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**DOI**
10.1353/jem.2020.0018

**Publication date**
2020

**Document Version**
Final published version

**Published in**
Journal for early modern cultural studies

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**Citation for published version (APA):**

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An Ambivalent View of Colonialism:
The Spinozist Design for a Settlement in New Netherland

MARRIGJE PAIJMANS

ABSTRACT

Franciscus van den Enden (1602–1674) was an Amsterdam Latin school owner, radical egalitarian, and enigmatic figure in Spinoza’s circle. Among his sparse publications is the Brief Account of New Netherland (1662), a design for a democratic settlement in North America. Although Brief Account does not mention Spinoza by name, it is in many ways reminiscent of his naturalist philosophy. This article explores how Spinozist ideas function in Van den Enden’s utopia, focusing on the notion of “sovereignty,” the full right and power of a governing body over itself. The first part of the article demonstrates how Van den Enden’s representation of Native American society functions as a model for his self-governing settlement. The representation in projecting Spinozist ideas of sovereignty on Native American society can be considered a radical—if covert—critique of European state power as well as a typical case of Eurocentrism. The second part aims to reconcile Van den Enden’s critique of European state power with the fact that his design for a settlement is implicated in the overseas extension of Dutch sovereignty. The article concludes that Brief Account conveys an ambivalent view of colonialism as both an extreme expression of and an opportunity for escape from European state power.

Introduction

Populating New Amstel

The Dutch colony of New Netherland was established by the Dutch West India Company (WIC), in 1624, at a small trade post wedged between the British colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts to protect Dutch trade interests with various Munsee groups. From a small settlement of a few
hundred men and women New Netherland grew into a considerable colony of seven thousand to eight thousand inhabitants spread out over Manhattan and Long Island, the banks of the Hudson, the Delaware, and the Connecticut Rivers. The Dutch had entered the colonial competition in the last quarter of the sixteenth century and, initially, they turned their attention to Asia, where the Dutch East India Company (VOC) encountered relatively powerful indigenous states with high population densities and well-developed economies, hampering the establishment of colonial settlements. The Atlantic regions,
however, did offer opportunities for expansion. In fact, one of the main objectives of the WIC was to inflict damage on the colonial resources of the Iberian enemy through the conquest of its colonies.\(^5\) The conquest of Dutch Brazil (1630–1654), the northern portion of the Portuguese colony, was a military achievement, and yet, as the Portuguese had been established for decades, the superimposition of Dutch governmental, religious, and social structures met with stiff resistance and was never quite accomplished.\(^6\) At this point in the seventeenth century, New Netherland was unique as a settlement colony originally established by the Dutch, firing the latter’s utopian imagination.

The settlement of New Amstel (Nieuwer-Amstel, see figure 1) occupied a special position within New Netherland.\(^7\) In 1655, an expedition under the leadership of Peter Stuyvesant overran a Swedish fortress and settlements located fifty kilometers upstream on the South River, the present Delaware River. To protect the area from Swedish attempts to reclaim the land as well as from invasions by English settlers and the Native American Unamis and Susquehannocks,\(^8\) it was crucial to quickly repopulate the land with Dutch settlers. To do so, the Amsterdam chamber of the WIC turned for help to the City of Amsterdam, which recognized the advantages of establishing its own city colony, to be named New Amstel. In eager pursuit of settlers, the City of Amsterdam offered very favorable conditions to colonists, as evidenced by a thirty-four-article pamphlet printed and distributed by the Amsterdam burgomasters in 1656.\(^9\) They would, for example, guarantee decent transport (art. 1–3), a fertile piece of land (art. 5) and temporary tax reduction (art. 10 22). The “Conditions” also emphasize Amsterdam’s nearly total jurisdictional authority of the colony, which would be governed “as it is done here in Amsterdam” (art. 11).\(^10\) The sheriff (schout) was appointed by the delegates of Amsterdam in the name of the Amsterdam chamber of the WIC and the States General, which held sovereignty (art. 13), while the right to appoint burgomasters would be vested with the citizens (art. 15). Considering that the highest administrators in the other colonies administered by the WIC were all appointed from above,\(^11\) these conditions must have been attractive to colonists with liberal aspirations.

Frans Blom and Henk Looijesteijn have demonstrated how Amsterdam’s colonial propaganda machine adopted the representation of New Amstel as a liberal enclave in a WIC-dominated New Netherland.\(^12\) They argued that the burgomasters of Amsterdam exploited the city’s reputation as a sanctuary for freethinkers to attract potential settlers, allowing for religious and
democratic experimentation in their colony. The extent to which this was a well-considered strategy is unclear, intentions being notoriously difficult to prove, but it is not unlikely that the city assumed a tolerant attitude toward the ideologies of colonists, considering the need for settlers and the large financial investments the city had already made. This article, in any case, concerns one freethinker’s response to the calls for emigration: Brief Account of New Netherland’s Opportunity, Virtues, Natural Privileges, and Special Suitability for Population (Kort verhael van Nieuw-Nederlants gelegenheit, Deugden, Natuerlijke Voorrechten, en byzondere bequaemheid ter bevolkingh), published anonymously in 1662 by Amsterdam school owner, radical egalitarian, and enigmatic figure in Spinoza’s circle, Franciscus van den Enden. Van den Enden not only offered an elaborate proposal for a democratic settlement nearby New Amstel, but also claimed to speak for “some respectable families” prepared to cross the Atlantic and perform this experiment.

**Franciscus van den Enden and Benedict de Spinoza**

Most publications on the Brief Account hitherto point out its remarkable similarities to Spinoza’s philosophy, which has led others, such as Frank Mertens, to warn against an “anxious focus” on Spinoza. To be able to assess the exchange of ideas between these thinkers, some biographical information is indispensable at this point.

Franciscus van den Enden (1602–1674) was born in Antwerp and received his education in the humanities and philosophy at Augustinian and, later, Jesuit colleges. The Jesuits appointed him a Latin teacher, but dismissed him in 1633—presumably, he had “a great penchant for women.” On October 11, 1640, he married Clara Maria Vermeeren, with whom he relocated to Amsterdam to start an art gallery and bookshop in the Nes called In the Art Shop (In de Konstwinkel), probably between 1644 and 1645. Possibly a first sign of Van den Enden’s political engagement is a reprint of the 1587 defence by the States of Holland against the King of Spain, published for his bookshop in 1650. When the shop went bankrupt in 1652, Van den Enden founded a preparatory school at the Singel, where he taught classical rhetoric complemented by philosophy and the new sciences. This fashionable approach led the school to become a meeting place for the circle of freethinkers around Spinoza in the late 1650s. During this period, Van den Enden published the school drama Philedonius (1657), the design for a colonial settlement
Brief Account (1662), and the elaboration of his political ideas Free Political Propositions (Vrije politijke stellingen, 1665). In 1670, van den Enden emigrated to Paris to found a new school, l’Hotel des Muses, which was elevated to an intellectual salon by his second wife, Catharina Medaens. Here Van den Enden became implicated in a republican conspiracy against Louis XIV for which he was arrested, interrogated, and hanged at the Place de la Bastille in 1674.

