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A New Language for the Natural Light

Translating the New Philosophy in the Dutch Early Enlightenment (1640-1720)

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1 Introduction

1.1 The mind, the mouth, and the tongue

Ever since Immanuel Kant published his 1784 essay *Was ist Aufklärung?*, many discussions about the Enlightenment started with his famous answer to that perennial question: ‘*Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit*’. Or, in the translation by Mary J. Gregor: ‘Enlightenment is the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred minority’.¹ When I, as a Dutch reader, first read Gregor’s translation, I felt that ‘minority’ did not quite capture the meaning of *Unmündigkeit*. Peter Gay translates Kant’s *Unmündigkeit* with ‘tutelage’, which intuitively sounded better to me for reasons I could not explain, lacking a native proficiency in German or English.² According to dictionaries the German term is only used in its metaphorical sense. It refers to the legal status of a minor and the associated inability to act responsibly, to be held accountable for one’s actions. Given that metaphorical meaning, Gregor’s choice for ‘minority’ seems perfectly accurate. It explains Enlightenment as a process of maturation towards intellectual independence. And yet, a more literal meaning of *Unmündigkeit* – which is still present in the Dutch equivalent *onmondigheid* – is lost in her translation. *Onmondigheid* signifies not just the *intellectual* ‘inability to make use of one’s own understanding’ (as Gregor translated Kant’s definition of ‘Unmündigkeit’), but also the *social* inability to open your mouth (*Mund*), to speak up, to use your voice. Kant addressed both inability with his distinction between the private and the public use of reason. He insisted that liberation from *Unmündigkeit* most of all required the freedom to use reason publicly, that is, ‘before the entire public of the *world of readers*’.³ Intellectual autonomy could only emerge in a public sphere in which the possibilities for expression and communication were not restricted by political or religious powers. Enlightenment was a matter of the mind *and* the mouth.

This dissertation foregrounds the possibilities to exercise reason publicly in the Dutch vernacular during an early stage of Kant’s *Aufklärung*: the Dutch Early Enlightenment (1640-1720). It presents a comparative history of the first Dutch

¹ I. Kant, “An answer to the question: What is enlightenment?” in *The Cambridge edition of the works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. M.J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.

² P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 3.

³ Kant, “What is enlightenment?”, 18. Emphasis in source.

translations of the New Philosophy – a heterogeneous collection of philosophical systems challenging the authority of Ancient knowledge in the seventeenth century. More specifically, this study examines Dutch translations of philosophical treatises written by three prominent New Philosophers: French natural philosopher and mathematician René Descartes (1596-1650), English political theorist Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), and Jewish-Dutch philosopher Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677). The first Dutch translators of their work played a key role at the intersection of the intellectual and the social dimension of Enlightenment. By translating the New Philosophy they facilitated the public use of reason in vernacular discourse. In writing a history of translators and translations, I propose to understand the Dutch Early Enlightenment as a cultural attempt to revisit the relationship between reason and language in specific, local debates. These debates addressed philosophical, metaphysical and theological issues, such as the freedom of conscience, natural law and cosmopolitanism, political sovereignty, and medical discoveries. My thesis reconstructs the intellectual and social function of translations in those debates. It is a study, in short, of the mind and the mouth.

Insofar as ‘mouth’ can be understood as a metaphor for the distribution and social reception of Enlightened ideas, this study builds upon solid ground. In 1982, book historian Robert Darnton already made a case for studying the social and economic conditions of the Enlightenment: ‘The Enlightenment also was a campaign to spread light (*Lumières*) – that is, an attempt to propagate ideas among the general public and not merely to refine them among philosophers.’⁴ A similar distinction between the intellectual and social history of the Enlightenment appears in *Enlightenment Contested* (2006) by Jonathan Israel, whose methodological approach discerned a ‘two-way traffic, or dialectic of ideas and social reality’.⁵ Inspired by Israel’s books, my dissertation foregrounds simultaneously the social and ideological conditions of the authors, translators and publishers involved in the ‘campaign to spread light’ during the Dutch Early Enlightenment.

But unlike historians such as Darnton and Israel, I allow for an additional meaning of the term ‘mouth’. If we stretch the metaphor a little, the mouth may also be read as a totum pro parte for the ‘tongue’. The tongue symbolises the actual medium of the Enlightenment’s social reception: language. This additional emphasis on the linguistic form reveals how the intellectual conditions and social circumstances of translators shaped their work in various ways. As such questions of form require a comparative approach, they will be answered using a methodology

⁴ R. Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 71-72.

⁵ J. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23.

that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods, including various forms of computational text analysis. The mind, the mouth, and the tongue: with my focus on Dutch translations of philosophical texts, I aim to connect the intellectual conditions, social circumstances, and linguistic practices of the public use of reason in Dutch vernacular discourse.

1.2 Language and knowledge in the Dutch Early Enlightenment

This cultural history of translation contributes to an already rich scholarly tradition with regards to the Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic. Several historians have recorded how Dutch freethinkers began to question the accepted beliefs in metaphysics, theology and political theory from the 1650s onwards. In 2001, Jonathan Israel published an influential grand narrative about what he defines as the Radical Enlightenment: ‘an intellectual and socio-cultural movement that first assumed its basic features during the third quarter of the seventeenth century’.⁶ Israel points to Spinoza and his intellectual companions from Amsterdam and Leiden – commonly referred to as *Spinoza en zijn kring* (Spinoza’s circle), or *le cercle spinoziste* – as the philosophical origin of this Radical Enlightenment.⁷ He views the Enlightenment as a predominantly *philosophical* project fuelled by a dialectic between ‘radical’ and ‘moderate’ thinkers. The radicals combined an ‘immense reverence for science, and for mathematical logic, with some form of non-providential deism, if not outright materialism and atheism along with unmistakably republican, even

⁶ J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); J. Israel, “‘Radical Enlightenment’. A game-changing concept,” in *Reassessing the Radical Enlightenment*, ed. S. Ducheyne (London: Routledge, 2017), 15.

