

A matter of time: Dutch philosophy of language in the eighteenth century

Jan Noordegraaf, Free University of Amsterdam

1. A “poor pasture”? For some hundred years eighteenth-century Dutch linguistics seems to have been out of favor. According to the image evoked by textbooks and studies on Dutch language and literature, the eighteenth century was densely populated by spelling freaks, schoolmasters, and language tyrants, who mainly kept themselves occupied with gender lists and other such matters, which modern-day linguists would dismiss as relatively insignificant. In other words, eighteenth-century linguistics in Holland appears to have been just *een schrale weide*, a poor pasture, the study of which could only yield *onverkwikkelike lectuur*, unsavory reading (de Vooys 1947: 11). Until recently this was the “received view” of Dutch linguistics in the Age of Enlightenment. To my mind, however, it is time to revise this rather unappealing image of eighteenth-century linguistics in the Netherlands. But what more is there to this story than the inevitable discussions of spelling and language regulation?

In his hefty volume on the history of the Dutch Republic, Jonathan Israel presents a vivid description of “the rise, the greatness, and the fall” of the Dutch Republic. Although it is true that his book concentrates on politics and socio-economic life in the Netherlands in the years 1477–1806, it is striking to observe that the entry LINGUISTICS appears only once in the index. It is interesting, then, to see that this sole reference applies to the works of a linguist from the eighteenth-century, namely the Amsterdam private scholar Lambert ten Kate Hermansz (1674–1731), who is hailed by Israel (1995: 1045) as one of the founding fathers of modern linguistics, and not without reason. After all, ten Kate’s “remarkable work on Dutch,” the *Aenleiding tot de kennis van het verhevene deel der Nederduitsche sprake* (Introduction to the study of the elevated part of the Dutch language) (1723) is nowadays seen as the “high point” of comparative historical language study in the eighteenth century (Law 1990: 817), in particular when one takes the European context into consideration. The crucial

question here is: was Ten Kate just an exception amidst so many contemporary linguistic non-entities? In my opinion there are good grounds for disputing this view.

It is worth noting that linguistic historiographers have no problem listing more eighteenth-century linguists who have made significant contributions to the “greatness” of the Dutch Republic. Not only were considerable achievements made in the study of Dutch at this time but also in other fields of linguistic research, namely in classical and Oriental studies. The Schola Hemsterhusiana, for instance, was an eighteenth-century group of Dutch classical scholars, consisting of Tiberius Hemsterhuis (1685–1766) and some of his pupils, such as Lodewijk Caspar Valckenaer (1715–1785), who followed his approach in the study of Greek. In addition to their literary and interpretative work, Hemsterhuis and his students developed an etymological method of investigating language based on principles of reconstruction. The influence of this Schola was not restricted to the Netherlands. Classical philology was a European affair, and the Netherlands was without doubt an international breeding ground for philologists. Thus, the views of the Hemsterhusians were disseminated all over Europe through the lecture notes made by their students. They were definitely major players on the European scene (Gerretzen 1940; Verburg 1998: 440). In the field of Oriental studies I need only mention the name of Hemsterhuis’ colleague, the renowned Albert Schultens (1686–1750), whose textbooks were reprinted as far away as in Transylvania.

In this article, however, I do not intend to deal with the international impact of work done by Dutch linguists or discuss the achievements of one particular scholar. Referring to the works of Ten Kate, the Schola Hemsterhusiana, and a few other seventeenth and eighteenth-century linguists, I would like to tentatively define the contours of what I call Dutch Enlightenment linguistics, and I shall do so by bringing to the fore what I consider to be three of its main features: its empirical slant, its recourse to history, and, finally, its social view of language.

2. The empirical orientation. As early as the seventeenth century Dutch linguists started practicing an empirical approach to the study of language. In their Old Germanic studies, scholars such as Franciscus Junius (1589–1677) and Janus Vlietius (Jan van Vliet, 1622–1666) used empiricist ideas that were based upon the new scientific approach of Francis Bacon and the Royal Society. It was Junius, celebrated for his ground-breaking edition of the Gothic *Codex Argenteus* (1665; cf. van Bree 1995), who first implemented “the ideas of the English empiricist tradition in Old Germanic scholarship,” as Dekker (1997: 291–292) claims. However, neither Van Vliet’s studies nor those of Junius contain any direct references to theories of Baconian empiricism. Nevertheless, Dekker (1997: 292; cf. *stelling iv*) convincingly argues that “there are sufficient parallels to suggest that these theories had implications for Van Vliet’s motivation in pursuing Old Germanic and etymological studies.”

One of Junius’ admirers was Adriaen Verwer (ca. 1665–1717), an older friend of Ten Kate’s. Verwer, an Amsterdam Mennonite merchant who was a well-known author and a key figure in the intellectual life of the city. He kept in