Benedict de Spinoza (1632–1677) may have started visiting Van den Enden’s school well before his excommunication by the Sephardic Jewish community in 1656, but certainly not later than 1657. It is likely that Mennonite and Collegiant friends, such as Pieter Balling, Jarig Jellesz, Simon de Vries, and Jan Rieuwertsz, directed him to the school. In 1657, Spinoza was twenty-five years old and well on his way to unfolding his dismissive views of religion, which may have contributed to his excommunication. On a philosophical level, he must have been Van den Enden’s interlocutor rather than a student. In the school, Spinoza not only found a classical rhetorical education, but also an academic network of Cartesians. According to Mertens, it was not so much Van den Enden himself as his relations at the University of Leiden that introduced Spinoza to Cartesianism and effectuated the naturalistic turn in his thinking. In 1660, Spinoza started to work on the Ethics. Even though he relocated to Rijnsburg in the spring of 1661, he kept the Amsterdam circle well-informed about his progress in letters and through the Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being (Korte verhandeling van God, de mensch en deszelvs welstand), a manuscript that runs parallel to the first three parts of the Ethics and was put into “circulation” among friends in 1662. The Short Treatise does not follow the geometric method, but it does involve Spinoza’s naturalistic ideas in the line of Lucretius as well as his monistic “theology” presenting God not as the transcendent creator of and judge over nature, but as the immanent force of nature itself. Although Spinoza does not divulge any social or political thoughts in the Short Treatise, he may have started to evolve such thoughts at the time, considering that, in 1665, Spinoza would suspend his work on the Ethics for the writing of Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (TTP, 1670). The Ethics would be finished in 1675 and published in 1677 as part of the Opera posthuma.

It is clear that Van den Enden, having received a classical Jesuit education, and Spinoza, coming from a Jewish background, both engaged with the new sciences in the late 1650s to develop radical political views during the years
1662–1665, which Van den Enden was the first to publish. It is impossible, however, to establish the direction of influence between Van den Enden and Spinoza, as this influence must have been oral for the most part and, moreover, mutual. This article therefore does not aim to demonstrate the extent to which Spinoza influenced Van den Enden or the other way around, but rather to employ Spinoza’s philosophy, which is by all means much more elaborate than Van den Enden’s, in gaining a more profound understanding of elements of Brief Account that have, until now, not been accounted for.

Aim and Methods

This article focuses on Van den Enden’s notion of sovereignty, the full right and power of a governing body over itself, this being the most prominent intersection with Spinoza’s philosophy as well as a central notion in colonial politics. Spinoza’s philosophy hinges on a dual notion of sovereignty concerning both the ethical body of the individual and the political body of the state. In Spinoza’s conception of natural law, both bodies are sovereign; every individual has the inalienable right to govern itself, while the right of the state is constituted—and limited—by the power of its people. Evidently, this dual notion of sovereignty implies a tense power relation between the state and its citizens. In TTP, Spinoza argues that most European states were unjustly involved in the ethical domain, often through strained cooperation with the church. This article argues that Van den Enden recognizes this problem and that his design for a settlement seeks the solution in absolute equality and the abolition of the public church, thus mobilizing a radical, if covert, critique of European state power.

This interpretation, however, is at odds with the colonial context of the Brief Account, as the founding of a colonial settlement violates the very sovereignty of America’s indigenous inhabitants over their land, begging the question how Van den Enden’s critique of political sovereignty can be reconciled with the fact that the very vehicle for his critique is implicated in the expansion of Dutch state power. The final part of the article demonstrates how Van den Enden’s Brief Account employs Spinoza’s dual notion of sovereignty to facilitate an ambivalent view of colonialism. In sum, this article investigates how Spinozist ideas inspired a political experiment in the colony and argues that these ideas encompassed a critique of certain aspects of Dutch colonial sovereignty. In doing so, it aims to bring nuance to the view that Dutch
seventeenth-century colonial discourse did not offer any space or ethical frameworks to support criticism of colonialism and slavery.40

A literal analysis of Van den Enden’s design will not suffice to expose its Spinozist content, because Van den Enden at no point explicitly refers to Spinoza. The reason for omitting his name cannot have been official censorship, because it was not until 1673 that the first publication by Spinoza was prohibited.41 Probably, the main reason was to prevent the proposal’s rejection by the Amsterdam burgomasters; during the 1660s, the very mention of Spinoza’s name would have precluded any proposal from succeeding in any bureaucratic selection procedure. Wiep van Bunge has described how seventeenth-century thinkers very skillfully dissimulated their heterodox ideas for outsiders, while at the same time presenting them very straightforwardly to insiders.42 A simple example of this in the Brief Account concerns two “Warnings” to booksellers and readers at the back of the title page announcing controversial political theory that had not been indicated on the title page.43

Another common way of “encoding and decoding” controversial knowledge involved the use of literal and metaphorical references.44 To analyze these processes of encoding and decoding in the Brief Account with respect to its Spinozist content, this article takes an “interdiscursive” approach, in the sense that the Spinozist content is taken to refer to a contemporary discourse among members of the circle around Spinoza.45 As TTP and the Ethics had not been published by 1662, they cannot serve as historical sources for the Brief Account, yet they will serve as the main points of reference for the Spinozist discourse. The Short Treatise is only used as a source when a reference does not direct to the Ethics. The insights offered by this article are thus primarily theoretical, although they should not be considered entirely ahistorical. The interdiscursive analysis encompasses the interplay between the text, peritext, and intertext of the Brief Account in its historical context, starting from literal and metaphorical references in the text and peritext.46 A literal reference explicitly refers to the intertext. Van den Enden, for example, repeatedly refers to David Pietersz de Vrie’s Brief History and Journal of Different Voyages (1655) by mentioning the author’s name, the book title, and even page numbers.47 In other cases, such as his reference to Michel Montaigne’s essay “On Cannibals” (1580), Van den Enden paraphrases the Native Americans’ view on European politics implicitly—that is, without clarifying whether he consulted the actual Essais or based his remark on an intermediate text.48 In the Brief Account, literal references to Spinozist discourse are always implicit. A metaphorical
reference invokes the intertext, or part thereof, by replacing it with something similar. Personification, allegory, and metonymy are all forms of metaphor that may be involved in intertextual references. In the Epilogue of the *Brief Account*, for instance, New Netherland and Holland are personified as “mothers” evoking a joint future for their “children.” Evidently, the political reference becomes more effective when pronounced by two pre-eminently unpolitical characters. A more comprehensive (and hypothetical) example concerns Van den Enden’s representation of Native American society as an allegory representing his political ideology as well as the model for his settlement.

The following section expounds the composition and set-up of the *Brief Account*, concentrating on the political structure of the proposed settlement. The second section demonstrates how this structure is founded in a Spinozist view of sovereignty. This is done through an analysis of Van den Enden’s representation of Native American society, which, this article hypothesizes, functions as a model for the settlement. Moreover, this section aims to show how the *Brief Account*, in epitomizing an appeal for absolute ethical sovereignty, can be considered a critique of European state power. The third section investigates how Van den Enden’s critique of political sovereignty can be reconciled with the *Brief Account*’s implication in the overseas expansion of Dutch sovereignty. Both Van den Enden’s justification for the settlement in New Amstel and his critical remarks of colonial atrocity and slavery will be considered in analyzing how he employs Spinoza’s dual notion of sovereignty to sustain an ambivalent view of colonialism.