⁷ J. Israel, “Radical Thought,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, eds. H.J. Helmers and G.H. Janssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018), 370. The phrase ‘Spinoza en zijn kring’ as well as the importance of Spinoza’s social milieu was first articulated in K.O. Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring. Over Hollandse Vrijgeesten* (Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1980 [1896]). The concept of Spinoza’s circle generated a wealth of studies on the social conditions of Spinoza’s philosophical development, including W.N.A Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza. Presentatie van een emanciperende generatie 1650-1700* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997); S. Lavaert and W. Schröder (eds.), *The Dutch Legacy : Radical Thinkers of the 17th Century and the Enlightenment* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), and even literary adaptations such as N. Noordervliet, *Vrij man* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2012); M. Rovere, *Le clan Spinoza. Amsterdam 1677, l’invention de la liberté* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017).

democratic tendencies'.⁸ The moderates, on the other hand, tried to harmonise 'reason combined with faith and tradition'.⁹ While the moderate Enlightenment became mainstream during the eighteenth century, the Radical Enlightenment, Israel insists, was to become the prime cause of the great philosophical and political revolutions preludeing the modern age. Key to Israel's thesis is the supposed continuity between the radical philosophical momentum emerging around Spinoza during the 1660s in the Dutch Republic and the radical wing of the eighteenth-century High Enlightenment in France and elsewhere, which reached a political climax during the French Revolution.

Situating Spinoza at the root of the radical branch, Israel deviates from an earlier interpretation of the Radical Enlightenment proposed by Margaret Jacob.¹⁰ She also stresses the relationship between philosophical materialism and political republicanism: the intellectual programme of the Radical Enlightenment was characterised by 'a commitment to republicanism, a turn toward materialism or atheism, and a search for a purely naturalist form of religious behaviour'.¹¹ Unlike Israel, however, Jacob identifies late seventeenth-century English philosophers such as John Toland (1670-1722) and Isaac Newton (1642-1727) as the inspiration of this intellectual movement, which surfaced in Freemasonry meetings in The Hague during the 1710s. According to Israel, the origins lie earlier and elsewhere. Putting Spinoza's activities from the 1660s and 1670s firmly centre stage, Israel paved the way for many historians who would reconsider the impact of Spinozism on early modern Dutch culture. For example: Henri Krop published a detailed overview of Spinoza's cultural reception in Dutch history, Inger Leemans assessed the late seventeenth-century adaptation of philosophical radicalism in Dutch pornographic literature, Michiel Wielema documented Spinoza's impact on early modern debates in the Dutch Reformed Church, and Jetze Touber interpreted Spinoza's biblical criticism in the context of contemporary philological traditions.¹² Although Israel's thesis considering the presumably far-reaching influence of Spinoza's ideas after

⁸ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 11-12.

⁹ Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 11.

¹⁰ M.C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment. Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: Georg Allen & Unwin, 1981).

¹¹ M.C. Jacob, "The Radical Enlightenment. A heavenly city with many mansions," in *Reassessing the Radical Enlightenment*, ed. S. Ducheyne (London: Routledge, 2017), 48.

¹² H. Krop, *Spinoza. Een paradoxale icoon van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2014); I. Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant. Radicale ideeën in Nederlandse pornografische romans 1670-1700* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2002); M. Wielema, *The march of the libertines. Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660-1750)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004); J. Touber, *Spinoza and Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic, 1660-1710* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

1720 remains a matter of dispute, few historians nowadays underestimate the cultural significance of Spinozism in late seventeenth-century Dutch society.

Israel's account is nevertheless challenged by narratives staging a larger number of protagonists. For example, in Wiep van Bunge's view on Dutch intellectual history, the varied reception of Descartes is considered equally important. In contrast to Israel's understanding of the Radical Enlightenment as a coherent movement with consistent philosophical objectives, Van Bunge stresses the heterogeneity and incoherence of what he calls the 'early Dutch Enlightenment': 'Maybe one of the obstacles for clearly identifying the early Dutch Enlightenment as a separate and important factor in the promotion of ideas, should be attributed to the clumsy fact that it appears to lack a "goal".'¹³ Van Bunge thus emphasises the diverse adaptations of the New Philosophy: not just the Dutch academic reception of Descartes, but also vernacular authors who appropriated Cartesianism in theological or political discussions. In the vernacular domain, the success of Descartes's ideas depended on their usability in theological and political discourse, whereas at Dutch universities Cartesianism was only able to flourish because the theological implication of Descartes's metaphysics was carefully neutralised.¹⁴ This diverse, successful and relatively early reception of Cartesianism (and later Newtonianism) is what distinguished the *Dutch* Early Enlightenment from similar episodes in European intellectual history.¹⁵ Cartesian philosophy spread so quickly that it even became 'largely synonymous with "modern" philosophy' in Dutch discourse.¹⁶ According to Van Bunge, the Dutch Early Enlightenment started around 1650 'when Cartesianism hit the academic culture of the Netherlands and when the Republic embarked on its first Stadholderless age'.¹⁷ The intellectual freedom associated with the cultural and economic prosperity during the First Stadholderless period (1650-1672) created a fertile ground for Enlightened debate.

Descartes and Spinoza thus occupied a central place in the historiography of the Early Enlightenment. They seem to have inspired a wide range of Dutch

¹³ L. van Bunge, "Introduction: The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic, 1650-1750," in *The Early Enlightenment in the Dutch Republic 1650-1750*, ed. L. van Bunge (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 7.

¹⁴ Th. Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch. Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy 1637-1650* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 70; W. Frijhoff and M. Spies, *1650. Bevochten eendracht. Nederlandse cultuur in Europese context* (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 1999), 311. L. van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza. An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2001), 67.

¹⁵ Van Bunge, "Introduction: The Early Enlightenment," 9.

¹⁶ L. van Bunge, "The Early Dutch Reception of Cartesianism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism*, eds. S. Nadler, T.M. Schmaltz and D. Antoine-Mahut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 418.

¹⁷ Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza*, 158.

readers and authors to liberate themselves from their *Unmündigkeit*. Both philosophers propagated intellectual autonomy and defended the freedom of thought against the severe attacks of the powerful theologians in the Dutch Republic. At first glance, this freedom of thought applied to every literate man or woman, almost like a universal right in the modern sense. Lay persons who did not read Latin were apparently encouraged to participate in philosophical debate. Spinoza for example, who wrote all his books in Latin, allowed his friends to publish a translation of his *Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae* (1663) in 1664 and possibly edited the translated text of his undated *Korte verhandeling*.¹⁸ Descartes went even further, writing several books in his native French. In *Discours de la méthode* (1637), he justified the preference for his mother tongue with a social distinction between Latin and French discourse:

‘And if I am writing in French, my native language, rather than Latin, the language of my teachers, it is because I expect that those who use only their natural reason in all its purity will be better judges of my opinions than those who give credence only to the writings of the ancients’.¹⁹

Elsewhere, in *Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii* (written around 1628, first published in Latin in 1701), Descartes claimed that ‘people who have never devoted their time to learned studies make sounder and clearer judgments on matters which arise than those who have spent all their time in the Schools.’²⁰ The French philosopher not only assumed literate lay readers would be able to appreciate his ideas; he also expected them to be better judges of his work because they were not corrupted by ancient knowledge. Such claims echoed the idealised views of the rational purity of the unlearned that had become a popular topic among early critics of scholasticism.²¹

And yet, both philosophers also fenced off important parts of their work for vernacular readers. Descartes deliberately wrote his main work, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* (1641), in Latin as he considered it unwise to publish a full account of his philosophical system in ‘a book written in French and designed to be read by

¹⁸ F. Mignini, “Inleiding,” in B. de Spinoza, *Korte geschriften*, eds. F. Akkerman et al. (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1982), 239-240.