touch with a group of Scottish scientists who were adherents of Isaac Newton's (1643–1727) and sought to develop his theories further. At an early stage Verwer became acquainted with Newton's *Principia*, the much-celebrated *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (1687), a book which was diligently studied in certain Amsterdam circles (Vermij 1991: 17–18). Moreover, Verwer was also a linguist: his achievements include the composition of a Latin grammar of Dutch, *Linguae belgicae idea grammatica, poetica, rhetorica* (Sketch of the Dutch language), which appeared in 1707 (1783²) and which was prompted by the publication of the reverend Arnold Moonen's (1644–1711) *Nederduitsche Spraakkunst* (Dutch grammar) of 1706. Moonen's intentions were clear: his normative grammar was written “de regels ter hant stellen, waer naer het Nederduitsch voortaan zuiver gesproken en geschreven wordt” (to provide the rules according to which the Dutch language is to be properly spoken and written from now on), as was stated in the introduction (Moonen 1706: 6^v). To Moonen, the language of the great seventeenth-century writer Vondel constituted the norm. Verwer engaged in a fierce polemic with the Deventer preacher. Among other things, he argued (Verwer 1783/1996: vi): “ge zult zien dat de taalwetten hier niet uit het verstand (*e cerebro*) worden geproduceerd ... maar uit de diepste werkelijkheid der taal, alsmede uit het juiste gebruik gereproduceerd” (you will see that here the laws of language are not produced from the intellect [*e cerebro*] ... but from the deepest reality of language, and are also reproduced from the correct usage). Verwer loathed what he referred to as “gefabriekte regelen,” made-up rules; a grammarian, he maintained in one of his letters on matters linguistic, is just a cartographer, making a map of the land, and definitely not someone who actually divides the land (Verwer 1708: 553).

It was Verwer who stimulated his younger friend, Lambert ten Kate, to embark on the study of Gothic. The sophistication and the methodological rigor which characterize Ten Kate's work make him as much of a nineteenth-century grammarian as Jacob Grimm (1785–1863). Ten Kate's main aim was to provide an introduction to “the elevated part of the Dutch language,” i.e. its etymology, in his grand *Aenleiding tot de kennisse van het verhevene deel der Nederduitsche sprake* (Introduction to the study of the elevated part of the Dutch language, 1723). In order to provide a firm theoretical basis for his etymological practices, he set out the principles which he felt should underlie the *geregelde afleiding*, the derivation according to fundamental rules. In his view, these principles alone should be relied upon for correct etymologies of the Germanic languages, rather than the traditional addition, removal, transposition, and mutation of letters. Consequently, he promised (1723, I: 175; cf. 1723, II: 6) “*Dat ik geen' eene Letter zoek te veranderen, te verplaatsen, nogte af te doen, dan uit kragte van een streekhoudende Rooi of Regel*” (not to alter, shift, eliminate, or add a single letter except on the strength of a consistent rule). Rejecting the prevailing misconceptions on the subject, Ten Kate gave short shrift to many of his predecessors: the only way to obtain a sound etymology, he argued, was to forget everything that had previously been said in this field of linguistics.

Abandoning the techniques of ancient etymology, Ten Kate had to describe and justify his own research methods very carefully (cf. Van de Velde 1990). He

put forward a rigorous scientific approach: the linguist should FIND regularities, not INVENT them (cf. 1723, I: 13). In other words, he propagated an inductive-empirical approach. Where does this orientation come from?

The background to Ten Kate's views is to be found in the Newtonian approach then reigning supreme in the Netherlands (cf. Peeters 1990b; Jongeneelen 1992: 210; Noordegraaf 1996a: 226–231). Ten Kate, for instance, wrote an essay entitled *Proef-ondervinding over de scheiding der coleuren* (Experiment on the division of the colors) (1716), imitating an experiment by Newton. He can be rightly considered to be a typical exponent of the Dutch mainstream Enlightenment, the essence of which was “the overthrow of Cartesian deductive science and its replacement with *philosophia experimentalis*, a mania for scientific classification which spilled over beyond the realm of the natural sciences,” as Israel (1995: 1045) puts it. However, one should not see Ten Kate as an early positivist. In fact, he was an adherent of eighteenth-century inductive, functional rationalism, which advocated the application of reason to the discovery and explanation of the laws of language. However, space does not permit analysis and discussion of such matters here (for details cf. Peeters 1990b; Verburg 1998: 266 ff.). All in all, Ten Kate's approach can be characterized as inductive and empirical. His “Newtonian Linguistics” (Salverda 2001) is a reaction to Cartesianism, partly on religious grounds.

It was not only Ten Kate who had fallen under the spell of the Newtonian method. As early as the second part of the seventeenth century, Dutch scientists also found themselves attracted to experimental research. The experimental method resulted in an empirical approach, which was propagated in the eighteenth century by leading Dutch physicists such as Hermannus Boerhaave (1668–1738) and Willem Jacob 's-Gravesande (1688–1742), a friend of Newton's. The ideas of these scientists were influential abroad, as well as beyond the confines of their own field of research. In linguistics the influence of this empirical trend can be found in the works of the Schola Hemsterhusiana. The thesis put forward in the literature (Gerretzen 1940; Verburg 1998: 446) is that the basic views of the Schola Hemsterhusiana took shape under the direct influence of the views predominant in philosophy and natural philosophy at the time. For example, Hemsterhuis—who, incidentally, was acquainted with the ideas of the English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704)—considered language to be an ideally built body and, like an anatomist, he wished to dissect the *corpus linguae*, as he called it, attempting to penetrate even its minutest parts. A similar attitude has been pointed out in the works of Hemsterhuis' colleague, the Orientalist Albert Schultens.

Given the considerable influence exerted by both Ten Kate (van der Wal 2000, 2002) and the Schola Hemsterhusiana (Noordegraaf 1995, 1996a, 1996b) my conclusion is that eighteenth-century Dutch linguistics did not merely consist of language tyrants and *grammaire raisonnée*. On the contrary, we also find

an empirically-minded linguistic scholarship which can bear comparison with its European peers.¹

3. Back in time: The recourse to history. The second characteristic I would like to discuss is the recourse to history at a time when the slogan *Sprachwissenschaft ist Sprachgeschichte* (language science is language history) had not yet been heard. First, I shall return to the seventeenth century. I already mentioned the name of Junius, a scholar who is rightly included in the select group of founding fathers of Germanic studies. As pointed out above, it was Junius who edited the first printed edition of the Gothic text of the four gospels, published in 1665 at Dordrecht. He was able to do so on the basis of the splendid *Codex Argenteus*, the legendary manuscript which had led such a wandering existence for many years.

