysbrecht van Aemstel*.⁴ Later, W.A.P. Smit in *Van Pascha tot Noah* (1956) stressed the influence of Seneca on Vondel's play, but he also concluded that it was an allegory camouflaged as an ancient tragedy.⁵ In 1999, Lia van Gemert argued in *Tussen de Bedrijven Door?* that the choruses all represent a political faction pro or contra Palamedes or Van Oldenbarnevelt.⁶ More recently in 2005, Klaus Beekman and Ralf Grüttemeier wrote an article in which they show that Vondel portrayed Van Oldenbarnevelt as Palamedes, which made him subject to censorship.⁷ In brief, nearly all critics of the play focus on the Van Oldenbarnevelt allegory. Other analyses made by, for example, Johan Gerritsen deal with textual criticism and the print history of the play.⁸ Recently, there have been some studies that refrain from focusing primarily on the allegory. In *Fortuna, Fatum en Providentia Dei in de Nederlandse Tragedie 1600 – 1720*, Jan Konst supports the idea that Vondel resisted the notion of the double predestination in favour of an ideology that builds upon the idea of freedom of choice.⁹ Bettina Noak, in her article »Taal en Geweld in Enkele Bijbelse Treurspelen van Joost van den Vondel«, argued that the language of Agamemnon is that of a tyrant, a conclusion that she also ties to Vondel's reception of Maurice.¹⁰ In *Vondel Belicht*¹¹ and the 2009 English adaptation

3 See for example PIET CALIS: *Vondel: Het Verhaal van zijn Leven*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 12–14; JOHANNES FRANCISCUS MARIA STERCK, *Het Leven van Joost van den Vondel*, Haarlem 1926, p. 28; PIET OOMES: *Joost van den Vondel*, Leuven 1938, pp. 27–28; JOHANNES MELLES: *Joost van den Vondel: een Geschiedenis van zijn Leven*, Utrecht 1957, p. 43.

4 THEODOOR JORISSEN: *Palamedes en Gysbrecht van Aemstel: Kritische Studiën*, Amsterdam, 1879, pp. 1–56.

5 WISSE ALFRED PIERRE SMIT: *Van Pascha tot Noah*, Zwolle 1956, pp. 100–125.

6 LIA VAN GEMERT: *Tussen de Bedrijven door? De Functie van de Rei in Nederlandstalig Toneel 1556–1625*, Deventer 1999, pp. 236–238.

7 KLAUS BEECKMAN and RALF GRÜTTEMEIER: Censuur en literatuur: Joost van den Vondels *Palamedes* en Hendrik Smeeks' *Krinke Kesmes*, in: *ibid.*, *De Wet van de Letter*, Amsterdam 2005, pp. 11–27.

8 JOHAN GERRITSEN: De eerste druk van de *Palamedes*, in: HENRY F. HOFMAN and KOERT VAN DER HOF (eds.), *Uit Bibliotheektuin en Informatieveld: Opstellen aangeboden aan Dr. D. Grosheide bij zijn afscheid als bibliothecaris van de Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht*, Utrecht 1978, pp. 219–230.

9 JAN KONST: *Fortuna, Fatum en Providentia Dei in de Nederlandse Tragedie 1600–1720*, Hilversum 2003, pp. 178–184.

10 BETTINA NOAK: Taal en Geweld in Enkele Bijbelse Treurspelen van Joost van den Vondel, in: *Neerlandistiek.NL*, 2007. (online: <http://www.neerlandistiek.nl/publish/articles/000155/article.pdf>; accessed September 09, 2013)

11 FRANS-WILLEM KORSTEN: *Vondel Belicht: Voorstellingen van Soevereiniteit*, Hilversum 2006, pp. 129–137.

Sovereignty as Inviolability,¹² Frans-Willem Korsten points out that the predestination of the events is put into question. He argues the text poses a fundamental question: how can God be responsible for the death of innocent people? If it is possible that people are responsible, Christian history cannot be reduced to one efficient process. Therefore, Korsten suggests, Christian history in the play is shown to be an inconsistent, inefficient process that Vondel wanted to revise. Finally, Nina Geerdink contributed to the recently published bundle *Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679)* an article with the significant title »Politics and Aesthetics – Decoding Allegory in *Palamedes*«. ¹³ Geerdink touches on the fact that the allegory has a complex function that goes beyond a »thinly veiled political statement«, ¹⁴ and shows in her article that »allegory is both more than rhetoric or a literary game and more than a thin veil to cover a political statement«. ¹⁵ She concludes that the interaction between both politics and aesthetics is pivotal to *Palamedes*.¹⁶

Yet, all of the above studies have in common that they take the allegory more or less at face value: according to each of these scholars, the play can be read as a reflection on the tragic demise of Van Oldenbarnevelt. Every character in the play can be tied to and identified with a historical figure. As a result, we can read *Palamedes* as a critique of the groundless execution of Van Oldenbarnevelt. When we try to contextualize the play in its historical reality, the allegory does indeed immediately catch the eye. Yet, if we read the text more closely we can discover that underneath this allegory another level of interpretation is possible. The play is not only a critique of the groundless execution of Van Oldenbarnevelt, but also a critique of the order of the contemporary state. By making use of Michel Foucault's notion of »governmentality«, I will try to sidestep the play's allegory and try to show that at the heart of it we can also read the fear that the tolerant and flourishing state would fall into abuse and injustice, not only because Van Oldenbarnevelt was sentenced to death, but because the regime that came with Maurice could be harmful for the development of the state and its economy. As such, the play seems to present a clash between an old policy and new forms of government. Seen in this way, the text can be read as an agent in the contemporary debate on the order of the state.