**The Publication of the *Brief Account***

The full title of the publication, as mentioned on the title page and translated here to English, is this: *Brief Account of New-Netherland’s Opportunity, Virtues, Natural Privileges, and Special Suitability for Population: With Some Requests, Arguments, Deductions etc. towards that End Presented by Some Devotees at Various Times about the End of the Year 1661 to the Lords Burgomasters of this City, or their Lords Commissioners etc.* Phrases such as “Opportunity” (“Gelegenheit”), “Natural Privileges” (“Natuurlijke Voorrechten”), and “Special Suitability” (“byzondere bequaemheidt”), presenting the natural environment of New Amstel as exceptionally attractive, mark the publication’s propagandistic function. The title further clarifies that the anonymous author has submitted a proposal for a settlement to the burgomasters and their representatives.
commissioned with the management of the city colony on behalf of “Some Devotees” (“eenige Liefhebbers”), whose devotion probably concerns the accomplishment of such a settlement. The title page does not show a publisher, but based on the typographic material the publication has been traced back to the press of Pieter Arentsz (c. 1634–1688) and the bookshop of Jan Rieuwertsz (c. 1617–1687). Rieuwertsz also published Spinoza’s *Renati Des Cartes principiorum philosophiae* in 1663 and, in that same year, a reprint of *Brief Account*.

The author’s name is not mentioned on the title page or anywhere else in the text, however, his pseudonym, “H.V.Z.M.,” appears below the incorporated correspondence with the burgomasters. This acronym corresponds to the pseudonym on the title page of *Free Political Propositions*: “Loves Things Most” (“Meest Van Zaken Houdt”), which in Dutch grammar means the same as “Houdt van Zaken Meest.” The question is what those “Things” (“Zaken”) are. Clearly, “zaken” is a translation from the Latin *res*. From a Spinozist perspective, the first intertext that comes to mind is *The Nature of Things* (*De rerum natura*) by the Epicurean thinker Lucretius (99–55 BCE). To Lucretius, “res” were the material things in the physical world. He claimed that everything that exists must necessarily consist of atoms, implying that nothing transcended or preceded the world of things, that is: nature. According to Lucretius, a naturalist worldview would cure his contemporaries from their superstitions. This interpretation of the pseudonym would position Van den Enden in this Epicurean and naturalist tradition, the most important seventeenth-century exponent of which was Spinoza. Wim Klever suggests that Van den Enden’s use of the word “res” in *Philedonius*, the 1657 school drama, supports this interpretation. *Philedonius* is a “friend of pleasure” who repeatedly exclaims: “I want the things, the things, I love the things themselves; let the shadows disappear.” Philedonius refuses to abstain from his materialist inclinations, because thoughts and ideas are illusions to him. To Mertens, this interpretation remains too speculative; he claims the pseudonym represents “a realistic or business-like attitude,” which would make sense in the context of the colonial enterprise. To me, as a literary scholar, it seems plausible that both meanings resonated among contemporaries.

After the prologue (Voor-reeden, iii–vii), which is dated October 10, 1662, and which will be discussed hereafter, the contents (Korten Inhout, viii) distinguishes six parts. Part I (1–27) is the actual account of New Netherland, which includes the description of the “N. Netherlands Naturals’ or Indians’
figure, customs, politics, etc.”56 Since Van den Enden had never visited America, he based his description on earlier accounts, primarily Van der Donck’s Discourse of New Netherland (Vertoogh van Nieu-Neder-land, 1650) and the extended version Description of New Netherland (Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant, 1655), and David Pietersz de Vries’s Brief History (Korte historiael, 1655).57 Part II (28–33) unfolds the design for the settlement, involving the “substantial liberties” (“behoorlijke vryheden”) that were meant to attract colonists. Part III (33–42) provides explanations and revisions of the constitution of the settlement as negotiated in Part IV (43–67), which contains six letters (A to G) addressed to the Amsterdam burgomasters between November 22, 1661, and May 25, 1662. Letter D contains the initial 117-article constitution, which can be considered the legal core of the publication. Judging by letter G, a desperate request for response, Van den Enden’s design was silently rejected by the burgomasters. Part V (68–83) is the epilogue (Na-Reeden), which expresses Van den Enden’s utter disappointment with Amsterdam’s colonial administration; by defeating his design, the burgomasters had denied respectable citizens their natural right for self-government and jeopardized the survival of New Amstel. Although the epilogue is not dated, it was probably written simultaneously with the prologue for the text to have been published in November or December. Finally, Part VI (80–84) concerns two supplements: a chapter from Agrippa d’Aubigné’s Free Discourse on the Settling of Religious Disputes (1632),58 calling for a reformation of the French state, and an extract from Dirck Coornhert’s Remonstrance or Discourse by Those from Leiden (1582), addressing the Middelburg Synod with a plea for freedom of expression.59

As a whole, the Brief Account can be characterized as the report of Van den Enden’s failed attempt at approval of his proposal: starting off as a propagandistic account of New Netherland, passing into an increasingly forlorn correspondence with the Amsterdam burgomasters, culminating in a profound complaint against Amsterdam’s colonial administration. Although, according to the author, the purpose of the publication was to vindicate the design for devotees and against slanderers,60 it may still involve a last endeavor to persuade the burgomasters by exerting public pressure.

A Feasible Design

In the prologue, Van den Enden introduces Brief Account as the “fruit” of “Political Considerations, The Count’s and the Stadholder’s Governments, Holland’s
Interests, Discourses, etc.,” invoking at least four separate publications by the brothers Johan (1620–1660) and Pieter (1618–1685) de la Court, however, without mentioning their names.\footnote{Van den Enden considers their work a “modest attempt for political freedom” (“bescheide Vryheits-betrachtingh”). Indeed, *Considerations and Examples of State* (*Consideratien en exempeleen van staat*, 1660), outwardly a Platonist examination of the three classical forms of government—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy—had reached the rather unconventional conclusion that “the Popular government is the most natural, rational, peaceful, and advantageous for its Inhabitants.”\footnote{It was a radical statement to make, as the reality of Dutch politics was very remote from a popular government. The De la Courts’ understanding of a popular government involved an assembly of all citizens with the right to vote, thus a direct democracy after the example of classical Athens. The text had been written by Johan, but it was published by his brother after his death in 1660. In the second edition, *Considerations of State or Political Scales* (*Consideratien van staat*, 1661), Pieter made some drastic revisions. Among other things, he added two chapters entitled “Reasons why the Popular Government has earlier been presented so advantageous, while it is truly not the best” and “That an Aristocracy, which comes closest to the Popular, is definitely the best Government.”\footnote{Pieter’s main objection to the popular government, on second thought, was that an assembly can only consist of “all the inhabitants who can be presumed to have sufficient power and knowledge to take care of their own welfare,” thus dissociating himself from Johan’s more egalitarian view. The revision had clearly provoked Van den Enden’s discontent. He literally quotes the line, affirming that a state can indeed not be governed by “Poor, Destitute” (“Arme, Behoeftige”) people.\footnote{Van den Enden believes, however, that these people can be brought to “one opinion and Interest of State.”\footnote{He claims that with the Brief Account, he is offering a feasible design for a proper democratic settlement.}}\footnote{Articles 1 and 2 of the constitution, as stated in letter D, articulate the main principles of the design. The first principle is the “even-equality” (“Even-gelijkheid”) of all inhabitants of the settlement.\footnote{This rather uncommon phrase was used by contemporaries in the sense of “entirely equal,” which is how Klever and Mertens seem to have interpreted it.}}}}
forms of equality. In a state all inhabitants are, even if they are equal to each other, subjected to the state itself, the state being a sovereign and therefore transcending body. In Van den Enden’s settlement there appears to be no such institution; power only concerns the relationships among the people themselves. Evidently, however, the principle of even-equality was at odds with the settlement’s embeddedness in New Amstel, which remained under the sovereignty of the States-General. The second principle involves a ban on all forms of religious sectarianism. This principle required the absence of clergyman in the settlement; “as feeders and stiffeners” of private opinions, they would form a “ruinous plague to all peace and concord.” Article 2 also implied a ban on biblical exegesis for political purposes, as bible readings tended to degenerate in conflict. It remains unclear whether it was the claim for self-government or the dismantlement of religion that led to the rejection of the proposal—most likely it was the combination of both.