¹⁹ R. Descartes, “Discourse on the Method,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, eds. J. Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Vol. I, 151.

²⁰ R. Descartes, “Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, eds. J. Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Vol. I, 16.

²¹ L. Nauta, *Philosophy and the Language of the People. The Claims of Common Speech from Petrarch to Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 68.

all and sundry, in case weaker intellects might believe that they ought to set out on the same path.²² Spinoza, in turn, bluntly recommended the ‘common people’ ignore his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670):

I don’t ask the common people to read these things, nor anyone else who is struggling with the same affects as the common people. Indeed, I would prefer them to neglect this book entirely, rather than make trouble by interpreting it perversely, as they usually do with everything.²³

The philosopher even prevented a Dutch translation of the treatise from being printed.²⁴ Because of his emphasis on the political need for obedience by the intellectually or emotionally inferior ‘common people’, Spinoza has recently been re-evaluated as a conservative and anti-democratic thinker – a provocative interpretation that contradicts his reputation as an early advocate of democratic politics.²⁵ Spinoza’s rejection of the equality between men and women also reminds us of the distance between his political theory and modern concepts of equality and democracy.²⁶

Current historiography of the Dutch Early Enlightenment often fails to acknowledge the implications of the language preferences among its intellectual heroes. The decision to write in Latin instead of Dutch or French had social, political and philosophical consequences. These philosophers talked the talk of intellectual autonomy, but only to the privileged few who could speak their language. This dissertation foregrounds authors who also walked the walk – who compiled dictionaries and translated philosophical texts in order to enable participation in Dutch philosophical debate. Several members of Spinoza’s circle followed the philosopher intellectually but took a different stand regarding the

²² R. Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, eds. J. Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Vol. II, 6.

²³ B. de Spinoza, “Theological-Political Treatise,” in *The collected works of Spinoza*, ed. E. Curley (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1985), Vol. II, 75.

²⁴ For a reconstruction of the Dutch translation history of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* see: J.J.M. van de Ven, “‘Van bittere galle by een gebonden’. Over de laat zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse vertalingen van Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*,” *Mededelingen van de Vereniging van het Spinozahuis* (2019); L.A. van der Deijl, “The Dutch Translation and Circulation of Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in manuscript and print (1670-1694). A Computational Reconstruction,” *Quaerendo* 50, no. 1 (2020), 211-219.

²⁵ V. Kal, *De list van Spinoza. De grote gelijkshakeling* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2020).

²⁶ Spinoza expressed his opinion on the position of women most explicitly on the last page of his unfinished *Tractatus Politicus* (1677). For an overview of feminist critiques and interpretations of Spinoza’s work, see H. Sharp, “Spinoza and Feminism,” in *A Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Y. Melamed (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), 422-430.

dissemination of their controversial ideas. Radical thinker Adriaan Koerbagh (1632-1669) opened his unpublished treatise *Een ligt schijnende in duystere plaatsen* with a telling justification for his decision to write in Dutch, a language ‘that is or should be known to all of the people’: his ideas concerned everyone, ‘the entire people’.²⁷

While some translators and freethinkers writing in Dutch agreed with Spinoza about the incompetence and simplicity of the unlearned, they were generally less pessimistic about the possibility to educate them. Both Lodewijk Meijer (1629-1681) and the aforementioned Koerbagh – two close friends who also knew Spinoza personally – published loanword dictionaries helping Dutch readers to understand ‘Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French and other’ jargon in learned and legal discourse.²⁸ Their dictionaries aimed to purify the Dutch language from foreign influences: the entries contain loanwords and jargon (*bastaartwoorden* and *konstwoorden*) from foreign languages, for which they provide Dutch alternatives. Koerbagh’s dictionary became notorious because he criticised the accepted meaning of key theological terms. He argued, for instance, that the word *bibel* (bible) etymologically was a Greek barbarism for the Dutch *boek* (book), sneeringly adding that theologians incorrectly reserved the word for one specific book only. On etymological grounds he also criticised the prevailing meaning of words like *triniteyt* (trinity), *satan* (satan), *catholijke Religie* (catholic religion), and *transsubstantiatie* (transubstantiation). In Koerbagh’s attack on superstition, the purification of contemporary dogma and the purification of the Dutch language were two sides of the same coin. In order to change the signified one needed to change the sign.

The stakes were high in these lexicographical projects: Koerbagh and Meijer expected that a switch to Dutch would enable substantial progress for the arts and sciences. In similar argumentations they both explain why it was necessary to develop Dutch as a language of the arts and sciences, primarily because of the many valuable hours wasted on learning the Latin lingua franca, whereas that time could be used for actual study if key texts were available in Dutch. In some cases

²⁷ ‘die taal, welk by al ’t volk bekend is, of behoord bekend te zijn; ‘ter oorsaak dat de saaken, die wy tot nut des volks en staat in aller ernst (...) sullen verhandelen, raakende sijn den gantschen volke.’ A. Koerbagh, *Adriaan Koerbagh a light shining in dark places, to illuminate the main questions of theology and religion*, ed. M. Wielema (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2011), 13. On Koerbagh see: B. Leeuwenburgh, *Het noodlot van een ketter. Adriaan Koerbagh 1633-1669* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013); L. van Bunge, “Introduction”, in *Adriaan Koerbagh a light shining in dark places, to illuminate the main questions of theology and religion*, ed. M. Wielema (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2011); H. Laurens, *De rede: bron van geluk voor iedereen. Een inleiding tot de filosofie van Adriaan Koerbagh 1633-1699* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2019).

²⁸ Cited from the title page of A. Koerbagh, *Een bloemhof van allerley lieflijkheyd sonder verdriet [...]. Of Een vertaaling en uytlegging van al de [...] vreemde bastaart-woorden* (Amsterdam, for the author, 1668). On the relationship between Koerbagh and Meijer see Leeuwenburgh, *Het noodlot van een ketter*, 120.