12 FRANS-WILLEM KORSTEN: *Sovereignty as Inviolability: Vondel's Theatrical Explorations in the Dutch Republic*, Hilversum 2009, pp.119–131.

13 NINA GEERDINK: Politics and Aesthetics – Decoding Allegory in *Palamedes*, in: FRANS-WILLEM KORSTEN and JAN BLOEMENDAL: *Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679) Dutch Playwright in the Golden Age*, Leiden 2012, pp. 225–248.

14 GEERDINK (see n. 13), p. 225.

15 GEERDINK (see n. 13), p. 248.

16 GEERDINK (see n. 13), *ibid.*

1 Foucault's governmentality

During his course *Security, Territory, Population* (1977–78) at the Collège de France, Foucault famously elaborates on his notion of »governmentality«. He makes a genealogical study on the evolution of government and notices that from the 16th century onwards, various older and newer mechanisms of the management of the population are being implemented. The first of these mechanisms is, according to Foucault, the juridico-legal mechanism. This mechanism is the archaic form of penal order, a mechanism that in Western Europe runs from the Middle Ages until the 17th and even 18th century.¹⁷ The second mechanism Foucault describes is the disciplinary mechanism, which begins to rise from the 17th century onwards. Foucault explains the difference between the two systems as follows:

[T]he first form, which consists in laying down a law and fixing a punishment for the person who breaks it, which is the system of the legal code with a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited, and a coupling, comprising the code, between a type of prohibited action and a type of punishment. This, then, is the legal or juridical mechanism. [...] [T]he law framed by mechanisms of surveillance and correction, [...] is [...] the disciplinary mechanism. The disciplinary mechanism is characterized by the fact that a third personage, the culprit, appears within the binary system of the code, and at the same time, outside the code, and outside the legislative act that establishes the law and the judicial act that punishes the culprit, a series of adjacent, detective, medical, and psychological techniques appear which fall within the domain of surveillance, diagnosis, and the possible transformation of individuals.¹⁸

The difference between these two forms of government is to be understood within the context of the idea of the maximization of the state. According to Foucault, this concept emerged in the 17th century, together with the awareness that processes and people needed to be managed in such a way that the best and most productive result was reached. A person who was hung could set an example for the rest of the people. This way, the people were encouraged by the head of state to follow the policy. Because of their own benefit, they would act in the best interest of the state. The practices of public torture and execution can be seen as a corrective and disciplinary technique. While they may have an economic aim, they are clearly still rooted in the juridico-legal and disciplinary domain.¹⁹ When a person committed an offence, he became an offender and

17 MICHEL FOUCAULT: *Security, Territory, Population*, ARNOLD I. DAVIDSON (ed.), New York 2009, p. 6.

18 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 5.

19 Foucault described these practices more at length in his famous work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. For an account of the disciplinary and juridico-legal mechanisms see

needed to be corrected.²⁰ What was catalogued as an offence was strictly regulated. To Foucault, these mechanisms tie in with the politics of sovereignty:

what enabled sovereignty to achieve its aim of obedience to the laws, was the law itself; law and sovereignty were absolutely united.²¹

All of this changed with the rise of the third mechanism Foucault describes. With the mechanism of security, which starts from the 18th century onwards, all too strict criteria are abandoned:²²

[I]nstead of a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited, one establishes an average considered as optimal on the one hand, and, on the other, a bandwidth of the acceptable that must not be exceeded. In this way a completely different distribution of things and mechanisms takes shape.²³

Within this mechanism processes are more able to just happen, which can be linked to the *laissez-faire, passer et aller* doctrine of liberalism.²⁴ The reality of the natural processes had shown that too strict regulations could turn out counter-productive.²⁵ A certain amount of freedom was inserted in the governance, which proved necessary for the enhancement of the productivity of the state.²⁶ The insertion of freedom in the governance had very profound repercussions for the way people were governed:

[T]he population no longer appears as a collection of subjects of right, as a collection of subject wills who must obey the sovereign's will through the intermediary of regulations, laws, edicts and so on. It will be considered as a set of processes to be managed at the level and on the basis of what is natural in these processes.²⁷

MICHEL FOUCAULT: *Discipline, Toezicht en Straf: De Geboorte van de Gevangenis*, Groningen 2007, pp. 10–99.

20 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 7.

21 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 100.

22 Even though Foucault sees the system of security becoming installed in the 18th century, he does mention that this shift in governing started in the 17th century with the economical doctrines of mercantilism and cameralism: FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 68.