Within the present framework it is worth noting that the status of Dutch is an important aspect of Junius' work. As Dekker (1997: 263) pointed out, it played a significant role at the beginning of his Germanic studies. "In his *Observationes in Willerami* (1665) Junius appealed to the patriotic sentiments of the trustees of Leiden University, by stressing the need to restore the Dutch language to its former glory, and by referring to the public support such an endeavour would enjoy." The key issue of his work was "the amelioration of our Teutonic language [Dutch]," which was to be elevated to a standard comparable with Latin and Greek. Historical research could show that the Germanic vernaculars were not at all inferior to the traditional *linguae sacrae*, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. After all, the Word of God could also be expressed by Germanic languages, as the discovery of biblical texts in Gothic had proven (Dekker 1997: 265 ff.).

The same attitude with regard to the mother tongue is to be found in the works of Jan van Vliet. Again I refer to Dekker's (1997: 267) pertinent analysis: "Junius' exhaustive study of the *Codex Argenteus* and the fact that he recognized qualities in Gothic that were normally reserved for Latin and Greek, influenced Van Vliet by convincing him that it was possible to illustrate and elevate contemporary Germanic languages with the help of their oldest stages." The thesis defended by Dekker (1997: *stelling ii*) is that the Old Germanic studies by Junius and Van Vliet are connected with the elevation of the role of Dutch in the seventeenth century.

In the *praefatio* to his 1707 grammar, Verwer, an ardent admirer of Junius, emphasized that it was of great importance "*linguam nostram ex origine nosse*" (cf. 1783/1996: viii), to know our language from its origin. Verwer acknowledged that it had become possible to do so thanks to the works of Franciscus Junius, whom he calls a scholar of perennial fame. In the past, Verwer felt certain, there had once been a *seculum analogum*, an era during which the Dutch lan-

¹ Cf. the works of Balthazar Huydecoper (1695–1778), a student of Dutch who was much admired for his inductive method (de Bonth 1998: 384). Another example is the influential grammarian and historian Adriaan Kluit (1735–1807; cf. van de Bilt 1999, 2000). It is interesting to note that around 1750 a similar anti-Cartesian tendency towards empiricism can be seen in Italian linguistics (cf. Pennisi 1987).

guage had been characterized by a perfect *analogia*, regularity, and it was in that period that Verwer sought the norm for contemporary Dutch, in an attempt to restore its lost regularity.

Inspired by his friend Adriaen Verwer, Ten Kate composed his *Gemeenschap tussen de Gottische spraek en de Nederduytsche* (Correspondence between the Gothic language and the Dutch). The *Gemeenschap* (1710) is a relatively short work of 84 pages, in which it is demonstrated that the conjugation of verbs in Dutch and Gothic follows the same pattern. It was in the verbal conjugation system that Ten Kate recognized the regularity of vowel alternation, which eventually led him to the discovery of the phenomenon that Grimm would later call *Ablaut*.

Ten Kate's *Aenleiding* (1723) presents the first historical grammar of Dutch, the concepts "historical," "grammar," and "Dutch" being understood in a very broad sense. The book is, for the most part, written in the form of dialogues between Verwer and Ten Kate himself. One also finds an essay presenting a full comparative description of the irregular verb systems of Dutch, Gothic, Old High German, Anglo-Saxon, New High German, and Icelandic. Extrapolating the findings in his *Gemeenschap*, Ten Kate presented irrefutable proof that these irregular verbs, far from representing an erratic type of conjugation, were subject to rules that obtained not only in Gothic, but were valid for all branches of Germanic.

In the *Aenleiding* the reader encounters various instances of the use of botanical language, for example, when Ten Kate discusses the "Europische Taelboom" (European language tree) with its "takken" (branches) en "spruiten" (twigs). Ten Kate suggests that one could consider "onze ONGELYKVLÖEYENDE VERBA voor de Wortels of Stammen aenmerken; de daer van Afgeleide *Nomina* voor *Stamdeelen* of Hoofdtakken; de *Verba* daer uit voortgeschoten voor *Kloeke Armspruiten*, en de *Nomina* van dezen weder afkomstig voor *Minder telgen of Loten*" (our UNEVENLY FLOWING [i.e. irregular] VERBS as the *Roots* ..., the *Nouns* derived from them as ... *Main Branches*, the *Verbs* which have sprung from them as *Strong Limbs*, and the *Nouns* which arise from the latter as ... *Lesser Limbs*). Then, as far as derivation is concerned (1723, II: 95–96),

zullen we ... een overgroot Veld bewandelen, begroeit met Verwonderlijke Boomen; een Veld, dat van wegen 't verloop zo veler Eeuwen verwildert ligt, en overall bezet en bestrooit met oude dorre of afgescheurde Takken, onder welken zig wederom nieuwe Uitscheuten uit verborgene Wortels vertoonen. Hier hebben we gezocht een weg te banen, om onbelemmerd daer deur te mogen gaen, om 't Gebrokene hier en daer te herstellen; om Verstrooide Takken en Telgen ijder tot zijn eigen Boom of Plant te mogen brengen; om de Gapingen te heelen; om ruimte van Doorzigt, om toegang tot de Vrugten te maken; en eindeling om eene Beplanting, die ons eerst als een over hoop liggende Woestenyte te voren quam, in eene Lusthof verandert te zien.