Dutch authors already equalled the most learned among the Greeks, Koerbagh observes, and others even surpassed them. He invites his reader to imagine the excellence of their achievements if they were able to read the canonical works in their mother tongue.²⁹ It would have allowed the great minds of their era to discover new and unknown knowledge, instead of merely reproducing the Ancient and Renaissance heritage.³⁰ Meijer reminds his readers that the Romans and the Arabs had inherited their ‘Wisdom’ from the Greeks, who were in turn descendants of the Egyptians. These great civilisations had managed to surpass their predecessors by adapting and translating the old heritage, and Meijer expected the Dutch to do the same with the Ancient tradition. He concludes his preface by rejecting the *verouderde waan* (outdated delusion) that the chick will never become wiser than the hen.³¹ The Dutch chick bred by the Ancient hen was destined to eventually free itself from the Greek and Latin heritage.

Meijer thus reserved a key role for translations in his *Bildung*-ideal *avant la lettre* – and it was not just an ideal. Translations offered the most important gateway into the knowledge economy of the Early Enlightenment. A handful of individuals – Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker (1619/1620-1682); Pieter Balling (?-?); Stephan Blankaart (1650-1704); Jacob Copper (?-?) – are to be credited for the fact that almost all books by Descartes and Spinoza became available in Dutch during the seventeenth century. In the prefaces of their translations, they stress the importance of open access to philosophical discourse. Glazemaker for example explicitly states his aim to bring Cartesianism to unlearned readers through translation, which would ‘extend the pales of the Cartesian Philosophy, and share her with the Dutch who are not versed in Latin’.³² Although such expressions of servitude were common among Renaissance translators, it is characteristic that Dutch translators of philosophical texts emphasised the function of their work instead of its literary merits.³³

²⁹ Koerbagh, *Een bloembhof*, 2r-2v.

³⁰ ‘in ’t navórschen van nóch onbekende zaaken’. L. Meijer, *L. Meijers Woordenschat. In drie deelen ghescheiden, van welke het I. Bastaardwoorden, II. Konstwoorden, III. Verouderde woorden begrijpt* (Amsterdam: De Weduwe van Jan Hendricksz. Boom, 1669) 5th reprint, xix.

³¹ Meijer, *L. Meijers Woordenschat*, xx.

³² ‘de palen der Cartesiaansche Wijsbegeerte wijder uit te breiden, en haar ook aan de Nederlanders, de welke onkundig in de Latijnsche taal zijn, deelachtig te maken’. J.H. Glazemaker, “Voorreden van den oversetter,” in J. Clauberg, *Nadere uitbreiding wegens Renati Cartesii Bedenkingen van d’eerste wijsbegeerte*, trans. J.H. Glazemaker (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1683), *3[v].

³³ Th. Hermans, “Images of Translation. Metaphor and Imagery in the Renaissance Discourse on Translation,” in *The Manipulation of Literature*, ed. Th. Hermans (London: Routledge, 2014), 117.

Yet, the enlightenment of the people was not their only motivation. Translators like Glazemaker and their publishers met a real demand, that also created commercial opportunities. At the end of the century, the Dutch Republic was home to a vibrant discussion culture where ‘all sorts of laymen, some of them female, with little or no Latin at all now felt able and entitled to take part in highly obtuse metaphysical disputes.’³⁴ Many of them relied on translations. Dutch translators thus addressed a larger, more diverse readership than the actual authors of the New Philosophy. It is emblematic that many freethinkers related to Spinoza’s circle produced translations of philosophical texts: not only the aforementioned Glazemaker, Balling and Meijer, but also schoolmaster Abraham van Berkel (1639-1686), silk trader Ameldonck Blok (1651/52-1702), theatre director Johannes Bouwmeester (1630-1680), and medical doctor Pieter van Gent (?-?).³⁵ From the onset of the Early Enlightenment, these individuals not only acknowledged but also facilitated the philosophical imperative to use reason publicly. For them, intellectual innovation went hand in hand with the development of new ways of reading and writing: vocabularies, hermeneutics, and rhetorical strategies. A vernacular Enlightenment required access to books and, most of all, a transparent language understood by every reader gifted with reason: a new language for the natural light.

³⁴ L. van Bunge, “The Use of the Vernacular in Early Modern Philosophy,” in *Bilingual Europe. Latin and Vernacular Cultures, Examples of Bilingualism and Multilingualism c. 1300-1800*, ed. J. Bloemendal (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 171.

³⁵ On the translating activities of Van Berkel see C.W. Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the mind. Studies in the Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Dutch Translation* (Leiden/Boston: Brill 1983); M. Wielema, “Abraham van Berkel’s Translations as Contributions to the Dutch Radical Enlightenment,” in *The Dutch Legacy: Radical Thinkers of the 17th Century and the Enlightenment*, eds. S. Lavaert and W. Schröder (Leiden/Boston: Brill 2017). On Ameldonck Blok see P. Steenbakkers, *Spinoza’s Ethica from Manuscript to Print: Studies on Text, Form and Related Topics* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1994), 36; R.H. Vermij, “De Nederlandse vriendenkring van E.W. von Tschirnhaus,” *Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis der Geneeskunde, Natuurwetenschappen, Wiskunde en Techniek* 11, no. 4 (1988); On Johannes Bouwmeester’s translating activities see: W.N.A., Klever, “Hoe men wijs wordt. Een gespannen doch vruchtbare relatie tussen Spinoza en Bouwmeester in het licht van een nieuw document,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 21 no. 1 (2005): 335-353. On Pieter van Gent as a translator see L. Spruit, ‘Het Vaticaanse manuscript van Spinoza’s Ethica.’ *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie* 74 (2012) 2, pp. 305–318; Steenbakkers, *Spinoza’s Ethica from Manuscript to Print*, 35-50; P. Omero and L. Giovanni, *Il carteggio Van Gent-Tschirnhaus (1679-1690). Storia, cronistoria, contesto dell’editio posthuma spinoziana* (Università di Macerata 2013).

1.3 Intellectual conditions: The Hobbesian turn

The new rationalist thought sparked discussions about epistemology and language, about the representation of knowledge, and about linguist reform. Those discussions interacted with Dutch translations of the New Philosophy in complex ways. Rationalist language theories and changing epistemologies were at the heart of those conditions. In order to understand this relationship between translation practices and contemporary language theories, we need to look closer into the intellectual conditions of the Dutch Early Enlightenment.