23 FOUCAULT (see n.17), p. 6.

24 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), pp. 46–49.

25 Foucault gives the example of the regulations on grain in times of scarcity. Price control and the prohibition to export grain were intended to counter scarcity and high prices on the market. Yet, this seemed to be counter-productive as this system provided very little profit for the peasant. The less profit, the less the peasant will be able to sow for the next year, thus resulting in scarcity: FOUCAULT (see n.17), pp. 32–33.

26 When you let things naturally take its course it will entail its own self-curbing and self-regulating: FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 42.

27 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 70.

As opposed to the other mechanisms that correlate with sovereignty, Foucault sees this mechanism of security link in with what he calls »governmentality«. Compared with sovereignty:

[I]t is not a matter of imposing a law on men, but of the disposition of things, that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, or, of as far as possible employing laws as tactics; arranging things so that this or that end may be achieved through a certain number of means.²⁸

These changes can be distinguished from each other, but it's impossible to pin them down to a specific point in time. These are different techniques that emerge over time and gradually become more significant. That doesn't mean that one system will replace another one:

In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, but in which above all changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms and mechanisms of security.²⁹

In his genealogical research of these systems Foucault does, however, notice a rupture in the 16th century when the dominance of sovereignty starts to decline. In the 16th century the world-view has thoroughly changed. Because of this, the prince or sovereign could no longer straightforwardly appeal to old principles to rule over his territory.³⁰ In the middle of the 16th century the art of governing emerges. An important difference here is that there is both an upward and a downward continuity in this form of governing:

There is upward continuity in the sense that whoever wants to be able to govern the state must first know how to govern himself, and then, on another level, his family, his goods, his lands, after which he will succeed in governing the state. [...] Then there is continuity in the opposite, downward direction in the sense that when a state is governed well, fathers will know how to govern their families, their wealth, their goods, and their property as well, and individuals will also conduct themselves properly.³¹

This is a crucial shift, because the question of governance became a private problem: how can one govern oneself, one's children, and one's family? Or how do I relate myself to others, the authorities or sovereign? From the 16th century onwards people actively pursued better forms of governance.³²

28 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 100.

29 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 8.

30 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), pp. 73; 88 – 89.

31 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 94.

32 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 88.

The art of governing becomes settled, repressing sovereign thoughts. A political economy is at the core of this new way of thinking. As Foucault puts it:

Whereas the end of sovereignty is internal to itself and gets its instruments from itself in the form of law, the end of government is internal to the things it directs; it is to be sought in the perfection, maximization, or intensification of the processes it directs, and the instruments of government will become diverse tactics rather than law.³³

As a result the ruler can now be seen as some sort of manager. His duty is to manage the state and the people in such a manner that both can develop. The Dutch Republic was the centre of the world trade, and had to perfect and maximize itself to compete with other states. By consequence the state had to rethink its managing techniques. Instead of clinging to the word of the law, they had to reorganize the way processes were conducted. This shift has another repercussion: the ruler must be competent. Being appointed by God, or being virtuous as opposed to earlier times is not good enough anymore.³⁴ Society moved over to a meritocracy where the people in charge should be the most capable.³⁵ Of course, nepotism is of all times. Yet there seems to have been an awareness of and a demand for capable and good governance, which can be tied to this shift in conduct. This good governance aspires a well-ordered state, where autonomy and tasks are carefully considered and distributed. Foucault states that the old way of government with regulatory control breaks down to some sort of double system:

On the one hand will be a whole series of mechanisms that fall within the province of the economy and the management of the population with the function of increasing the forces of the state. Then, on the other hand, there will be an apparatus of instruments for ensuring the prevention or repression of disorder, irregularity, illegality, and delinquencies.³⁶

Despite this rupture it is important to note that Foucault doesn't see these differences as final, nor do they appear brusque. When Foucault opposes sovereignty to governmentality he doesn't do this in order to simply contend that the former gets replaced by the latter. Both political systems remain active at the same time. As with the juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms and

33 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 99.

34 See for example: ERNST H. KANTOROWICZ: *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton 1997 [1957], pp. 8–9.

35 A possible explanation for these explicit references to meritocracy in treatises and pamphlets could be the influence of the Republic of Venice, which was set as an example for good governance by a number of prominent authors. It was believed that in Venice each year citizens' merits were scrutinized. If it turned out to be positive, the citizen could become a member of the ruling council. See for example: PETER BURKE: *Venetie en Amsterdam: een Onderzoek naar Elites in de Zeventiende Eeuw*, Amsterdam 1991, p. 48.

36 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 353.

mechanisms of security there can be a shift in dominance. Even though at the base of both systems lies a completely different conception of power, it does not imply that the sovereign system gets abolished altogether. To Foucault, a sovereign rules a territory, without taking care of the subjects. Opposed to that, governmentality will subjectify because it addresses individuals to take up an active role within the government.³⁷ If they are governed well, they will be able to govern their own families and goods, and they will also conduct themselves properly. When we look at the massive pile of treatises and books about political theory in the 16th and 17th century this seems to be right. According to Foucault, a great many authors were actively thinking about how to govern oneself and how to be governed best. We can see numerous examples whose influence on the Low Countries has been sufficiently stressed: Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Bodin, De Groot, Spinoza, Hobbes, The De la Court brothers, ... In what follows, I would like to read Vondel's play as one of those »governmental« reflections.