Natural Society

In describing the climate, the vegetation, the animals, and finally the indigenous inhabitants of New Netherland, Van den Enden generally follows Van der Donck’s Description of New Netherland. However, Van den Enden’s description is much shorter and less detailed, while his representation of the Native Americans is far more positive. Remarkably, the principles of even-equality and the ban on religious sectarianism are explicitly operational in Native American society.

Van der Donck’s description starts by explaining that the Native Americans are called “savages” (“wilden”) because they are unfamiliar with Christianity or any other form of organized religion; secondly, because their approaches to marriage, land division, and law are so diverse that they are practically “running wild” in these matters; and, thirdly, because the name of “pagan” (“heyden”) is too general, while “black” (“swarte”) does not apply. Van den Enden appears to be correcting Van der Donck when he speaks of “Savages, or rather Indians.” Even though he uses “Savage” three times himself, he clearly prefers “Indians.” Moreover, the aforementioned personification of America in the epilogue explains that the Dutch are mistaking the natural and free character of her people for rough and savage. Even though this critical remark is made by a literary figure instead of by Van den Enden himself, it undoubtedly intends to rehumanize the Native Americans by disrupting dehumanizing colonial discourse. It
will soon become clear that this gesture is primarily in the interest of his own
design.

When Van den Enden discusses Native American society, he introduces a
third name: “Naturals” (“Naturellen”), which means “natives,” in the sense
that they are born (natus) in this land or nation.\textsuperscript{79} It does, however, also reso-
nate with Van den Enden’s remark that the Native Americans live “solely
according to the law of nature” (“alleen na de wet der naturen”),\textsuperscript{80} which he
considers to be a good thing, as his political ideas are rooted in natural law.
Van den Enden would agree with Spinoza that, according to natural law,
every human being has inalienable natural rights independent of the laws of a
given state or religion.\textsuperscript{81} To live according to one’s nature, for Spinoza, is to
exist by the necessity of one’s own nature and to fully determine one’s own
actions, which means to be entirely free.\textsuperscript{82} Van den Enden seems to agree with
this, yet his idea of human nature is very different. Spinoza holds a Hobbesian
view in which all humans are by nature enemies in the struggle for survival. In
this condition, which Spinoza calls the “state of nature” (status naturalis), it is
the laws of desire that count; there is no justice or injustice, virtue or sin,
because these notions are not natural, but imposed upon us by a state or
church. Judging by \textit{Free Political Propositions}, Van den Enden regards of
humans as social creatures by nature: “And thus we can discover from men’s
own nature and disposition that he is necessarily driven towards mutual
sociability and cohabitation with his fellow men, first from need and for more
assistance and afterwards also to enjoy more pleasure and entertainment.”\textsuperscript{83}
This view appears to be based on Hugo Grotius’s principle in \textit{The Rights of
War and Peace}.\textsuperscript{84} For Spinoza, sociability is the rational outcome of the insight
that alliances substantially increase our chances of survival. Forgoing some of
our freedoms, such as the right to injure fellow human beings, we may rejoice
in the peace and security of a society—a condition Spinoza calls the “civil
state” (status civilis). Evidently, a “state of nature” in the sense of a political
state or society in which the citizens are completely free, would be a contra-
diction in terms for Spinoza.

Van den Enden does not reject the possibility of people living together in
freedom. His representation of Native American or “Natural” society actu-
ally presents such a case; it is rather peaceful and secure, while the Naturals
have not resigned from their natural rights; the Naturals are “by nature very
free and noble of character, unable to tolerate any form of oppression, of
which they are extremely suspicious and alert.”\textsuperscript{85} Van den Enden considers
Natural society a nearly perfect democracy,86 governed by chiefs, noblemen, and seniors, who, if they have to make an important decision, convene a meeting to ask the entire society for their consent. In accordance with Van den Enden’s notion of even-equality, neither the chiefs nor the meetings are by any means transcendent to the people, in order for politics to operate on exactly the same level as the people or rather through the self-governing people. The notion also explains why Van den Enden does not speak of a state,87 but of a society (“societeit,” “gemeente,” “politie,” or “geselschap”).

The principle of even-equality manifests in every aspect of Natural society. For example, contracts (“Verbonden, Accoorden, Vreede-handelingen, Soenen, Voorslagen, Versoeken, Verbintenissen, en Beloften”) are not enforced by a transcendent institution, such as the state or church, but are considered agreements between people that may be confirmed with gifts and rituals.88 Even though contracts are held in high esteem, they can be declared void in case of “high emergency, disparity, or upon the common People’s protest (which is considered by them God’s voice).”89 This last remark may be considered a literal reference to Spinoza’s critique of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), who stated in Leviathan (1651) that the social contract as enforced by the sovereign ruler can never be contradicted on legal grounds, because it is the only thing that prevents the people from falling into the state of nature.90 For Spinoza, it is crucial that contracts can be dissolved as soon as the benefits turn out to be unequal.91 By comparing the “People’s protest” against a social contract to “God’s voice”—the ultimate sovereign—the Naturals seem to indicate that all parties involved in the contract are sovereign and should retain their capacity for political self-determination.92 It might also explain why Van den Enden spells “People” with a capital. Even the contract of marriage is annullable in Natural society, divorce being “a very common and usual thing,”93 presumably because marriage was not considered a holy sacrament, but again a contract between two people. Whereas Van der Donck considered the Naturals’ unfamiliarity with Christianity “savage,” Van den Enden applauds the absence of churches and clergymen in Natural society. He proposes the same for his settlement and to instead distribute some Bibles, the Holy Scripture being “the most peaceable and least costly clergyman.”94 Since the Naturals are unfamiliar with the devil, they do not fear death, enabling them to enjoy life to the fullest.95 Finally, the aforementioned alertness to oppression makes the Naturals exquisite democratic citizens who are drastically curbing their chiefs’ power.96 To cultivate the same alertness in the
Dutch settlers Van de Enden intends to build plenty of schools in his settlement where mathematics and history will be taught as necessary knowledge for participation in the rational cause of politics. Even though Natural society functions rather well without such knowledge, Van den Enden believed that for the Naturals to become true allies they should receive some form of education:

not in the common, confused and superstitious manner of today’s most-illusionary, pretentious Christians, . . . but by a purely clear, rational teaching in all the necessary, useful, political and ethical principles to the effect of religion, which should be induced from, on the one hand, the universal and infallible laws of nature and, on the other, on the best experimental and probable premises.

The passage states clearly that politics should be based on the laws of nature and practiced accordingly. Van den Enden considered democracy as practised in Natural society the best form of government, precisely because it was the most natural form. This principle had already been modestly articulated by Johan de la Court, and Spinoza would articulate it more boldly in TTP: “[The democratic government] seems to be the most natural and to be that which closest approaches the freedom nature bestows on every person. . . . In this way all remain equal as they had been previously, in the state of nature.”