(we will walk on a vast Field, which is covered with Amazing Trees; a Field, which due to the passing of so many ages has grown wild, and it is ... sprinkled all over with old barren or torn-off Branches, among which new Shoots from hidden Roots can be discovered. Here we have sought to clear a way, in order to be able to cross it without obstruction, to repair here and there what has been

broken; to bring back Dispersed Branches and Sprigs each to their proper Tree or Plant; to heal the Fissures; to create Space in order to obtain some perspective; to give access to the Fruits; and, finally, to change a Plantation, which at first looked like a chaotic Wilderness, into a Garden of Delight.)

It is evident that Ten Kate was determined to find the *analogia*, the regularity, which had become obscured in the course of the history of the language. As “Regelmatigheid” (regularity) was “de kroone eener Tale” (the crown of a language), Ten Kate could not believe that the verbs he referred to as “ongelykvloeyende” (lit. unevenly flowing, i.e. irregular) were as irregular as his contemporaries considered them to be. To him (1723,I: 9), language was a “Goddelijke gave” (divine gift); “gevoed met de melk der Rede” (fostered by the milk of Reason) (1723,I: 9–10), its development and extension had been left to man. As reason had been the “Voestermoeder” (foster mother) of language, language must also be characterized by regularity and show logical coherence. Thus, to Ten Kate reshaping the “Woestenyne” (chaotic Wilderness), the wasteland, into a “Lusthof” (Garden of Delight), a pleasurable place, was definitely not a prescriptive activity. His aim was to bring to light the underlying systematic nature of language through historical research, by studying earlier language stages; with the help of the researcher’s reason, consistent rules could be found. In other words, Ten Kate wished to convince his readers that the Dutch language was as perfect and as regular as Greek, which was often regarded as the OPTIMUM of language and which was once sketched by Hemsterhuis’ successor, Lodewijk Caspar Valckenaer (1715–1785), as a well-structured *jardin classique français*. The comparison to Greek was something of a topos among the defenders of the mother tongue.

In summary, I think it can safely be assumed that the recourse to history in the first decades of the eighteenth century was also a quest for the lost *analogia*, i.e. regularity. It was a search which was to be conducted by means of the right method, i.e. the empirical method, and it was definitely connected with the ambition to promote the stature of Dutch as a national language.

4. Language as a socializing force: A matter of time.

God, having designed man for a sociable creature, made him not only with an inclination and under a necessity to have fellowship with those of his own kind, but furnished him also with language, which was to be the great instrument and common tie of society.

John Locke, *Essay concerning human understanding* (1690, III,I: 1)

In the preface to his grammar, Verwer (1783/1996: vii) argues that one should be able to understand the “oude inzettingen van de maatschappij der burgers [Oude Keuren, Handvesten, Kostuimen] ..., die tot op heden kracht van wet hebben, opgesteld in de toenmalige taal, die niettemin echt Nederlands is: hoe zal de overheid, hoe zullen de onderdanen nog bevredigend rekenschap geven van hun plicht als wij die inzettingen niet op de juiste wijze verstaan?” (the ancient ordinances, ancient institutions of civil society, which have been valid up to now, but which are composed in the language of the old days, which is authentic Dutch. How will the government, how will the subjects give a

satisfactory account of their obligations if we are not able to understand those ordinances in a proper way?). Referring to the great Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), Verwer consequently argues that one should discuss language in its origin and progress, and present the mother tongue in a pure and fine form. There should be a general language invested with authority by the government. It is the task of the authorities to provide the Dutch people with a book on the most excellent language of the fatherland (1783/1996: viii). “Eene *Gemeen-en-Lants-tale is Juris Publici*” (*A Common National Language is Juris Publici*) (cf. Knol 1977: 102). Laws in a *civilis societas* (1783/1996: vii), a civil society—these are the key words.

In Ten Kate we also find various references to the laws given by the state. To quote from one of his dialogues (Ten Kate 1723, I: 13):

Ik heb ook aangemerkt uit uw gezeg, en stem het toe dat de Spraeck als een Voesterling van de Rede moet geagt worden; en het vergelijken van de *Staet-en Tael-wetten* heeft mij als met den vinger aangewezen, datze, alhoewel het gezach van de Rede in elks grondlegging moet erkent worden, eger als een *Gemeente-Regt* zijn geworden, wanneer de Gewoonte en 't agtbaere Gebruik, die de Wetten uitmaken, hare wortels al sedert vele eeuwen geschoten hebben. Hier uit is ligtelijk op te maken, dat men, nu van agtere komende, *de Taelwetten moet vinden en niet maken*; zo dat de Rede nu weinig regt op dezelve schijnt te hebben ...

(I have also observed in your words, and I approve of this, that speech is to be considered as a foster child of reason; and a comparison of the *laws of state* and of *language* has shown me distinctly, that although the authority of reason has to be considered as their foundation, they have become a *common law* when the custom and estimable usage which constitute the law have their roots in centuries past. From this it may be easily concluded that, when one is looking back at this moment, *the laws of language must be discovered and not be made*; thus, reason does not seem to have a legitimate claim to their authorship ...)