2 *Palamedes*: analysis

For the analysis of the play I will take both the reception of the play in 1625 and the text itself into account. Both can be profitably linked to Foucault's governmentality and thus provide a better understanding of the subtext of *Palamedes*, with regards to the politics of governance.³⁸

2.1 Reception

Before I get to the actual play I will briefly look at the reception of the play, because I believe it can give us some interesting insights in the way the state functioned, with regards to Foucault's framework.

As stated in the introduction, *Palamedes* was meant to be an allegory on the execution of Van Oldenbarnevelt by Maurice. Vondel sided with Van Oldenbarnevelt and wanted to depict the injustice of this political »murder«. Because Maurice was still installed as the ruler over the Republic, Vondel had to be careful not to be accused of lese-majesty. By the time the play was almost finished Maurice had been taken ill. Geeraardt Brandt, biographer of Vondel, tells us that

³⁷ According to Foucault, the backbone of this individualization is the Christian pastorate. The government of souls was a central and learned activity indispensable for the salvation of all and of each. FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 471.

³⁸ This article presents a first analysis of the play. Within the scope of my PhD project I will be analysing the play more in depth. For more information on the project see: <http://www.gems.ugent.be/research> (accessed September 09, 2013).

Vondel, when hearing the news of the dying Maurice, called out: »Laat hem sterven. Ik belui hem vast.«³⁹ Maurice did die at the beginning of 1625 and was succeeded by his half-brother Frederick Henry. The new stadtholder opted for a more pragmatic course and the climate in the Republic became more calm and tolerant.⁴⁰ This must have given Vondel the confidence to publish *Palamedes* later that year under his own name. The decision proved to be a bit presumptuous, because it didn't take very long before there was a demand for repercussions. The Counter-Remonstrant authorities, which had pledged allegiance to Maurice, were outraged and protested to have the author handed over to the States of Holland in The Hague. The authorities in Amsterdam, however, did not really feel like doing that. This faction felt more sympathetic towards Van Oldenbarnevelt and was heading for a more tolerant attitude. The authorities of Amsterdam decided not to hand the poet over, but rather try Vondel themselves. Because of his defence that the play had to be read as ancient tragedy – all other readings were solely ascribed to the reader himself – the judges did not arrive at a unanimous verdict. Vondel got away with it and only had to pay a fine and have the publication burnt. The fine was paid by others, and in the tradition of Amsterdam, the books never got burnt. Despite all the commotion Vondel walked away unharmed.⁴¹

This short history holds a number of interesting suggestions. First, it shows that the juridico-political authority in the Republic was indeed distributed: on the one hand there is a level on which the economy and management of the state is situated. On the other hand, as Foucault explains, there is a more confined level that has jurisdiction over the prevention or repression of disorder, irregularity, illegality and delinquencies.⁴² The States of Holland may be seated at The Hague, they don't, however, have full authority over the Republic. Amsterdam had the power to decline The Hague's request and try Vondel herself. We must take note that it was formally not insubordinate behaviour. Vondel was indeed tried. Amsterdam was perfectly authorized to do this herself, so the town's judges could reject the request to extradition.

Secondly, with the rejection of Amsterdam we can see a return to tolerance. Under the reign of Van Oldenbarnevelt, the Republic maintained a pragmatic tolerant course. After his death, under the influence of the Counter-Re-

39 GEERAARDT BRANDT: *Het leven van Joost Van Den Vondel*, P. LEENDERTZ JR. (ed.), 's Gravenhage 1932, p. 15 »Let him die, I'll already toll his bell.«

40 On the more calm climate in the Republic after Maurice, see for example HENK NELLEN: *Hugo de Groot: Een Leven in Strijd om de Vrede*, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 317 – 323, 360 – 363. Or ISRAEL (see n. 1), pp. 485 – 499.

41 For a more detailed account of this episode see CALIS (see n. 3), pp. 11 – 27; KNAPEN (see n. 1), pp. 336 – 337; OOMES (see n. 3), p. 30; MELLES (see n. 3), p. 43.

42 FOUCAULT (see n. 17), p. 353.

monstrants, society became more rigorous. Now with the passing of Maurice there was a restoration of tolerance.⁴³ Of course, the freedom and tolerance in the Republic was relative. Authors could not write or say whatever they wanted, the trial of Vondel made that clear. Yet to a certain degree, there was a predilection towards liberty.

As Foucault would argue, the power could be seen to break down in a double system. The States of Holland were in charge of the economy and the management of both state and population. The trial of Vondel was not their concern. This was the responsibility of Amsterdam. It was her task to repress and prevent disorder and illegality within the city's bounds. The Amsterdam judges could not agree on the illegality of Vondel's text, but they couldn't let him go without any form of penalty. This would have stirred things up with the Counter-Remonstrants. In order to prevent disorder they sanctioned Vondel mildly.