While the epistemologies of Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes informed ideas about language and knowledge from the 1650s onwards, vernacular authors also drew upon earlier programs for language reform dating back to the sixteenth century. Koerbagh and Meijer were not the first to propagate the vernacular for the advancement of philosophy and the dissemination of knowledge. They borrowed arguments from earlier debates about the position of the Dutch language in the multilingual Low Countries.³⁶ Decades earlier, Hugo Grotius had already advocated the use of the vernacular in the scientific domain. He also claimed that the Dutch could reach great heights if Dutch scholars would start writing in their mother tongue.³⁷ Driven by similar ambitions, playwrights Samuel Coster, Gerbrand Bredero and Pieter Hooft in 1617 had even established an institution dedicated to theatre and higher education in the vernacular: the *Nederduytsche Academie* in Amsterdam.³⁸ In the preface to his 1654 reissue of Johan Hofman's loanword dictionary *Nederlandsche woorden-schat* (1650), Meijer explicitly acknowledged his indebtedness to previous authors like Grotius who had 'taught the Arts and Sciences to speak Dutch'.³⁹ Moreover, with their efforts to purify the Dutch language from

³⁶ For an overview of these debates in European context, see A. van de Haar, *The Golden Mean of Languages. Forging Dutch and French in the Early Modern Low Countries (1540-1620)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 93-141.

³⁷ M.J. van der Wal, "Grotius' taalbeschouwing in contemporaine context," *Nederlandse taalkunde* 28 no. 1 (1997), 20-21. Cf. L. Meijer, "Den Neederduitschen Taallieveren gheluk en voorspoedt," in *L. Meijers Woordenschat* (Amsterdam: De Weduwe van Jan Hendriksz. Boom, 1669), xx.

³⁸ K. Porteman & M.B. Smits-Veldt, *Een nieuw vaderland voor de muzen. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1560-1700* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008), 235.

³⁹ L. Meijer, "Den ghoedtwillighen Leezer Gheluk en Voorspoedt," in *Nederlandsche Woorden-schat, Waar in meest alle de Basterdt-Woorden, uyt P.C. Hóófdt, H. de Ghróót, C. Huygens, I. v. Vondel, en andere voortreffelijke Taalkundighe: En Konst-Woorden Uyt A.L. Kóke, S. Stevin, de*

foreign influences, Meijer and Koerbagh joined a long line of language innovators criticising the perceived contamination of the vocabulary by loanwords. To use Alisa van de Haar's words: 'discussions on loanwords did not confine themselves to one language, or to one century'.⁴⁰ In the Dutch context this tradition included most notably mathematician Simon Stevin (1548-1620) and philosopher Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert (1522-1590).⁴¹ Linguist Joos Lambrecht (1491-1556/1557) and lawyer Jan van den Werve (1522-1576) had published Dutch loanword dictionaries as early as 1546 and 1553, and the 1599 edition of Cornelis Kiliaan's dictionary *Etymologicum teutonicae linguae* also provided an appendix with common loanwords: *Appendix peregrinarum, absurdarum adulterinarumque dictionum*.⁴²

In contrast to this earlier linguistic purism, Meijer and Koerbagh primarily viewed loanwords as a cause of confusion and semantic uncertainty. Unlike Stevin, they did not ascribe superiority and seniority to the Dutch language compared to other languages. Neither were they motivated by patriotism or by an artistic desire to restore the Dutch language to a mythical purity before it got tied to the 'long lasting racks of the Latin language rules' – as Coornhert had phrased it.⁴³ Instead, the prefaces to their dictionaries emphasise the negative effects of loanwords on the use of reason in contemporary discourse: they led to confusion, deception and ignorance. Meijer and Koerbagh contended that the Dutch language – like the French, Italian, and Spanish – had suffered from the 'unbearable yoke of Roman bondage'.⁴⁴ It had been polluted and obscured by centuries of influences from theological, philosophical, and legal discourses in Latin and French. Furthermore, Meijer lamented the 'unlearned populace' (*onkundigh ghbraam*) expressed their

Kamer In Liefd' bloeiende, en andere Duitse Wijsghieren Verghadert, Nauwkeurighlijk en met Kraft vertaalt worden, L. Meijer and J. Hofman (Amsterdam: Thomas Fonteyn, 1654), *3v.

⁴⁰ Van de Haar, *The Golden Mean of Languages*, 263.

⁴¹ Articulations of their purist ideals can be found in Coornhert's preface "De vertaelder totten Leser" from his translation of Cicero's *De Officiis*, titled: *Officia Ciceronis, Leerende wat yegelick in allen staten behoort te doen* (Haarlem: J. van Zuren, 1561); Coornhert's "Voorreden" appended to Hendrik Laurensz Spiegel's *Twe-spraack vande Nederduitsche letterkunst* (Leiden: C. Plantijn, 1584) and Stevin's essay "Vytspraeck vande weerdicheyt der Dvytsche tael" included in his *Beghinselen der weeghconst* (Leiden: Plantijn, 1586), IX-XII.

⁴² On linguistic purism in Dutch and other languages see M. van der Wal and C. van Bree, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlands* (Houten: Spectrum, 2014), 195-198; 222-226; N. van der Sijs (ed.), *Taal trots, Purisme in veertig talen* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Contact, 2019). For an overview of foreign influences in modern Dutch, see: N. van der Sijs, *Van Dale Groot Leenwoordenboek. De invloed van andere talen op het Nederlands* (Utrecht/ Antwerp: Van Dale 2005).

⁴³ 'na de langdurighe pynbancken der wetten vande Latynse tale'. D.V. Coornhert, "Voorreden" in *Twe-spraack van de Nederduitsche Letterkunst*, 8.

⁴⁴ 'het ondraaghlijk juk der Roomsche slavernije'. Meijer, "Den Neederduitschen Taallieveren", vii.

pretension to erudition by overloading their language with foreign terminology.⁴⁵ A similar passage occurs in the preface to Koerbagh's first (legal) dictionary, *'t Nieuw woorden-boek der regten* (1664). He mocked the attorneys and authors who, lacking a formal education, feigned learnedness by using Latin words without knowing their meaning, 'like the Indian parrot, that mimics human words without reason'.⁴⁶ This parrot provided the ultimate metaphor for Koerbagh's project: reclaiming the language was a way to disarm the theological and legal elites, liberating the people from parroting their rulers. He empowered his readers to think *and* speak independently in their own language. Such liberation required dictionaries that not only provided translated terminology, but also offered conceptual corrections and explanations in their entries.

Koerbagh's lexicographical work thus aimed to resolve the unreliability of the Dutch language as a medium for true knowledge. Thought itself remained stuck in old tradition as long as it continued to be communicated in the languages of the past. Various key texts from the Radical Enlightenment started with a similar discussion on the semantic instability and inaccuracy of (Biblical) language, or stated the importance of using clear and understandable words, e.g., Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), Meijer's *Philosophia S. Scriptura Interpres* (1666), Koerbagh's *Een ligt schijnende in duistere plaatsen*, and Pieter Balling's *Het licht op den kandelaar* (1662).⁴⁷ Relieving oneself of this burden of linguistic confusion, this inheritance from the past, required the invention of a new vocabulary and a new hermeneutics. Pieter Balling, Spinoza's first Dutch translator, even argued for a completely new language: 'So that then, if one through words, and arguments, should want to better instil the things in someone, one would be required, to invent new words, and consequently a whole new language'.⁴⁸ While Balling seems to have dismissed this project as an absurdity, Koerbagh actually tried to realise that ideal. He used the dictionary as an

⁴⁵ Meijer, "Den Neederduitschen Taallieveren", v.