Ten Kate puts the laws of state and the laws of language on a par. It is striking to see, de Vooy (1924: 384) comments, how Ten Kate “het verband van de taalontwikkeling en de samenleving doorzag; de hogere eenheid ziet hij terecht als een sociale noodzakelijkheid” (comprehends the relation between the development of language and the development of society; their higher unity is rightly seen by him as a social necessity). It is hardly surprising then that Ten Kate’s basic ideas show a great affinity with those of the twentieth-century linguist Edward Sapir (1884–1939), as Peeters (1990a: 10–13) pointed out. Both authors pay ample attention to the social, cultural, and historical dimensions of language.

The fact that both Verwer and Ten Kate often refer to legal matters, to civil law, might be explained by the fact that they were both merchants, and that Verwer was an expert on maritime law. But it also gives a clue as to how both of them perceived language, for laws are the social language *par excellence* in the bourgeois cosmopolis; they are the voice of public reason, the articulate expression of the general will (Formigari 1993: 103; cf. Trip 1773: 32). Whereas Verwer’s and Ten Kate’s remarks reflect a social view of language, the linguists

of the next generation took a step further. To them, the mother tongue also became a means to establish a community, a nation, and to improve civil society. Language is therefore seen as a socializing force. I will limit myself to one example here.

The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a growing interest in standard language. The foundation of the Leiden *Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, in 1766, can be seen as a sign of this change in intellectual and cultural attitude. Another striking fact is that in both the letters and conversations of contemporary Dutch classical philologists, Latin began to lose ground to Dutch. This meant an expansion of the use of the mother tongue by scholars who without any doubt had a perfect command of academic Latin. The Dutch Graecists launched several initiatives to raise Dutch to a higher standard, at the same time challenging the overestimation of Latin. The first academic courses on the Dutch language were given in the 1760s and 1770s by classical scholars such as Tydeman and Tollius, both Hemsterhusian scholars. In his Harderwijk inaugural oration of 1765, Tydeman told his audience: “ipse quidem vernaculus sermo colendus et cum cura descendus est” (the mother tongue needs to be cultivated and taught with great care), namely “ad gentis nostrae gloriam augendam” (to enhance the glory of our people). In other words, to be eloquent in the mother tongue is a matter of national interest (Gerretzen 1940: 342).

In fact, Tydeman repeated what he had put forward in a 1762 treatise on the usefulness and necessity of practicing the mother tongue. Not long ago, he said, “een vreemdeling in ons land” (a stranger in our country) had argued that the “beoefening der moedersprake” (practice of the mother tongue) had been one of the causes “van het verval der beschavende wetenschappen” (of the decline of civilized learning). Tydeman (4) deemed this to be a serious misconception.

Dewijl wij nu van onze eerste kindsheid af gewoon zijn, Nederduitsch te hooren, te spreken, en in het Nederduitsch te denken, zo blijkt tastbaar, dat geene oefening grooter invloed op onzer medeburgenen gelukstaat hebbe, dan even deze. Deze is het derhalve, welke ... onze poogingen, tot de heilsbevordering van ons en onze medeburgenen aangewend, alleen gelukkiglijk doet slagen. (From our early youth on, we are used to hearing and speaking Dutch, to thinking in Dutch. It is obvious, therefore, that the study of Dutch has a tremendous influence on the state of happiness of our compatriots. So, it is only through this study that our efforts towards the promotion of our own welfare and that of our fellow citizens may happily succeed.)

Considering “hoe naauw dus de banden van verpligting zijn, welke ieder gëaarten Vaderlander aan de alleszins noodzaaklijke bevordering van zulk een heil verknogten” (how strong the ties of duty are that bind every real patriot to the, in all respects, indispensable advancement of such welfare), it will never be denied that “de beoefening der landstale van de grootste aangelegenheid zij voor elken Nederlander, wien de behoudenis zijner medegenooten ten harte gaat” (the cultivation of the national language is of the greatest importance to every Dutchman who is really concerned for his compatriots’ salvation) (1762: 6). Tydeman’s conclusion (1762: 8) was: “beschaving der volksspraak heeft voorzeker den grootsten invloed op, en brengt onbegrijpelijk veel toe tot de

verbreiding van het welzijn der geheele maatschappij” (cultivating the vernacular has, without any doubt, a crucial influence on, and contributes greatly to increasing the well-being of our society as a whole).² In other words, it is in the national interest to cultivate the mother tongue.

Around 1760, academics in the Netherlands, but also in other countries such as Italy (cf. Lo Piparo 1986: 231), were concerned with language as one of the fundamental driving forces by which one could construct a modern state, improve civil society, expand the wealth of the nation, and spread a more democratic culture among the people of the modern state. In other words: improve the Dutch language and you will improve the whole of Dutch society.

It is interesting to note that similar opinions can be found in a celebrated contemporary treatise, Johann David Michaelis’ (1717–1791) influential prize essay *Von dem Einfluss der Meinungen in die Sprachen und der Sprache in die Meinungen* (On the influence of opinions on language and languages on opinions), which was published in 1760 and soon translated into French as *De l’influence des opinions sur le langage et du langage sur les opinions* (1762). The year 1769 saw an English translation, and in 1771 a translation into Dutch appeared, *Prysverhandeling over den wederkeerigen invloed van de aangenomen begrippen onder een volk op de nationaale taal, en van de taal op de nationaale wyze van denken* (Prize treatise on the mutual influence of the accepted concepts among a people on the national language, and of the language on the national manner of thinking). It is not surprising, then, that the editor of a 1776 grammar of Dutch referred positively to Michaelis’ essay in stressing the need for the study of *’s Lands tale*, the national language (Bolhuis 1776: viii).