The immediate context in which *Palamedes* originated shows us that the Republic indeed was directed towards a well-ordered state with distributed power. The fact that Amsterdam refused to obey The Hague, although perfectly legal, does make a statement. It indicates that the order and the realization of the state were subject to discussion. In what follows I will try to show that considerations about the order of the state and the distribution of power are also present in Vondel's text.

2.2 Text

The text tells the story of the demise of Palamedes, the son of the Euboean king. This heir to the throne of the Greek island addresses us in the first act, and lets us know that he is subject to slander. He has been accused of some terrible things, but he is completely innocent. In the second act, we meet Ulysses, supporter of Agamemnon, who conspires against Palamedes: they will bury gold at the place where his tent was. A letter will be sent in which it is stated that he received the gold from the enemy, which would make him a traitor. The plan is completed in the third act. The letter reaches Agamemnon who immediately takes it at face value. Nestor and Ajax have doubts about the authenticity of the letter, which leads to a discussion. To resolve this discussion, Ulysses cunningly suggests that they search for the gold. If Palamedes is innocent the gold will not be there. If he is guilty they will find it. We also find out that Calches, the priest, bears a grudge against Palamedes because he wanted to restrain the power of the clergy. He too wants Palamedes dead, and will give Agamemnon his support. At the end of the act, Palamedes is court-martialled. Palamedes's enemies and adversaries make

⁴³ ISRAEL (see n. 1), p. 488–490.

up the tribunal that will judge him. Oates, Palamedes's younger brother, insists with Agamemnon at the beginning of the fourth act that Nestor be included among the members of court. Only with Nestor present a just verdict will be possible. But Nestor's influence is insufficient: Palamedes will be sentenced to death. We get an exposé about his death at the beginning of act five by a messenger.

In the following analysis I want to read the text in terms of a conflict between two different types of policy. On the one hand, there is the sort of policy Agamemnon stands for: a sovereign policy with absolute and centralized power that uses disciplinary techniques to make his people fall into step. On the other hand, there is Palamedes's approach: a governmental policy with a well-ordered state that distributes authority, preserves privileges and liberties. At the same time it makes even use of mechanisms of security. In this play we can perceive three specific ways of orders: policy, religion and justice. I will discuss these three separately.

2.2.1 Policy

Let us start with a clarification of the order of policy within the scope of government. In act three, during the discussion with Nestor, it becomes clear that Agamemnon stands for a policy where he alone has all the power. His word is the law, and all have to obey. Related to Foucault's framework, this policy can be characterized as a sovereign one:⁴⁴

Agamemnon:

Wat Agamemnon drijft dat moet voor al geschien.
 'Tbetaemt den minderen voor meerde macht te duycken.

Nestor:

Een koning kan seer licht d'ontfange macht misbruycken.

Agamemnon:

Dat oordeel staet aen hem.

Nestor:

En oock aen syn gemeent,
 Van wie hy syne macht, en heerlyckheyt ontleent.
 De koning is om 't volck. Wijs die sich weet te voegen.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ JOOST VAN DEN VONDEL: Palamedes oft Vermoorde Onnooselheyd, in: *De Werken van Vondel*, J.F.M. STERCK (ed.), Amsterdam 1928, p. 683.

⁴⁵ Agamemnon:

What Agamemnon desires above all must happen.
 It is becoming that the lesser should bow for higher power.
 Nestor:

Agamemnon, who as a character represents Maurice, expects absolute power. Nestor, the voice of the impartial judges, immediately sees the danger, inherent in such a model, of the abuse of power. To him, the prince receives his authority from the people. It's his duty to take the people's wishes into account. This is reminiscent of what Foucault understood to be the art of governing: when a ruler looks after its people, the people will behave. The rupture between the notions of policy is sharply spelled out in this fragment. Using Foucault's vocabulary, two conflicting groups can be distinguished. On the one hand, there is Palamedes and his supporters with the governmental policy, on the other hand there is Agamemnon and his supporters with the sovereign policy. Ulysses, for example, as an ally of Agamemnon advocates a sovereign absolute power, when he explains in act two why he wants to incriminate Palamedes:⁴⁶

De wereld geensins lyd twee schitterende sonnen:
 Soo duld geene heerschappy twee hoofden in een rijck:
 Geen vorst, syne wederga: geen koning syns gelyck.
 D'Eubeër [Palamedes] is te hoogh in mogentheyd gestegen,
 En aensien by 't gemeen: dit's Agamemnon tegen.⁴⁷

According to him it is impossible for a state to have two leaders. The authority must be absolute. It's not possible that kingship, a divine appointment, gets mixed with worldly matters. Such an idea is a violation of the king's ascendancy, and therefore Agamemnon has the right to take revenge. By 1625 this seemed to be an outdated opinion. The people demanded a capable government. To occupy a position one should not only be worthy but competent as well. Agamemnon betrays the regional princes with his sovereign ambitions; therefore he's not competent to be king. The night before his execution Palamedes will explain to us what's to be expected from a prince:⁴⁸

'T is waer Ick duld 'et noyt, noch sal het niet gehengen
 Met myn' bestemming, datme' onordenlyck ga mengen

A king can easily abuse the power received.
 Agamemnon:
 He is the judge of that.
 Nestor:
 Also his people,
 From whom he borrows his power and authority.
 The king is of the people. He that knows how to behave is a wise man.