⁴⁶ 'gelijk den Indiaanschen klap-vogel, die sonder verstant de woorden der menschen nabootst.' A.K. [= Adriaan Koerbagh], "Goedgunstige Leesers", in *'t Nieuw woorden-boek der regten ofte Een vertaalinge en nytlegginge van meest alle de Latijnse woorden, en wijze van spreken, in alle regten en rechtsgeleeders boeken en schriften gebruykelijk* (Amsterdam: Weduwe van Jan Hendriksz Boom, Zalr., 1664), p. *vi.

⁴⁷ J. Touber, *Spinoza and Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic, 1660-1710* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴⁸ 'Zoo dat dan, indien men door woorden, en redenen iemandt de zaken zelve, beter zoude willen indrukken, men van noden hadde, nieuwe woorden, en by gevolg een heele nieuwe taal te vinden.' Anonymous [= P. Balling], *Het licht op den kandelaar. Dienende, tot opmerkinge van de voornaamste dingen; in het boekje genaamt De verborgentbeden van het rijke Ghodts [...] door William Ames* (S.l.: 'Gedrukt voor den Auteur', 1662), 3. On Balling's language critique see Krop, *Spinoza. Een paradoxale icoon van Nederland*, 91-92; Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza*, 16-19.

instrument to not just explain but also critically redefine theological terminology such as ‘prophet’, ‘trinity’, and ‘bible’.

Scepticism about the reliability of language was also fundamental to Cartesian and Spinozist epistemology, although Descartes and Spinoza held different views about the possibilities for linguistic reform. In the second part of his *Ethica* (1677), Spinoza distinguishes between three kinds of knowledge: imagination, reason, and intuitive knowledge. Knowledge of the first kind, imagination, is to be considered ‘the only cause of falsity’, whereas reason and intuitive knowledge were necessarily true.⁴⁹ Spinoza allocates knowledge perceived through words and signs to the first category, effectively dismissing all linguistic communication as being potentially false. From his point of view, Spinoza probably regarded his friends with amusement as they tried to fix the language problem through purification and promotion of the vernacular. After all, if rational knowledge does not depend on signs, language reform merely replaces one unreliable sign system for the other. Discussing the interpretation of Scripture in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), Spinoza acknowledges the impossibility to change the meaning of words:

‘Anyone who tried to do this would be forced, as part of the process, to explain all the authors who wrote in that language and used that word in its accepted meaning. Either he would have to do this according to the temperament and mind of each author, or else he would have to distort them very carefully.’⁵⁰

While utterances are often misinterpreted, the meaning of words, Spinoza insists, cannot be changed because meaning depends on common language use. Decent language training and linguistic tools such as grammar books and vocabularies were vital to recognise and criticise such misinterpretations – Spinoza himself worked on a Hebrew grammar to help other philologists understand the syntax and meaning of the Biblical sources. But it was pointless to attempt changing the meaning of language. One could only reach true knowledge about God or Nature through the second or third kind of knowledge, which are both language-independent.

Compared to the freethinkers from Spinoza’s circle, Descartes was less interested in matters of theology and Bible hermeneutics. For him too, however, there was little truth to be found in the knowledge accumulated and preserved in the written world. Language and rhetoric were considered antithetical to philosophy

⁴⁹ B. de Spinoza, “Ethics,” in *The collected works of Spinoza*, ed. E. Curley (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1985), Vol. I, Part II, proposition 41, 478.

⁵⁰ B. de Spinoza, “Theological-Political Treatise,” Chapter VII, 179.

and deduction. In *Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii* he writes: ‘in the vast majority of issues about which the learned dispute, the problem is almost always one of words.’⁵¹ The old method of formulating rational arguments in syllogisms was to be transferred ‘from philosophy to rhetoric’, as Descartes considered them merely reproductions of existing arguments instead of instruments to arrive at new conclusions.⁵² This (old) opposition between philosophy and rhetoric exemplifies the Cartesian assumption about the existence of intersubjective common notions. These common notions are grounded in the ‘natural light’ of reason, as opposed to empirical or revealed knowledge based on rhetoric or perception.⁵³ Only clear and distinct ideas could serve as a solid foundation for the truth. For similar reasons Descartes rejected the habit of providing definitions that only obscure the words they are meant to clarify.⁵⁴ He regularly criticised the obscure terminology and definitions from Scholasticism. If complex explanations are needed for presumably self-evident terms like ‘place’ or ‘movement’, then apparently they are not clear at all, and therefore unfit for science and philosophy.

The Cartesian method promised a way out of what Richard Popkin called the ‘crise pyrrhonienne’, the sceptic crisis of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century.⁵⁵ The Reformation had created an intellectual and political crisis where different knowledge systems and religious traditions competed for the (holy) truth. MARRIGJE PAIJMANS introduced the similar notion of a ‘crisis of truths’ to denote the epistemological uncertainty resulting from the political and religious fragmentation in the Dutch Republic.⁵⁶ But thanks to Descartes, the trust in the human mind was only temporarily restored. His method made it possible again to attain ‘clear and distinct ideas’. Descartes’s efforts to develop a deductive method originated in a widely felt need to retrieve a common ground in a post-Babylonian world of philosophical disagreement and religious discord. Spinoza’s ambitions with the ‘geometric’ order of his *Ethica* – written in a dense structure of axioms, propositions and demonstrations inspired by geometric deduction – were similarly high. Spinoza employed his philosophical genius for maintaining peace in a religiously divided

⁵¹ Descartes, “Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” 53.

⁵² Descartes, “Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” 37.

⁵³ S. Gaukroger, *Descartes. An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 201-202.

⁵⁴ Descartes, “Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” 49.

⁵⁵ R.H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (New York: Harper & Row 1968), 17; L. van Bunge, *Johannes Bredenburg (1643-1691). Een Rotterdamse collegiant in de ban van Spinoza* (Dissertation Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1990), 243.

⁵⁶ M.G. Pajmans, *Dichter bij de waarheid. Parrhesia en dramatisering in het werk van Joost van den Vondel* (Dissertation University of Amsterdam, 2015), 17.

country, showing his readers how to be rational members of a peaceful commonwealth.