As discussed, Van den Enden and Spinoza’s naturalist philosophies inspired different views of democracy. Van den Enden’s optimistic view of human nature enabled him to conceive of a society that features ethical sovereignty, every individual’s right to govern himself, while political sovereignty, the power of the state over its citizens, is entirely absent. Spinoza’s more realist view of human nature did not allow for a just society without any kind of sovereign rule. Instead the balance between ethical and political sovereignty in a state should be constantly queried. From this perspective, Spinoza’s dual notion of sovereignty becomes visible as an instrument to unravel the ethical and political forces at play. In the Ethics, he further specifies political sovereignty or state power as potestas and ethical sovereignty or the inalienable right and power of every individual as potentia. While potestas is imposed by one body on another, potentia is the immanent force of nature (or God) expressing itself through a body as desire (conatus). This distinction provides better insight into Van den Enden’s representation of Native American
society, where politics unfolds from the people with the immanent dynamics of *potentia*, similar to the expression of divine power in the “things” or “bodies” that constitute nature. At times, Van den Enden’s word choice emphasizes the immanent dynamics of *potential*—for instance when he speaks of a “government among an innumerable multitude,” instead of of or over, which would be the common expression. Finally, Spinoza’s distinction clarifies the seemingly incoherent structure of the *Brief Account*, as it develops from a eulogy into an indictment of the same Amsterdam burgomasters. In the account and the first letters, they are praised for stimulating and supporting the people’s *potentia* as they wish to settle in New Amstel and bring themselves and the colony to fruition, while in the epilogue the burgomasters are accused of curbing *potentia* and exercising *potestas*. Their fear of financial loss and political proliferation has exceeded their ambition to save the colony and led them into the pitfall of state power; that is: to limit and exploit the power of the citizens.

**Sovereignty and Slavery**

In the *Brief Account* Van den Enden does not provide a faithful representation of the Native Americans, but rather manipulates earlier descriptions to offer his controversial political views in a veiled manner. From a postcolonial perspective, Van den Enden’s representation can be considered a “projection” of Spinozist ideas onto Native American society, the “indigenous other” functioning as a “projection screen” for Eurocentric thought. It undeniably abuses the Native Americans for its own purposes, but that does not mean that Van den Enden entirely neglects the atrocities committed on the indigenous inhabitants of New Netherland. *Brief Account* also contains explicit criticism thereof. This section examines how this criticism can be related to Van den Enden’s comprehensive critique of political sovereignty, and how it can be reconciled with the *Brief Account’s* implication in the overseas extension of Dutch sovereignty. First, it will establish how Van den Enden justifies the foundation of a colonial settlement to, subsequently, contrast this justification with more critical remarks.

**Otherwise Unpossessed Land**

Van den Enden justifies Dutch presence in New Netherland on the first page of his proposal; but not wanting to linger on details, he evades the burden of
proof. The justification runs as follows: “in our opinion those are not the least entitled to any exotic or otherwise unpossessed Land, who not only arrived there first, but, particularly, who will bring it to useful Cultivation or Development and fruition.”\textsuperscript{103} The statement contains two arguments, the first being that the Dutch were first to arrive in that part of America, which is later supported by Native American eyewitness accounts.\textsuperscript{104} From this, one might infer that Van den Enden does not consider the Native Americans the owners of America, possibly because they were to a large extend a nomadic people with different views of landownership.\textsuperscript{105} At another point, however, he speaks of America as “their Land”: “To those with whom they are not at war, their Land is open, to move around freely, and to settle as they see fit like the \textit{Free and Indigenous} [people] themselves.”\textsuperscript{106} In this case, the Native Americans are the indigenous inhabitants and legitimate owners of America, entitled to grant the Dutch access to their land. In doing so, they show respect for the human right to move around freely, “because no particular freedom restricting \textit{Rights, Laws, Rules} are upheld, as in ordinarily politicized countries; they are not greedily preoccupied, or troubled by Envy, about the approach of and cohabitation with other Peoples.”\textsuperscript{107} Their respect seems again based on Grotius’s principle that humans are social creatures who will respect each other’s right for free trade and settlement.\textsuperscript{108}

The second argument, that the Dutch have a right to the American land because they are capable of cultivating it, thereby providing for their own livelihood, may be related to Spinoza’s identification of right and power—each person’s right extents as far as his powers.\textsuperscript{109} Both arguments advanced by Van den Enden are based on his notion of ethical sovereignty, from inalienable human rights and capacities, yet he applies a double standard in doing so. On the one hand, the Native Americans are considered in terms of Grotius’s principle of sociability, dismissing potential claims to their land as antisocial, on the other, the Dutch are assessed using Spinoza’s identification of right and power, relieving them from any social responsibilities as to Native American landownership.

\textit{Atrocity and Slavery}

Despite this dubious justification, Van den Enden does not close his eyes to colonial atrocity, as shown by the following two passages. The first concerns the peaceable disposition of the Native Americans compared to the Europeans:
It is in all manners a truly excelling, tractable, and freedom-loving Nation (in contrast to the English, and all machinations or malicious receptions by our people there committed against them—see and read more about this in the aforementioned David Pietersz de Vries, and a certain Notable dialogue entitled Broad Council).  

The manner in which Van den Enden quasi-marginalizes his criticism by literally bracketing it, suggests sarcasm; so does the euphemism “malicious receptions” in referring to a series of massacres under the command of director generals Willem Kieft and Peter Stuyvesant, as described by David Pietersz de Vries in the aforementioned Brief History and in Broad Council. De Vries (1593–1655) was a navigator who founded a colony on Staten Island, and he reports of the Pavonia Massacre of 1643, in which 129 Dutch soldiers killed 120 Indians, including women and children. De Vries did not witness the massacre, but copied his account from Broad Council (1649; Breeden-raedt), a pamphlet written by some anonymous inhabitants of New Netherland. The text involves a fictitious discussion between a group of men at sea. Captain Bouwen Krijnssen (“B” in the discussion) criticizes Kieft’s undemocratic decision for the massacre. By invoking these critical sources and shedding light on the marginalized debate about the massacre, Van den Enden overtly supports the authors in their struggle against the WIC’s undemocratic and bellicose rule. Based on the foregoing, Van den Enden considered massacres unnecessary and preventable if both peoples would learn to respect each other’s freedoms. Indeed, the personification of New Netherland in the epilogue invites the “children of Holland” to populate her lands, provided that “they know how to Govern themselves” (“sigh zelven onderlingh weeten te Governeren”), and that they are provided with the necessary means and liberties to do so—the latter being a broad hint to the Amsterdam burgomasters. Van den Enden did not think of the Dutch invasion as aggressive in itself, nor is he realistic about the conditions for peaceful coexistence, but he undeniably shows himself critical of colonial atrocity.

The second passage concerns Van den Enden’s account of farming involving his view on slavery. He refers to The True Distinction between Cold and Warm Lands (Het waere onderscheyt tusschen koude en warme landen, 1659), in which Otto Keye aims to attract potential colonists to the Dutch colony of Guyana in South America by asserting that Guyana’s warm climate is preferable to the cold of New Netherland. Colonists need not worry about sweat,
because “the Patrons can provide their colonists with the *Negroes, Black* people, being *Slaves* from *Africa*: by means of their servitude they [the colonists] can accomplish and fabricate very easily and quickly everything for their maintenance as well as fast benefits and profits.”114 Van den Enden responds that the fact that Dutch survival in torrid climates depends on slavery is a clear sign that the Dutch do not belong there.115 Again, he reasons from the identification of right and power, yet this time the lack of Dutch capacity results in the denial of their right for settlement. Subsequently, he refuses Keye’s solution of slavery, because it is inconsistent, firstly, with the free nature and government of the Dutch; secondly, with Christianity “to the extent that it is a rational religion”—here Van den Enden may very well be criticizing the volatile attitude of the church in the matter of slavery—; and, thirdly, with “every sense of human equity and dignity to greedily trade and transport innocent humans into their indissoluble slavery.”116 The third argument, in rendering equity and dignity basic human rights, again points to ethical sovereignty: the right of an individual to govern his or her own body.