Where do these ideas on “the semiotic control of civil society” (Formigari 1993) come from? Elsewhere I have argued (Noordegraaf 1999) that they are an early application of the so-called *Weltbild* hypothesis as developed in the French and German Enlightenment and expressed in the works of writers like the French philosopher Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–1780), in whose writings one also finds the demand for the priority of the mother tongue. After all, the mother tongue plays a crucial role, given that thinking develops in that tongue. There is a close bond between the language and the people that speaks the language. In his *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines* (1756: 299) Condillac argues (cf. Aarsleff 1982: 31):

chacun peut s’appercevoir que les langues ... seroient une peinture du caractère et du génie de chaque peuple ... Mais si les moeurs ont influx sur le langage, celui-ci ... influa à son tour sur les moeurs, et conserva long-temps à chaque peuple son caractère.

² Note that it was not exceptional for eighteenth-century linguists to contribute to such a enterprise. For example, the philosophy of Hemsterhuis, like that of Boerhaave, had a social slant: science must contribute towards ameliorating the condition of the people and towards making it happier. It was God himself who had ordained *ut Homo Homini prodesset possit, aut potius inter omnes Homines societatem esse voluit* (that Man could be of use to his Fellow Man, or rather He wished that there was a community between Men), as ’s-Gravesande once put it (cf. Gerretzen 1940: 257).

(everybody may see that languages ... are a picture of the character and genius of every nation ... But if the manners of a people influenced language, the latter ... had in its turn an influence on manners, and for a long time preserved to each people their peculiar characteristic.)

In Condillac's statements one not only finds the idea of the mutual influence of language and the character of the people, but also the basis of much conscious language politics. A fine example of such an attempt to improve the nation is an essay by the German Carl August Göriz (1744–1799), published in 1780 and entitled *Untersuchung über den Einfluss der Verbesserung der mütterländischen Sprache in den moralischen Charakter einer Nation* (Investigation on the influence of the improvement of the mother tongue on the moral character of a nation). The central theme was that “die Sprache durch die Vernunft einen MITTELBAREN Einfluss auf den moralischen Charakter einer Nation habe” (that language through reason had an INDIRECT influence on the moral character of a nation). Göriz tried to show in detail that the improvement of the mother tongue was indeed beneficial to the *Nationalcharakter*.

A similar initiative, albeit on a more limited scale, was undertaken by a member of the *Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, the Groningen lawyer Lucas Trip (1713–1783). In his 1773 treatise on “den invloed van onze nederlandsche Moedertaale op onze vaderlandse rechtsgeleerdheid in derzelver kunde en gebruik” (the influence of the Dutch mother tongue on our national science of law), Trip advocated, as Adriaen Verwer once had, the study of the languages in which ancient legal texts were written in order to be able to interpret these texts correctly. Stressing the close bond between the Dutch language and the Dutch people, he argued (1773: 125) that contemporary laws should be formulated in clear and proper Dutch, not only because they had to be understood by more than a select few,³ but also because they had to be “in harmony met den trek der Natie” (in harmony with the character of the nation). This was all for the benefit of Dutch society as a whole.

My thesis is that the developments in the philosophy of language in Holland can be neatly tied in with those in other European countries.

5. Concluding remarks. Dutch Enlightenment Linguistics was characterized by an inductive and empirical approach, which has nothing to do with the maligned *grammaire raisonnée*. This method provided the proper means of carrying out historical research into Dutch (and cognate languages), research which was strongly motivated by the quest for *analogia*. Among other things, this was an attempt to elevate the Dutch language to the same level as Greek and Latin. Once it had become clear from history that the mother tongue was as perfect as the classical languages, it could be argued that the improvement of the mother tongue would benefit the development of civil society. This process would simply be a matter of time. Improving the language was no longer just a question of pride in the national language, but the necessary basis for any project for the improvement of civil society.

³ For similar ideas being put forward in Italy at the time, cf. Formigari (1993: 100 ff.).

The eighteenth century saw the rise of a more social and national conception of language, so that we may speak of an EMPIRICO-SOCIAL approach. The possible agreement between linguistic and contemporary economic and legal treatises, like that in Italy (cf. Pennisi 1987, Formigari 1993), would seem to present an interesting subject for further research. All in all, it appears that Dutch Enlightenment Linguistics is not such a “poor pasture” after all.

References

- Aarsleff, Hans. 1982. *From Locke to Saussure. Essays on the study of language and intellectual history*. London: Athlone Press.
- Bilt, Igor van de. 1999. *Adriaan Kluit: “Lantkaertschrijver”, ook “Lantverdeelers”*. *De taalkundige inzichten van Adriaan Kluit (1735–1807)*. Unpublished MA thesis, Free University of Amsterdam.
- _____. 2000. “Adriaan Kluit (1735–1807) en de spelling van het Nederlands.” *Voortgang. Jaarboek voor de neerlandistiek* 19: 95–142.
- _____. & Jan Noordegraaf. 2000. “Verwer, Kluit en de achttiende-eeuwse Nederlandse taalkunde.” In Verwer (1707b/2000), vii–xxxii.
- Bolhuis, Lambert van. 1776. “Voorrede van den uitgever.” In Klaas Stijl, *Beknopte aanleiding tot de kennis der Spelling, Spraakdeelen, en Zintekenen van de Nederduitsche taal*, i–x. Groningen: Jan Oomkens.
- Bonth, Rolandus Johannes Godefridus de. 1998. *De Aristarch van ’t Y. De “grammatica” uit Balthazar Huydecopers “Proeve van Taal- en Dichtkunde” (1730)*. Ph.D. dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen.
- _____. & Jan Noordegraaf (eds.). 1996. *Linguistics in the Low Countries: The eighteenth century*. Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek U; Münster: Nodus.
- Bree, Cor van. 1995. *Lotgevallen van de Codex Argenteus. De wisselende waarde van een handschrift*. Amsterdam: De Buitenkant.
- Condillac, Étienne Bonnot de. 1746. *Essai sur l’origine des connoissances humaines: Ouvrage ou l’on réduit à un seul principe tout ce qui concerne l’entendement humain*. Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1746. Repr., with a preface “L’archéologie du frivole” by Jacques Derrida. Auvers-sur-Oise: Galilée (Collection Palimpseste), 1973.
- Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de. 1756. *An essay on the origin of human knowledge*. Translated from the French by Mr. Nugent. London: J. Nourse. (Repr., with an introduction by Robert G. Weyant. Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971.)
- Dekker, Kees. 1997. “The light under the bushel.” *Old Germanic Studies in the Low Countries and the motivation and methods of Jan van Vliet (1622–1666)*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leiden.
- Formigari, Lia. 1993. *Signs, science and politics. Philosophies of language in Europe 1700–1830*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Gerretzen, Jan Gerard. 1940. *Schola Hemsterhusiana. De herleving der Griekse studiën aan de Nederlandsche universiteiten in de achttiende eeuw van Perizonius tot en met Valckenaer*. Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt.