While the medical doctors Koerbagh and Meijer agreed with Descartes and Spinoza about the diagnosis and the symptoms of the crisis of truths, they disagreed about its remedy. Descartes and Spinoza maintained an opposition between reason and rhetoric. They propagated a geometric, language-independent method to obtain new and valid knowledge based on rational or 'intuitive' knowledge. For Koerbagh and Meijer, on the other hand, words and ideas were connected, which made linguistic reform an instrument for conceptual innovation. While Spinoza and Descartes rejected the possibility of lexical change and devalued the function of definitions, Koerbagh and Meijer used the genre of the dictionary to liberate their fellow citizens from false beliefs. Their position aligned with the philosophical development of a third major rationalist who played a key role in the Dutch Early Enlightenment: Thomas Hobbes.

On the stage of Dutch intellectual history, Hobbes was only present through stand-ins. Unlike Descartes and Spinoza, he never settled permanently in the Dutch Republic nor did he rely primarily on the Dutch book trade for the dissemination of his works. Spending his life in the service of England's high nobility, the philosopher produced his books in a setting completely different from the other two protagonists of this study, who appreciated the quiet isolation of small towns in Holland. Despite his physical distance to the Dutch Republic, however, Hobbesian ideas soon surfaced in the vernacular discourse on political theory during the seventeenth century. Even more than Descartes and Spinoza, Hobbes depended on cultural brokers for the Dutch reception of his thought, like Lambert van Velthuysen and Pieter de la Court, who responded to his political philosophy; like Johannes Blaeu, who published Hobbes's *Opera Philosophica* in 1668; and like the schoolmaster and radical thinker Abraham van Berkel (1639-1686), the first Dutch translator of Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) in 1667.

Contrary to Descartes and Spinoza, Hobbes changed his mind about his earlier attempts to separate reason from eloquence, the linguistic art of persuasion. As Quentin Skinner argues in his *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (1996), Hobbes's early work responded to the 'rhetorical culture of Renaissance humanism' more than to the epistemological challenge of pyrrhonism.⁵⁷ The philosopher's rationalism was first informed by a desire to abandon the relativist rhetorical culture which taught students the ability to argue *in utramque partem* – to both defend and oppose a given proposition.⁵⁸ The association between eloquence and reason made

⁵⁷ Q. Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

⁵⁸ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, 299.

the idea acceptable that any well-argued statement could be true, which undermined political stability and therefore the social contract with the sovereign. Like Descartes and Spinoza, Hobbes initially viewed language and rhetoric mainly as a flawed and misleading medium for rational knowledge. He aimed to develop a political philosophy and civil science on rational grounds that could serve the stability of the state. By resolving confusion he hoped to contribute to political harmony and prevent the people from reverting to the state of nature where they are torn apart by war and lawlessness. If used correctly, reason should be persuasive in itself. Hobbes thus tried to detach reason from eloquence in the scientific realm. Years later however, Hobbes paradoxically came to write ‘a belated but magnificent contribution to the Renaissance art of eloquence’: *Leviathan* (1651).⁵⁹ Inspired by François de La Mothe le Vayer, a theorist of rhetoric whom Hobbes met in France, and prompted by the English civil war (1642-1651) culminating in the dramatic execution of Charles I in 1649, the English philosopher felt obliged to revisit his earlier position. To get his message across among a large unlearned reading public, he could not afford to discard the power of eloquence.⁶⁰ In the interest of political stability, it was permitted to employ the art of rhetoric and language for the rationalist cause.

With this change of mind, Hobbes’s philosophical development combines the two positions represented by Meijer and Koerbagh on the one hand and Descartes and Spinoza on the other. It is clear that Koerbagh engaged with Hobbes’s work intensively, helping his friend Abraham van Berkel to find a printer for the latter’s Dutch translation of *Leviathan* (see Chapter 5). Koerbagh’s optimism about conceptual change through linguistic reform echoes Hobbes’s assumption that language – ‘the most noble and profitable [human] invention of all other’ – can be instrumental to our rational abilities under certain circumstances.⁶¹ In his chapter ‘Of Speech’ from *Leviathan*, Hobbes supports this proposition with the example of a man who is able to generalise about the shape of the triangle only because he can put the general rule defining its shape into words.⁶² Hobbes’s emphasis on the importance of new definitions for philosophical progress may also have inspired Koerbagh’s critical lexicography. The English philosopher compared those who failed to critically revise the definitions of their predecessors with ‘birds that entring

⁵⁹ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, 4; Cf. C. Cantalupo, “Hobbes’s Use of Metaphor,” *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture 1660-1700* 12, no. 1 (1988), 21.

⁶⁰ J. Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England, 1640-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 94.

⁶¹ Th. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019 [1996]), revised student edition 24.

⁶² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Tuck, 27.

by the chimney, and finding themselves inclosed in a chamber, flutter at the false light of a glasse window, for want of wit to consider which way they came in.⁶³ We could view Koerbagh's critical redefinition as an attempt to prevent his readers from becoming parrots, or trapped birds, by leading them back to the chimney. This dissertation examines whether and how this 'Hobbesian turn' – the revision of the relationship between language and reason – in vernacular debates is reflected in the Dutch translations of Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes.

1.4 Social circumstances: Spinoza's circle

Ideals about language and reason were meaningless if they did not resonate in specific social contexts. Therefore we must also reconstruct the social dimension of the Dutch Early Enlightenment. Students of the first Dutch translations of Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes will be quick to note that these texts emerged in a relatively small and closely related group of translators, editors and publishers. In this thesis I will consider 30 translations of 27 philosophical treatises.⁶⁴ Besides three anonymous translations, this corpus depended on only five translators – Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker, Pieter Balling, Stephan Blankaart, Jacob Copper, and Abraham van Berkel – and three publishers: Jan Rieuwertsz, Jacobus Wagenaar, and Jan Claesz ten Hoorn. Nearly all publishers and known translators can be tied directly or indirectly to Spinoza's circle. Besides Jacob Copper, a physician from Den Briel, they all participated in an Amsterdam publishing network serving the market's demand for the New Philosophy.

This concentration of human capital in one specific corner of the early modern knowledge economy raises questions about the social and ideological profile of the individuals involved. One might be tempted to assume a certain degree of intellectual homogeneity among translators of the New Philosophy. However, the assumption that social ties indicate shared intellectual sympathies should always raise some suspicion, simply because friends do not always agree with each other. Moreover, in the competitive book economy of the Dutch Republic, money was always a concern. Intellectual motives were often on a par with

⁶³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Tuck, 28.