In Part IV of the *Ethics* Spinoza describes the loss of ethical sovereignty as slavery (*servitus*). The slave is a classical metaphor for a human being who is “not his own master” in the sense that he is not led by reason, but by passion.117 The metaphor was used by the Stoics and the Epicureans alike in their pursuit of *ataraxia*, a state of inner peace and relative independence of affect. According to Spinoza, this state could be reached through ethical knowledge, that is the understanding of our entanglement in the web of affect. In *TTP*, Spinoza politicizes this notion, observing that the web of affect not only involves the forces of nature but political forces as well. A famous passage describes how people tend to be affected by political forces, in this case the manipulations of sovereign rulers:

> It may indeed be the highest secret of monarchical government and utterly essential to it, to keep men deceived, and to disguise the fear that sways them with the specious name of religion, so that they will fight for their enslavement as if they were fighting for their own deliverance, and will not think it humiliating but supremely glorious to spill their blood and sacrifice their lives for the glorification of a single man.118

Spinoza refers to the religious wars of his time; under the guise of religion, citizens were deployed in political conflicts between sovereign rulers. Van den
Enden motivates his criticism of political sovereignty slightly differently in the *Brief Account*: “Those people are justly considered the world’s greatest Fools who aim to subject many Human Beings, let alone entire Lands, to one rule or one precise way of living, without trying or managing to consider the character that a Land, or Society, moreover a Human Being is naturally compelled to.” Sovereign rulers are presented as ignorant of the diversity of people and their natural desires. The passage particularly applies to colonial sovereignty, which involved the conquest and subjection of peoples and nations that were for the most part unknown to the Europeans. Van den Enden approaches TTP more closely in *Free Political Propositions*, in which he describes how secular and religious sovereign rulers cooperate in a deliberate perversion of the people’s natural desires: alienating them from their pursuit of freedom, turning them into scorners of material goods, and praising as the highest virtues the denial of their bodies, blind obedience and voluntary poverty. He also describes this condition as slavery (“slaverny”).

The intertextual confrontation between actual slavery in the *Brief Account* and metaphorical slavery in Spinoza’s *Ethics* reveals that the distinction between the tenor and the vehicle of the slave metaphor is not clear cut. In fact, from a Spinozist perspective, the difference between the political and the ethical condition of slavery is only gradual. Van den Enden not only shows that what happened in the colonies was inconsistent with seventeenth-century ethical frameworks of positive law, Christianity, and natural law, but also that the atrocities committed in the far corners of the Dutch Republic were in fact extremities of a political system that was essentially based on the subjection and exploitation of citizens. His critique of the burgomasters in the *Brief Account* implies that the “sanctuary” of Amsterdam was implicated in that system.

**Conclusions**

This article aimed to demonstrate how Spinozist ideas inspired social and political experimentation in the colony through an interdiscursive analysis of Franciscus van den Enden’s design for a settlement in the *Brief Account*. Following literal and metaphorical references to central notions in Spinoza’s (later) philosophy makes visible that Spinoza’s dual notion of sovereignty, his identification of power and right, his preference for democracy as the form of government that approximates the state of nature most closely, and his criticism of political sovereignty had a significant function in Van den Enden’s design. The main difference being that Van den Enden’s view of humans as social
beings by nature was traced back to Grotius’s *The Rights for War and Peace*, as was the related principle of sociability that allows for free trade and settlement. The most important metaphorical reference concerned Van den Enden’s representation of Native American society, which has been “decoded” as a projection of Spinozist ideas of ethical and political sovereignty, tacitly functioning as a model for his democratic settlement.

The article also tried to show how taking into account the colonial context of the *Brief Account* increases our understanding of Van den Enden’s criticism of political sovereignty. The colonial practices of displacement, slavery, and genocide described in the *Brief Account* and other publications that Van den Enden referred to offer an extreme and colonial image of the more “specious” processes through which state power manipulated European citizens. Van den Enden’s criticism of colonial atrocity and slavery is thus in line with his criticism of political atrocity. From Van den Enden’s own perspective, his criticism of state power was reconcilable with his design for a colonial settlement, conceiving colonialism in terms of ethical sovereignty and contracts between individuals. He believed that, under the right conditions, the indigenous and the Dutch inhabitants of America would find ways to cohabitate.

Finally, this article proposes that seventeenth-century Dutch colonial discourse is more complex than has been assumed, in the sense that it did offer space for debate. The ambivalent view of colonialism offered in the *Brief Account* provides an example; on the one hand, in denying the consequences of colonialism and projecting Eurocentric ideas on the colonial other, the text is representative of oppressive colonial discourse; on the other, in criticizing colonial atrocity and slavery it rather disrupts pro-colonial propaganda, conventions, and restrictions, thus fostering debate. What makes it hard to recognize Van den Enden’s criticism as adequate or sincere is that it was expressed from within colonial discourse. However, it is a very common notion in critical theory that criticism is implicated in the system it criticizes and thus inherently ambivalent.122 This ambivalence should certainly not prevent us from reckoning with criticism and investigating its intertwinemement with strategic, bureaucratic and other causes in recovering the early modern debate on colonialism.

Van den Enden’s egalitarian settlement was never realized; however, in 1661, a rather similar proposal for a colony on the same location submitted by Pieter Cornelisz Plockhoy (1625–c.1664), a Collegiant utopian with close ties in English Republican circles, did find approval.123 The design was realized in 1663, but after the fall of New Amsterdam to the English in the summer of
1664, the situation for New Amstel deteriorated quickly. On October 1, 1664, the fledgling settlement was occupied by the English and only a handful of families stayed on into the period of English rule.

In its location at a crossroads of prominent research themes, the Brief Account offers many opportunities. Future research might start from the question of how Van den Enden’s views on equality as based on naturalist philosophy can be reconciled with Plockhoy’s Collegiant communitarianism. With respect to Spinoza studies, a prominent question regards the extent to which Van den Enden’s involvement in Amsterdam’s colonial politics and political issues raised by the Dutch overseas expansion more generally may have been a factor in Spinoza’s emerging political interest during the early 1660s. Finally, in light of current research about Europe’s colonial past, recovering the early modern debate on colonialism emerges as an important task. The purpose of such research would certainly not be to justify our ancestors’ colonial practices, but rather to understand how their ethical convictions related to their practices. We cannot have a fair picture of colonial practices if we do not have an understanding of the accompanying ideas. In the sense that the ethical convictions of our ancestors often did not correspond to their practices, they do not differ so much from ourselves.