⁴⁶ VAN DEN VONDEL (see n. 44), p. 661.

⁴⁷ The world certainly doesn't tolerate two shining suns:
 As no sovereignty tolerates two heads of a state:
 No prince, his complement: no king his equal.
 The Euboean [Palamedes] has risen too high in power
 And regard with the people: this disagrees with Agamemnon.

⁴⁸ VAN DEN VONDEL (see n. 44), p. 692.

'T bysonder en 't gemeen, 'twelck groot geschil verweckt.
 Het opperste gesagh, als hy ten velde treckt,
 Is met gemeenen raed syn scepter opgdragen:
 Niet om 't bysonder recht der vorsten te belagen,
 En dese maght so wyd te strecken, datter een
 'T bysonder eygendom sou smelten in 't gemeen.
 En als een dwingeland sich in den setel setten,
 En schenden de van ouds besworen Griecxsche wetten
 Hoe kan ick schaemteloos dat onrecht met hem staen,
 En tegens eer en eed myn vaderland verraen?⁴⁹

It could not be expected of him to allow the well-ordered Republic to be at risk. It couldn't be allowed that a sovereign would reign over the Republic (the common). The regions had their own autonomy (the particular). Agamemnon did have the authority over military matters, but that didn't give him the right to claim the sovereign throne. It contradicts the laws of the Republic. If Palamedes had allowed this, then he would have been guilty of high treason.

The conflict between the two kinds of policy can be analysed, using Foucault's framework, as sovereignty opposed to governmentality. Sovereignty, with Agamemnon, is depicted almost as a form of tyranny. His word is the law and he expects total obedience. Even his followers would not allow the authority and power to be shared. The state only needs one supreme ruler, who shouldn't allow any interference from second or third parties. Opposed to that, a more governmental approach can be found with Nestor and Palamedes. Nestor, as the symbol of wisdom, contradicts Agamemnon and stresses that he received the power from his people. Therefore he is obliged to listen to his people and not to make abuse of his power. Palamedes, from his side, could not allow the state to be managed by one supreme ruler. Power is entrusted by the people, and not for the rulers to take. Moreover, the state is ordered in such a way that autonomous regions hold their own authority. If he allowed Agamemnon to claim absolute power, the order of the state would have been violated. For Palamedes, the regulatory control of the government broke down into a double system. On the

49 It is true I won't allow it, nor will I let it happen
 That with my consent they will disorderly coalesce
 The particular and the common, which arouses severe disputes.
 When the highest power goes to war
 His sceptre is entrusted to him by common consent:
 Not to violate the particular rights of the princes
 Nor to stretch his powers to the limits where
 Particular attributes are lost in the common.
 And when a tyrant claims the throne,
 And disregards the ancient Greek laws
 How can I shamelessly choose his unjust side,
 Thus betraying my virtue and my oath to my fatherland?

one hand, there is the state that is in charge for the general management, and on the other hand there are the autonomous regions that hold their own authority. To him it is very important these autonomous regions remain autonomous and don't dissolve into the state's absolute power. This can be tied up with Foucault's governmentality as well. When the state has total control, or regulates every process, this can prove harmful to the development of the state. This view on policy is very different from the sovereign policy that can be found with Agamemnon. At the core lies a divergent concept of how to execute power. To both parties, these differences seem to be irreconcilable, which leads up to this conflict between these two men of state.

2.2.2 Religion

The conflict that is depicted between the two men of state goes beyond different visions of policy. Because of the support of the religious faction, the status of religion in the state's policy is bound to change, even though most people do not perceive this. Palamedes explains to us during his speech the night before his execution:⁵⁰

De meesten hoop is blind, om d'oorsaek van dit wrocken
 Te sien met onderscheyd: oock heeftmer in betrocken
 't Verschil van kerckenplicht, de macht van 't geestlijck hof,
 En 't geen den dienst betreft der Goden: dese stof
 Soodanigh is van aerd, dat allerley krackelen,
 Dat sucht tot eyge baet, en staet hier onder spelen:
 En alle schelmery, die slechts een schijngestalt
 Van hayligheyd ontleent, licht door dien trechter valt.
 Men hitst volcx harten op tot dolligheyd door 't kryten,
 En d'alderstercxte past den swackxten uyt te byten.⁵¹

In this fragment not only the people's blindness is criticized, but the implications of involving religious matters in state-policy is also dreaded. When we project this fragment on the situation in the Republic we can understand the

⁵⁰ VAN DEN VONDEL (see n. 44), p. 662.