- Göriz, Carl August. 1780. *Untersuchung über den Einfluss der Verbesserung der mütterländischen Sprache in den moralischen Charakter einer Nation*. Stuttgart: Mäntler.
- Israel, Jonathan. 1995. *The Dutch Republic. Its rise, greatness, and fall 1477–1806*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jongeneelen, Gerrit H. 1992. “Lambert ten Kate and the origin of 19th-century historical linguistics.” In Jan Noordegraaf, Kees Versteegh & Konrad Koerner (eds.), *The history of linguistics in the Low Countries*, 201–219. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Kate, Lambert ten. 1710. *Gemeenschap tussen de Gottische spraeke en de Nederduytsche*. Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwertsz. Reprint Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU; Münster: Nodus, 2001.
- _____. 1723. *Aenleiding tot de kennisse van het verhevene deel der Nederduytsche sprake*. 2 vols. Amsterdam: Rudolph & Gerard Wetstein. Reprint Alphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto/Repro Holland, 2001.
- Knol, J. 1977. “De grammatica in de achttiende eeuw.” In D. M. Bakker & G. R. W. Dibbets (eds.), *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse taalkunde*, 64–112. Den Bosch: Malmberg.
- Law, Vivien. 1990. “Language and its students: The history of linguistics.” In N. E. Collinge (ed.), *An encyclopedia of language*, 784–842. London: Routledge.
- Lo Piparo, Franco. 1986. “La nation, la campagne, la science et la langue chez Genovesi et De Cosmi.” In Winfried Bussen & Jürgen Trabant (eds.), *Les Idéologues. Sémiotique, théories et politiques linguistiques pendant la Révolution française*, 231–256. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Locke, John. 1974. *An essay concerning human understanding*. 2 vols. Ed. with an introduction by John W. Yolton. London: Dent. Originally London: Tho. Basset, 1690.
- Michaelis, Johann David. 1760. *Beantwortung der Frage von dem Einfluss der Meinungen in die Sprachen und der Sprache in die Meinungen ... welche der von der Königl. Academie der Wissenschaften für das Jahr 1759, gesetzten Preis erhalten hat von Johann David Michaelis*. Berlin: Haude und Spener.
- _____. 1762. *De l'influence des opinions sur le langage et du langage sur les opinions*. French translation of Michaelis (1760). Breme: G. L. Förster. Reprint Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: F. Frommann, 1974. With commentary by Helga Manke and a preface by Herbert E. Brekle.
- _____. 1769. *A dissertation on the influence of opinions on language*. English translation of Michaelis (1760). London: W. Owen.
- _____. 1771. *Prysverhandeling over den wederkeerigen invloed van de aangenoomen begrippen onder een volk op de nationaale taal, en van de taal op de nationaale wyze van denken : waarin tevens verscheide plaatsen der H. S. opgehelderd, de oorsprong van eene menigte vooroordeelen aangewezen, en veelvuldige zo geleerde als gemeene dwaalingen verbeterd worden door ... Joh. Dav. Michaelis; naar de laatste en met de byvoegzelen van den schryver vermeerderde uitgaave uit het Hoogduitsch vertaald, en*

