Ulric Huber (1636-1694) : 'De ratione juris docendi & discendi diatribe per modum dialogi : nonnullis aucta paralipomenois' : with a translation and commentary
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INTRODUCTION

The principal focus of this treatise is on Ulric Huber’s *De ratione discendi atque docendi juris diatribe per modum dialogi,* to give the work its full title as in Huber’s *Digressiones of 1688.* (Hereafter it will be referred to as the *Dialogus,* or sometimes the Dialogue.) The text of the 1688 version together with an English translation appears in Part II. The Introduction and Commentary in Part I and Part III, is intended to set the *Dialogus* in context and to discuss certain issues arising there from.

PART I contains the framework of the discussion

After the usual preliminary material and this introduction, there follows Part I of the commentary.

CHAPTER I of this section is directed to a general survey of the text itself. It introduces the main characters and, briefly, sketches the physical and intellectual milieu in which the dialogue takes place.

CHAPTER II. There were only two editions of the *Dialogus* produced during Huber’s lifetime — that of 1684 and that of 1688. As we shall see in the text itself they differ in several respects including a change of title. While remarking on these differences an attempt is made to explain why Huber made these alterations and if they were in accordance with a well conceived plan. The two posthumous editions are mentioned briefly to keep the record straight. In addition there are the last minute pre-publication alterations made to pages 79 and 80 of the 1684 edition as shown by the Dieterichs loose-leaved edition in the National Library of Scotland.

PART II is the keystone. It contains, on the right-hand pages, a photocopy of the 1688 text, on the left my English translation with indicators regarding textual differences to the 1684 text, and footnotes explanatory of the text itself. An appreciation of the *ipsissima verba* of the *Dialogus* is a necessary prerequisite for understanding and evaluating the commentary.

PART III contains the commentary where a number of issues are addressed.

CHAPTER III. Within a historic framework, the following questions are discussed. In how far were Huber’s didactic problems similar to those of the past, and, hence, in how far were his solutions the same as those attempted by his predecessors? What were the distinctive characteristics of Dutch legal education in the late 17th century and especially of the University of Leiden? How was legal knowledge imparted? And what were the students’ responses to it? Finally, a consideration of teaching with compendia will be in order as that is one of the chief topics for discussion in the *Dialogus.*

CHAPTER IV. This chapter homes in on Huber as the author of the *Dialogus.* Who was he? What influence affected his attitude to law and law teaching, leading ultimately (for our purposes) to the writing of the *Dialogus?* What do his other writings and orations on the topic of law teaching show about his thinking? To what extent was he influenced by humanism? Finally, in view of his other writings, why did he choose the dialogue form, what are its characteristics and what effect did it have on the structure of the work?

CHAPTER V. Here we are brought face to face with the three other speakers in the *Dialogus* Johann Friederich Böckelmann, Georgius Conradus Crusius and Adrianus

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8 A diatribe in the form of a dialogue on the method of learning and teaching law.
9 The first edition of 1684 is entitled *De Ratione Juris Docendi et Discendi Dialogus.*
10 For a detailed bibliography of Huber’s works and of the editions of the *De ratione juris docendi et discendi dialogus* see Feenstra *BGNR Franeker,* pp 47-98 and especially nos 298, 143, 144, 285.
Wijngaerden. In how far are these characters, as portrayed, true to their real-life selves? In how far are the opinions they are given an expression of their real views? And if not, why not? Why did Huber fix on these three individuals to represent divergent views and in some instances to speak for himself. In how far does the Huber of the Dialogus reflect the man himself? Is the Dialogus what it seems, an amiable chat between friends under the shade of a spreading plane tree or is there a sub-plot?

CHAPTER VI. In this chapter we meet two elusive figures, Albertus Rusius and Gerard Noodt, and try to understand what their rôle in the Dialogus is and why they were included.

CHAPTER VII. In how far is the Dialogus a record of an actual event? Here we consider the conflicting evidence and attempt to understand Huber’s motivation and to assess the dates suggested by the text.

CHAPTER VIII. In this chapter the questions centre on why Huber ended the debate by introducing what appears to be a topic extraneous to the theme of the discussion — Le Journal des Scavans. Was the introduction of the Journal, also referred to as the Ephemerides Eruditorum, relevant to the discussion on teaching law? Was it true to say that in the Journal there was a notable paucity of references to legal matters? And what, if anything, was Huber hoping to achieve?

Questions beget questions. May we hope that the first generation has been adequately addressed. Time and later scholarship may well throw more light on the developing issues. Certainly a careful study of Huber’s Orationes II and IV\(^{11}\) will produce further questions and further answers to the understanding of Huber’s stance on teaching law.

\(^{11}\) See Huber Oratio II, pp 62-74, Oratio IV, pp 88-100.