⁵¹ Most of them are blind to see with proper judgment
 The origin of this vengeance: they also involved
 The difference in church duty, the power of the clerical court,
 And as for the service to the Gods: this matter
 Is of such a nature, that all kinds of quarrels
 Only benefit self-interest and supremacy:
 And this entire devilry, that's only holy
 In appearance, by result is easily exposed.
 With their cheers they instigate people's fury
 And the strongest eat the weakest.

subtext of anxiety. If the Counter-Remonstrants get their way the clerical court would claim power. This contradicts the policy of Van Oldenbarnevelt that gave the regions the authority to decide in religious matters. The Counter-Remonstrants disputed this and wanted a policy in which religion would have supremacy over worldly matters. When we focus back on the text we can see Palamedes dealt with similar issues. In his appeal he explains why he would not allow interference by the clerical court:⁵²

Soo dryf ick dan niet nieuws, of selsaems, soomen 't noemt:
Maer 't priesterdom, dat slincx het wereldlyck verdoemt.
Genomen ick waer stom, en liet den teugel slippen,
Tot wroeging myner siele, en schennis myner lippen:
Sou niet te duchten staen gewetens scharpe dwang,
Waer aen gekoppelt is der steden ondergang?⁵³

It is not because of his refusal to give the church authority that he started discord. It is the priests that stir things up. If he had allowed it to happen it would have been a violation of his oath of only acting in the best interest of the state. He fears the moral restraint that will accompany this policy, which inevitably would lead to the city's demise. If the rigid Calvinists indeed would have their way it would put an end to liberty and tolerance. A flourishing state simply needs to have this freedom if it wants to develop. This way we could say Palamedes is turned into an icon of this freedom. After Palamedes has been arrested, Oates will cry out, at the beginning of act four:⁵⁴

Men gaet hem na, en stelt syn' vyand tot syn' rechter.
Hy die de tong, de mond, en het schild der vryheid is;
Syn vrydom nu ontbeert, in sware vangenis.
Hoe kan Ulysses doch een wettigh vonnis spreecken?⁵⁵

Another appeal to keep the authority to the autonomous regions can be read here. This time, it is the priests who want to claim power. This too is something Palamedes can't allow. The moral restraint, rules and regulations that rigid

⁵² VAN DEN VONDEL (see n. 44), p. 690.

⁵³ I don't use force to establish innovations, or rarities, like they call it:
But the clergy do, who misleadingly call the secular authority impious.
If I were to remain silent, and slackened the reins,
It would lead to my soul weighed down, and violation of my oath:
Wouldn't it inevitably lead to severe moral restraint
Accompanied by the demise of the cities?

⁵⁴ VAN DEN VONDEL (see n. 44), p. 708.

⁵⁵ They put him under scrutiny, and appoint his enemy as his judge.
He who is the tongue, the mouth and safeguard of freedom;
Now lacks freedom, in solitary imprisonment.
How can Ulysses ever sentence him legally?

priests like Calches would like to have installed, would surely lead to the loss of freedom. As Foucault argued, over-regulating the society proves to be counter-productive. This seems to be something Palamedes dreaded. The policy the priests strove for, according to Palamedes, would lead to the cities' demise. Godly sovereignty, where the word of God is the law, conflicts with the more governmental approach Palamedes wanted to implement. As was the case with Agamemnon, absolute power is out of the question. The regions must remain autonomous and have the authority over religious matters. Having the hands tied by the priests could be catastrophic for the development of the state. A certain amount of freedom, to come back to Foucault's governmentality, has to be inserted in the policy to safeguard the state's wellbeing. A very different conception of policy lies at the core of this conflict. For the priests the wellbeing and salvation of the state is dependent on the word of God. To Palamedes this conception is counter-productive. He opposes the priests' policy, with the moral restraint and regulations that would come with it. As a result, Oates portrays him as the mouth and safeguard of freedom and therefore, from a governmental point of view, the safeguard of the state's wellbeing.

2.2.3 Justice

The question Oates poses, »How can Ulysses ever sentence him legally?«, brings us to our final point: justice. Early on in the play it becomes clear that the text is concerned with how justice is implemented. The old system with revenge and blood feuds is outdated. Instead a fair and legal judiciary should be implemented. The discussion between Nestor and Agamemnon provides a good example. Nestor stresses that revenge is not right. Instead they should apply reason and don't jump to conclusions. To him, what Foucault called the juridico-legal and disciplinary mechanisms fall short. Applying the law at any cost and correcting the dissidents with corporal punishment, or even death, is no true justice. Contrary to Agamemnon he pleads for a moderate approach towards judgement. Correlating this to Foucault's governmentality, Nestor seems to be more sympathetic towards mechanisms of security:⁵⁶

Houd ghemack ghy heeren. Laet de schael
 Van ware billickheyd beslechten d'ongelijcken.
 Hoe kan u hevigh sweerd een wettigh vonnis strijcken.
 Die 't recht heeft op syn' sy' vaeck sneuvelt door het spits.
 Besadight breyn u schey'; die rechter is te bits.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ VAN DEN VONDEL (see n. 44), p. 678.