Notes
1. On the history of the first Dutch WIC (1621–1674), see Den Heijer, with respect to New Netherland, see 80–85. On the Dutch colony of New Netherland (1624–1667, 1673–1674); see Jacobs, spec. 1–3.
2. The Munsee were one of the three main divisions of the Lenape Nation, dwelling along the upper portion of the Delaware River. See Otto 82–83.
4. On the history of the VOC (1602–1800), see Gaastra. The traditional view that the VOC’s policies were non-imperial and primarily the outcome of market strategies and financial governance has been challenged by Van Goor.
5. On the reasons for founding the WIC, see Den Heijer 30.
6. See e.g., Klooster 77–82.
7. On the foundation of New Amstel, see Jacobs 126–28; Blom and Looijesteijn, “Ordinary People” 203–05; and Shorto 315–16. Before the establishment of New Amstel, the fortress, located at the present New Castle in Delaware, was called Casimir.
8. The Unami, living south of the Munsee along the Delaware River, formed another division of the Lenape Nation. The Susquehannocks lived further south, on the banks of the Susquehanna River. See Meuwese 111, 275–85.
11. See Jacobs 95; and Hart 90–91.
12. See Blom and Looijensteijn, “Land” 53; and “Ordinary People” 205–11.
13. See Blom and Looijensteijn, “Ordinary People” 204.
14. Two members of the New Netherland committee of the WIC’s Amsterdam chamber, Hector Pietersz (d. 1660) and Jan Tayspil (1618–1671), reportedly borrowed 132,000 guilders from private investors between 1656 and 1659. See Blom and Looijensteijn, “Land” 48.
15. I used Frank Mertens’s transcription available on his website Franciscus van den Enden (Works4). All English translations of Kort verhael are by me. All emphases are by Van de Enden, unless stated otherwise. Mertens’s English translation of Brief Account is in preparation for Brill Publishers, with an introduction by Wiep van Bunge.
17. The intended location for the settlement was “Hoerenkill” or present-day Lewes, about 150 kilometres downstream from New Amstel. See figure 1; and Kort verhael 44.
18. “verscheide burgerlijke-geschiedte Familien” (Kort verhael 43).
21. For Van den Enden’s biography, see Mertens, Franciscus van den Enden (Life). See also Du Cause de Nazelle 95–113; Meinsma 125–57; Francès; Meininger and Van Suchtelen; Klever, “New Source”; Klever, Inleiding; and Israel 174–85.
22. According to Du Cause de Nazelle, Van den Enden was reprimanded more than once by the Jesuits (98–100). See also Nadler 103.
24. See Korte verthooninghe. Spinoza summarized the contents in TTP 238; ch. 28, par. 10, which Klever considers an indication of shared interest. See “New Source” 618n23.
26. See Nadler 105.
27. See Nadler 106.
29. See Nadler 139.
30. See Mertens, Franciscus van den Enden (Life); Nadler 102, 107, 114; and Klever, “New Source” 627–30.
31. See Mertens, Van den Enden and Spinoza 65.
32. On the genesis of the Ethics, see Steenbakkers, “Textual History”; Spruit and Totaro 299–300; and Nadler 248.
33. See Nadler 108.
34. Spinoza’s Short Treatise contains some final remarks indicating that Spinoza did not intend to publish the text, but to inform his friends (149; book 2; ch. 26). See also Steenbakkers, “Textual History” 27–28, and “Text” 35–36.
37. With respect to Spinoza, see Steenbakkers, “Textual History” 30.
38. Spinoza discusses ethical sovereignty in the *Ethics* (254; 4P37S2) to relate it to political sovereignty in *TTP* (195; ch. 16, par. 2) and to the (democratic) state in (200; ch. 16, par. 8).
39. Spinoza, *TP* ch. 2, par. 17. See also letter 50 to Jarig Jelles, 2 Jun. 1674, in Spinoza, *Correspondence* 75.
40. One of the most prominent historians defending this view is Professor Emeritus Piet Emmer. See e.g., Emmer 13.
41. In 1673, the States of Holland prohibited *TTP* at the instigation of the ecclesiastical authorities of Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Leiden. The *Opera posthuma* followed in 1678, immediately after its publication. See Van Bunge 146.
42. Van Bunge 151–53.
43. “Waarschouwingh aen alle eerlijke, en bescheide Boek-verkopers” and “Opdracht aen den vertrouwden Lezer” (*Kort verhael* ii; see also vii).
44. The concept was first introduced by media scholar Hall in “Encoding / Decoding” (2001) and applied to early modern Dutch literature by Geerdink (2012) and Paijmans (2017).
46. The peritext involves all textual elements surrounding the main body of a published work, such as the title page, introduction, notes, etc. See Genette 5.
47. See e.g., *Kort verhael* 22–25.
48. Van den Enden relates how the Naturals cannot understand that in European society “one person is valued so much more than another” (19). Montaigne cites a similar remark: “They found it strange that these poverty-stricken [people] should suffer such injustice, and that they did not take the others [rich people] by the throat or set fire to their houses” (119).
49. See also letter A (43–45), in which the author presents himself as the “supplicant” of the proposal acting on behalf of “some respectable families” who wish to become colonists.
50. See Mertens, *Franciscus van den Enden* (Works4, n3). Riewaert reprinted *Brief Account* as *Zeekere Vrye-Voorslagen*.
52. See Smith xxxviii.
53. See Klever, “New Source” 621.
54. My English translation. The Latin reads: “rem volo, rem, rem volo; / Umbrae facessant” (Van den Enden, fol. Crv). The text was translated in Dutch by Cornelis van Vlooswijck, who translated “rem” into “saecke” (thing): “De saecke wil ick, de saecke, de saecke self begeer ick; Dat de schadue heenen vaeren” (Van Vlooswijck 17).
55. See Mertens, *Franciscus van den Enden* (Works4, n4).
57. See *Kort verhael* 22.
58. For the original text, see *Vrijmoedigh discours* 122–26; ch. 33.
59. For the original text, see Remonstrance, fol. B4. Coornhert wrote the Remonstrance on behalf of the Leiden citizens, therefore it was signed by burgomaster Jan van Hout (Voogt 175–76).

60. See Kort verhael 28.

61. "Politijke Consideratien, Grafelijke en Stadt-houders Regeeringen, Hollandtze Interesten, Discoursen, enz." (iv), viz. Consideratien en exempelen van staat (1660), Consideratien van staat (1661), Politike discoursen (1662); Historie der gravelijke regeering in Holland (1662); and Interest van Holland (1662).

62. "dat ... de Populaare Regeering de naturelikste, redelikste, vreedzaamste, en voordeeligste voor de ingezetenen is" (292; book 9, ch. 4). Kort verhael literally refers to this line (v). Remarkably, chapter 4 is entitled “The Lacks of the Popular Government,” while the chapter numbers are confused in this part of the book. Chapter 9, “Some Considerations to Conclude,” concludes that those who know which form of government is the best society sends “to the pig sty” (“near het Verkenskot”; 367).

63. See Weststeijn 51–53, 145.

64. “Reeden waarom de Populare Regeeringh voor deesen soo gonstig is voorgesteld geweest, hoewel die waarelik de beste niet zy” (555; part 3, book 3, ch. 2) and “Dat een Aristokratie, die aldaarnaast aan de Populaare komt, gewisselik de beste regeering is” (563; ch. 4). Moreover, the book ends with the dubious running title “The Present Government is the Best” (567–72; “De weesende Regeering is de beste”). My translations.

65. “bestaande uit alle Ingeseetenen des Lands, die gepremureerd kunnen werden magts ende kennis genoeg te hebben, om hun eigen welvaaren te versorgen” (564; part 3, book 3, ch. 4. My translation.). See also Weststeijn 166.

66. Van den Enden qualifies that poor people can only be considered “lazy, revelling and unsavory” after they have been offered equal opportunities by society (Kort verhael v).

67. “tot een gevoelen en Interest van Staet” (Kort verhael iv).

68. See Kort verhael 50. See also 30–31.

69. See “Evengelijk,” WNT.

70. See Klever, “New Source” 623; and Mertens, Van den Enden en Spinoza 75.

71. See Kort verhael 51, cf. 28. On religious conflict in New Netherland, see Jacobs 275–82.

72. “voeders, en stijvers van ieders particuliere opinie ... een onvermijdelijke ruineuxse pest van alle vreed, en eendracht” (Kort verhael 28).