- met eenige aanmerkingen vermeerderd door Cornelius van Engelen. Dutch translation of Michaelis (1960). Harlingen: Volkert van der Plaats Junior.
- Moonen, Arnold. 1706. *Nederduitsche Spraakkunst*. Amsterdam: François Halma.
- Noordegraaf, Jan. 1995. "The 'Schola Hemsterhusiana' revisited." In Klaus D. Dutz & Kjell-Åke Forsgren (eds), *History and rationality. The Skövde Papers in the historiography of linguistics*, 133–158. Münster: Nodus. Enlarged version in Jan Noordegraaf, *The Dutch pendulum. Linguistics in the Netherlands, 1740–1900*, 23–55. Münster: Nodus, 1996.
- _____. 1996a. "Dutch philologists and general linguistic theory. Anglo-Dutch relationships in the eighteenth century." In Vivien A. Law & Werner Hülsen (eds.), *Linguists and their diversions: A Festschrift for R. H. Robins on his 75th birthday*, 211–243. Münster: Nodus.
- _____. 1996b. "From Greek to Dutch. The Schola Hemsterhusiana and the study of the mother tongue. A few remarks." In de Bonth & Noordegraaf (1996), 33–56.
- _____. 1999. "Vaderland en moedertaal. Een constante in het taalkundig denken." In N. C. F. van Sas (ed.), *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis vanaf de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940*, 345–363. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Peeters, Leopold. 1990a. *Taalopbouw als Renaissance-ideaal: Studies over taalopvattingen en taalpraktijk in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw*. Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn.
- _____. 1990b. "Lambert ten Kate (1674–1731) en de achttiende-eeuwse taalwetenschap." In A. G. H. Anbeek van der Meijden et al. (eds.), *Traditie en progressie: Handelingen van het 40ste Nederlands Filologencongres*, 151–160. The Hague: SDU.
- Pennisi, Antonino 1987. "La linguistica dei 'mercantanti'." In Antonino Pennisi, *La linguistica dei Mercantati. Filosofia linguistica e filosofia civile da Vico a Cuoco*, 135–198. Naples: Guida editori.
- Salverda, Reinier. 2001. "Newtonian linguistics. The contribution of Lambert ten Kate (1674–1731) to the study of language." In Maire C. Davies, John Flood & David N. Yeandle (eds), "Proper words in proper places." *Studies in lexicology and lexicography in honour of William Jervis Jones*, 115–132. Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Akademischer Verlag.
- Schwink, Frederick Ward. 1986. *Lambert ten Kate: Sources and context*. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Texas at Austin.
- Trip, Lucas. 1773. "Vertoog over den invloed van onze nederlandsche Moedertaale op onze vaderlandse rechtsgeleerdheid in derzelve kunde en gebruik." In *Verhandelingen ter nasporing van de wetten en gesteldheid onzes vaderlands waarbij gevoegd zijn eenige analecta tot dezelve betrekkelijk door een genootschap te Groningen, Pro excolendo jure Patrio*. Deel 1, 9–126. Groningen: Bolt.
- T[ydeman], M[einard]. 1762. "Betoog der nuttigheid en noodzaaklijkheid van de beoefening onzer moedertaal." In *Proeve van oudheid-, taal- en dichtkunde, door het genootschap Dulces ante omnia musae*. I, 1–14. Utrecht: A. van Paddenburg, 1775.

- Van de Velde, Roger G. 1966. *De studie van het Gotisch in de Nederlanden. Bijdrage tot een status quaestionis over de studie van het Gotisch en het Krimgotisch*. Ghent: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde.
- _____. 1990. "The concept of 'scientific' in the development of the language sciences." In Konrad Koerner (ed.), *Progress in linguistic historiography: Papers from the international conference on the history of the language sciences (Ottawa, 28–31 August 1978)*, 395–402. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Verburg, Pieter Adrianus. 1998. *Language and its functions. A historico-critical study of views concerning the functions of language from the pre-humanistic philology of Orleans to the rationalistic philology of Bopp*. Translated by Paul B. Salmon. Amsterdam: Benjamins. Dutch original: *Taal en Functionaliteit. Een historisch-critische studie over de opvattingen aangaande de functies der taal van de prae-humanistische philologie van Orleans tot de rationalistische linguïstiek van Bopp*. Wageningen: Veenman, 1952.
- Vermij, Rienk H. 1991. *Secularisering en natuurwetenschap in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: Bernard Nieuwentijt*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Verwer, Adriaen. 1707a. *Linguae Belgicae idea grammatica, poetica, retorica; deprompta ex Adversariis Anonymi Batavi: In Usum Proximi Amici* (Literary, poetical, and rhetorical sketch of the Dutch language. Based on the notes of an anonymous Dutchman, for the use of a close friend). Amsterdam: F. Halma. (2nd ed. 1783).
- _____. 1707b. *Letterkonstige, dichtkonstige en redekonstige schetse van de Nederduitsche tale* [1759]. Uit het Latijn vertaald door A. Kluit naar de editie 1707. Bezorgd en ingeleid door Igor van de Bilt & Jan Noordegraaf. Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU / Münster: Nodus, 2000. (Translation of Verwer 1707a).
- _____. 1708. "Brief, door den ongenoemden Schryver der Idea, of Schetse der Nederduitsche Spraekunst, aen den Heere David van Hoogstraten." *Boekzaal der geleerde Weereldt*, mei–juni 1708: 524–556.
- _____. 1783/1996. *Schets van de Nederlandse taal. Grammatica, poetica en retorica*. Naar de editie van E. van Driel vertaald door J. Knol. Met een fotomechanische herdruk van Anonymus Batavus' *Idea Linguae Belgicae grammatica, poetica et rhetorica* bezorgd door Everhardus van Driel, Leiden, 1783. Bezorgd door Theo A. J. M. Janssen & Jan Noordegraaf. Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU / Münster: Nodus.
- Vooyo, Cornelis G. N. de. 1924. "De taalbeschouwing van Lambert ten Kate." In C. G. N. de Vooyo, *Verzamelde taalkundige opstellen*. Vol. I, 371–391. Groningen: Wolters. Originally published 1923.
- _____. 1947. "Uit de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse taalkunde: Van Ten Kate tot Siegenbeek." In C. G. N. de Vooyo, *Verzamelde taalkundige opstellen*, vol. III, 11–22. Groningen: Wolters. Originally published 1928.
- Wal, Marijke J. van der. 2000. "De receptie van Lambert ten Kate's ideeën in de achttiende eeuw." *Meesterwerk* 18: 12–18.
- _____. 2002. "Lambert ten Kate and eighteenth-century Dutch linguistics." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* 12: 49–63.