⁵⁷ Remain calm gentlemen. Let the scale of
 True judiciousness settle this inequity.

Implementing justice by sword is a mockery. It can hardly be considered lawful. Only the reasonable mind can pass judgement lawfully. But Nestor also more explicitly advances towards the mechanisms of security. Not everything needs to be punished at all costs. A state that acts fair and moderate should not want to persecute every supposed offender. In the discussion between Nestor and Agamemnon it becomes apparent that the latter still reasons within the Foucauldian disciplinary techniques. The ideas Nestor proposes seem to lack decisiveness to him.⁵⁸

Agamemnon:

Ghy vreest niet eens den staet door slapheyt te verkorten.

Nestor:

De rechter handelt wijs, die veel quaeddoenders spaert
Om eene onnoosle ziel te vryen van het swaerd.

Agamemnon:

Soo kan geen ryck bestaen.

Nestor:

So kan het eewigh duuren,
Gerechtigheyd die bout de koninglycke muuren:
Daer onrecht en geweld palaysen ommeruckt⁵⁹

If Agamemnon convicts Palamedes he can set an example and may bring other dissidents to their senses. Nestor makes use of a different logic. Analogous with Foucault's he proposes mechanisms of security. It is important that a state implements a certain tolerance, a certain *laissez-aller*. An empire that only resorts to bloodshed will inevitably regress to revenge and retaliation. Only moderation and a certain tolerance can maintain a state. Nestor strongly believes that it's even better to let a supposed offender walk free, if that can save one innocent life. Agamemnon cannot comprehend this. A state cannot possibly

How can your vengeful sword pass a lawful sentence.
He who has justice on his side often dies by the sword.
Mild reason should decide; not that sharp blade.

58 VAN DEN VONDEL (see n. 44), pp. 679 – 680.

59 Agamemnon:

You're not even afraid to hurt the state by weakness.

Nestor:

A judge acts wisely, when he spares many wrongdoers
To save one innocent soul from the sword.

Agamemnon:

That way no empire can exist.

Nestor:

That way it can last forever.
Justice builds the royal walls:
While inequity and violence make palaces fall.

survive like that, but Nestor makes clear that his way is the only way in which a state can last forever. So at the core of justice, a divergent point of view can be found as well. The juridico-legal and disciplinary mechanisms Agamemnon puts into action disagree with the mechanisms of security Nestor advocates. When reading the text the reader cannot help but feel sympathetic towards Nestor's point of view. Agamemnon's way might have worked in earlier times, it is found lacking in the contemporary society.

3 Conclusion

I have tried to show that we can read more into *Palamedes* than the allegory on Maurits and Van Oldenbarnevelt. Politics and policy about how to organize and order the state was subject of public debate in the 17th century. When we read the text in light of Foucault's notion of governmentality, it seems that we are able to grasp more of that contemporary debate. Underneath the surface of the allegory of the execution of the grand pensionary we can also read a much broader debate on how to organize the society. Van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurice established the Republic as sovereign state, relieved from Spanish supremacy. Van Oldenbarnevelt was constantly aiming for a better order of the state in order to reinforce and consolidate the position of the Republic. After his death Vondel, together with the supporters of Van Oldenbarnevelt, feared that the carefully built state would decline if they would allow a centralized absolutistic and godly sovereign power. There was this concern that tolerance, reason and justice would be out of the question. The sovereign juridico-legal and disciplinary techniques fell short to order the contemporary state. To cultivate the growth and the wellbeing of the state a different approach proved to be necessary. A form of government with distributed authority, that doesn't only respect liberty and tolerance but also implements it its operation. In short: a form of government we can call governmentality. These ideas circulated in the 17th century, as a lot of prominent members of society took part in that debate. Think for example of Hugo de Groot and Baruch Spinoza.⁶⁰

This analysis, by consequence, also poses the question if we could consider Maurice as sovereign and Van Oldenbarnevelt as governmental. Of course, this question is not easily answered. Firstly, Foucault argued that governmentality and sovereignty are not mutually exclusive. Both can be active at the same time. So cataloguing Maurice as a clear-cut sovereign and Van Oldenbarnevelt as a

60 For Hugo de Groot, see for example *De Republica Emendanda* (1601), or *Parallelon Republicarum* (1602). For Baruch Spinoza, see for example *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, which was eventually published in 1670, albeit anonymously.

straightforward governmental would not be that fruitful. There would be plenty of counterarguments to be found for both. Secondly, when we read texts like *Palamedes*, it is important to keep in mind these depictions of the men of state are coloured. Instead of pinning a historical figure down to one point of view on the basis of texts, it seems to me more interesting to look at the dialogue between ideas about the order of the state that are included in those texts, and how these relate to the public political debate. Using Foucault's framework, I have tried to detect some of these ideas regarding the order of the state in *Palamedes*. I have analysed this in relation to policy as well as to religion and justice. By making use of the notion of governmentality, I hope to have shown that we can come to a different reading of the play.⁶¹

61 I would like to thank Marrigje Paijmans for her attentive proofreading of this article. Her suggestions made this text more accurate and comprehensible.