74. On the genesis of Description of New Netherland, see Van den Hout 121–29.

75. See Kort verhael 31.

76. See Van der Donck, Beschryvinghe 54.

77. See Kort verhael 3, 4, 25.

78. See Kort verhael 71, 72, 75.

79. Van der Donck also speaks of “Wilden ofte Naturellen vanden Lande” on the title page of Beschryvinge.

80. See Kort verhael 22.

81. See Spinoza, TTP 205; ch. 16, par. 19.

82. See Spinoza, Ethics 75, 253–55; 1D7, 4P37S2.

83. “En dus konnen wy / uit des mensen eigen aert / en gesteltenis bespeuren / dat hy tot onderlinge gezelligheit en t’zamen-wooningh / met zijn even mensch / eerst uit noot /
en om ’t meerder behulp / en namaels ook uit genot van meerder lust / en vermaek / noot-
zakelijck wordt aengedreven” (Vrye politijke stellingen 2).

84. See e.g., Rights 136; book 1, ch. 3, where Grotius quotes Seneca (De ira, book 2, ch.
31): “As all the Members of the Human Body agree among themselves, because on the
Preservation of each depends the Welfare of the Whole, so should Men favour one
another, since they are born for Society, which cannot subsist but by a mutual Love and
Defence of the Parts.”

85. “uit'er natuur zeer vry, en Edelmoedigh van aert; weshalven zy, als geen heerschap-
pye over sich konnende verdragen, tegens de zelve met alle naeuwe tooversicht zijn gekant,
en ingespannen . . .” (Kort verhael 19).

86. See Kort verhael 21–22.

87. With one exception: Kort verhael 23. See also note 110 in this article.

88. See Kort verhael 21.

89. “Ten zijze door hoge noot, en verongelijkingh, of ook wel door den tegenroep van ’t
gemene Volk (’t welk by haer als de stemme Godts is) tot het breken als gedwongen
worden” (Kort verhael 21).

90. See Hobbes 120–21; ch. 17.

91. See Spinoza, TTP 200; ch. 16, par. 8. Cf. letter 50 in Spinoza, Correspondence.

92. This view of the people clearly resonates Machiavelli’s notion of the “multitude,”
which would be reiterated by Spinoza in TTP 210–11; ch. 17, par. 4, and TP, ch. 7, par. 2,
but I will not go into that here.

93. “heel gewooneelijk, en gebruikelijck dingh” (Kort verhael 22).

94. “den aldervreemst, ook onkostelijckste-Predicant” (Kort verhael 29).

95. The fear of the devil is a clear reference to Spinoza’s Short Treatise (143; book 2,
ch. 25), where the devil’s existence is rejected. It is a prominent theme for Lucretius as
well. See Smith xxxvi.

96. See Kort verhael 32.

97. See Kort verhael 29.

98. “’t welck gants niet en diende te geschieden, op een gemeene, verwarde, supersti-
tieuze wijz der meest-gewaende, hedendaeghze pretenderende Christenen, . . . maer door
een suyvere klare redens- onderwijzingh in alle nodige, nutte, recht-Burgerlijke, en zedelijke ter
Goeds dienst strekckende stellingen, welcker bewijz eensdeels van vaste, en onfeilbare kun-
digheden der Natuer, en anderdeels uyt de alderbeste ervarent- en waerschijnlijkheden behoor-
den afgeleit te warden . . .” (Kort verhael 23).


100. The Ethics can be considered a doctrine that “teaches us how citizens are to be
governed and led: namely, not so that they should be slaves, but so that they should do
freely what is best” (Ethics 162; 2P49S). This sentence does not occur in the Short Treatise.

101. Ethics 115–16; 2P3S. On potestas, see also TTP 208; ch. 17, par 1, on potentia TTP 11;
Prologue, par. 13.

102. “Regeeringh onder een ontallijke meenigte” (Kort verhael v; my emphasis). See
also vi.

103. “onzes oordeels en heeft die niet van het minste recht tot eenich vremt of andersins
ongeposseede Landt; die ’t zelve niet alleen eerst aandoet; maer voornemelijck die ’t zelve
ter nutbare Culture of Bebouwingh en vruchtgewin is brengende” (Kort verhael 2).

104. Van den Enden relates how in 1609 Henrik Hutson, captain of the Halve-maen,
discovered New Netherland as testified by the Native Americans. See Kort verhael 17.
105. On Dutch-indigenous relations and landownership, see Meuwese 228–85.
106. “en daerze geen vijandtschap mede en zijn hebbende, voor die is haer Landt open, en om daer in vry te verkeeren, en na eigen goetdunken als de eigen Vrije-Ingeboren zelfs aldaer ter neder te slaen, en zich op zijn best zien te erener, of onderhouden” (Kort verbael 21).
107. “geen bysondere vryheits-strijdende Rechten, Wetten, Regulen, na de wijz van ordinaire gepolitieerde Landen, plaets hebbende; zo en zijnze ook niet gierighlijk bekommert, of door Nijt gepleeght, over ’t naerdere, en by komen woonen van allerhande Volkeren” (Kort verbael 21).
108. See e.g., The Rights 154; book 1, ch. 10, where Grotius quotes Euripides (Helena, v. 903–08): “for the Air and Earth are common to all Men, where, when they increase their Possessions, they are not to detain or take away what belongs to others.”
109. See Spinoza, TTP 196; ch. 16, par. 3.
110. “dat het in aller manieren is een zeer uitmuntende tractabele, en vryheits-lievende Natie, waerdigh door alle goede wegen, en middelen (contrarie de Engelze, en alle machinatien, of quaetskostende-onthaelen van d’onze aldaer tegens de zelve gepleeght, ziet en leest hier over meergemelte David Pietersz. de Vries, en zekere Notabele samenspraak getituleert den Breeden-raet, . . . .” (Kort verbael 23).
111. Jacobs 137–38; and Shorto 137–39. Jacobs suspects that De Vries blackens Kieft’s reputation as an excuse for his own failures in the colony. See Jacobs 111.
112. The publication is largely accredited to Cornelis Melyn from Antwerps, chair of the Council of Eight Men (1643–1644) that represented the people of New Amsterdam in advising director general Kieft, because Melyn stayed in Holland at the time of the publication. On the Council, see Jacobs 136–37, 488; on Melyn Van den Hout 103–04). “Breeden-raedt” may refer to the Council of Eight Men, but also to the advice being “breed”; i.e., extensive, in broad daylight or broad-minded (cf. Jacobs 292; “Breed,” II Bijw. 3, 4, 5, WNT).
113. See Kort verbael 70.
115. See Kort verbael 26.
116. Klever calls Van den Enden “a convinced abolitionist” (Franciscus van den Enden 89–90), based on this passage in Brief Account and the following in Free Political Propositions: “The names of Master and Slave, as being two extremes, are not allowed to be mentioned, much less practised or cultivated in a well ordered Republic” (Vrye politijke stellingen 10, trans. Klever, Franciscus van den Enden 144).
117. See Spinoza, Ethics, 275–76; 4P66S; cf. 225; 4Pref.
118. See Spinoza, TTP, 6; prologue, par. 7.
119. “het . . . met recht voor de grootste Dwazen in deze werelt te achten zijn, die veel Menschen, ik swijgh noch van geheele Lantschappen, onder eenen regul, of strikte manier van leven trachten te brengen, zonder eens te willen, of konnen letten, wat den aert van zulke Lant, of ook Sociëteit, mitsgaders yder Mensch in ’t particulier tot zijn Natuir is vereyschende” (Kort verbael 30).
120. See Vrye politijke stellingen 22.
121. See Vrye politijke stellingen 23–24.
123. See Kort en klaer ontwerp. On Plockhoy, see Looijesteijn.
124. Jacobs 89, 132; Haefeli 251; and Shorto 247.
125. That the settlement was still inhabited in 1671 can be deduced from Craig 75–77, 80–81.

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