⁶⁴ Chapter 2 offers a detailed corpus description. Appendix A offers an overview of the 18 translations included in the so-called Translation Corpus.

commercial or financial needs. Glazemaker for example was one of the exceptional ‘professional’ translators in early modern Europe who may have earned a comfortable living with his pen. Previous scholars characterise him as a pragmatic and therefore productive translator, apparently mostly driven by commissions, who translated faithfully but also mechanically.⁶⁵ And yet, even his oeuvre contains clear ideological affinities that are overlooked if he is mainly viewed as a puppet employed by publishers to keep the presses going (see Chapter 3). Despite their differences, Dutch translators of the New Philosophy all married into to the same intellectual family. Each was in his own way ideologically committed to the books by Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes he set out to translate. Understanding their ideological commitment requires a careful reconstruction of the social circumstances of each translator.

The publishers related to Spinoza’s circle offer a good place to start. In the history of the Dutch Early Enlightenment, two in particular stand out as key brokers of people and books: Jan Rieuwertsz (ca. 1617-1687) and Jan Claesz ten Hoorn (1639-1715). Although operating in different periods and for different readerships, they played similar roles in the vernacular dissemination of the New Philosophy. In order to understand their individual positions I will distinguish between two waves in the Dutch translation history of the New Philosophy, respectively 1656-1684 and 1687-1694. Rieuwertsz played a prominent role in the first wave; Ten Hoorn in the second.

Rieuwertsz entered the book trade in 1644. He opened a bookshop in the Dirk van Assensteege (currently Dirk van Hasseltsteege) and later, in 1675, moved to the Beursstraat.⁶⁶ This Mennonite publisher was to become notorious for attracting and publishing a variety of religious (Socinian) dissidents – a reputation that did not escape the attention of the consistory of the Reformed church.⁶⁷ His shop was a meeting place for prominent freethinkers in the city, including Spinoza, Meijer, and

⁶⁵ P. Burke, “Cultures of translation in early modern Europe,” in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, eds. P. Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 13; Th. Hermans, “1550-1700. De wereld binnen taalbereik,” in *Vertalen in de Nederlanden. Een cultuurgeschiedenis*, eds. D. Schoenaers et al. (Amsterdam: Boom, 2021), 267-268.

⁶⁶ P. Visser, “‘Blasphemous and pernicious’. The role of printers and booksellers in the spread of dissident religious and philosophical ideas in the Netherlands in the second half of the seventeenth century,” *Quaerendo* 26, no. 4 (1996), 311.

⁶⁷ Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring*, 113; C.G. Manusov-Verhage, “Jan Rieuwertsz, marchand libraire et éditeur de Spinoza,” in *Spinoza to the Letter. Studies in Words, Texts, and Books*, eds. F. Akkerman and P. Steenbakkers (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 239-240; T. Holzhey, ‘*Als gy maar scherp wordt, zo zyn wy, én gy voldaan*’. *Rationalistische ideeën van het kunstgenootschap Nil Volentibus Arduum 1669-1680* (Dissertation University of Amsterdam, 2014), 67.

the Jesuit Latin teacher Franciscus van den Enden (1602-1674).⁶⁸ While a comprehensive study about Rieuwertsz still remains to be written, few scholars underestimate his central position in the socio-intellectual climate of Amsterdam during the second half of the seventeenth century.⁶⁹ Translations of nearly all books written by Descartes and Spinoza appeared under his imprint between 1656 and 1684. Most of them were translated by Glazemaker and prepared by the first ‘generation’ in Spinoza’s circle, including most notably Meijer, Balling, Bouwmeester, and Mennonite merchant Jarich Jellesz (?-1683).⁷⁰

At the end of the 1680s, when most members of the first generation were no longer alive, Jan Claesz ten Hoorn took over Rieuwertsz’s role as Amsterdam’s main publisher of the New Philosophy in translation. In 1687 Ten Hoorn would have published a Dutch translation of Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) if the Reformed Church’s consistory had not intervened, forcing him to interrupt the printing and burn the manuscript.⁷¹ On 22 March 1690, Ten Hoorn received the privilege from the States of Holland and West-Friesland to publish the complete works by Descartes in the Dutch language. Within two years he managed to produce the most complete edition of Descartes’s works ever to appear in Dutch, printed in four illustrated quarto volumes.⁷² This was an expensive project even for a successful bookseller like Ten Hoorn, which is probably why he produced the collected works in collaboration with his brother, the notorious publisher of novels

⁶⁸ On Van den Enden’s place in Spinoza’s circle and Rieuwertsz’s collegiant network, see F. Mertens, “Van den Enden en Spinoza,” *Mededelingen van de Vereniging van het Spinozahuis* (Rijnsburg: Uitgeverij Spinozahuis, 2012), 56.

⁶⁹ Visser “Blasphemous and pernicious”, 314; Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 279; Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant*, 277; Meinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring*, 105; S. Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell. Spinoza’s Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 214.

⁷⁰ The contribution of each of these individuals is documented in detail in Steenbakker’s *Spinoza’s Ethica from Manuscript to Print*. On Rieuwertsz and the printers of Spinoza’s works, see R. Jagersma and T. Dijkstra, ‘Uncovering Spinoza’s Printers by Means of Bibliographical Research,’ *Quaerendo* 43, no. 4 (2013), 286-288.

⁷¹ G.F.L. Peeters, “Jan Claesz ten Hoorn and Spinoza’s Tractaet,” *Quaerendo* 13, no. 3 (1983), 239-241.

⁷² R. Descartes, *Alle de werken van de heer Renatus Des-Cartes: Principia Philosophiae of beginselen der wysbegeerte [etc.]*, trans. J.H. Glazemaker (Amsterdam: Jan Claesz ten Hoorn 1690) Vol. 1; R. Descartes, *Alle de werken van de heer Renatus Des-Cartes: Meditationes de Prima Philosophia of bedenkingen van d’ eerste wysbegeerte [etc.]*, trans. J.H. Glazemaker (Amsterdam: Jan Claesz ten Hoorn, 1690) Vol. 2; R. Descartes, *Alle de werken van de heer Renatus Des-Cartes: proeven der wysbegeerte [etc.]*, trans. J.H. Glazemaker and S. Blankaart (Amsterdam: Jan Claesz ten Hoorn, 1692) Vol. 3; R. Descartes, *Alle de werken van de heer Renatus Des-Cartes: brieven aan vele hoog-geagte personen, van verscheide ampten [etc.]*, trans. J.H. Glazemaker (Amsterdam: Jan Claesz ten Hoorn, 1692) Vol. 4.

and pornography Timotheus ten Hoorn (1644-1715).⁷³ Consultation with *verscheyde Wijsgeeren* (various Philosophers) convinced him that he would earn back the *grootte onkosten* (great expenses) involved.⁷⁴ Ten Hoorn expected to be faced with sufficient demand because vernacular editions of Descartes's work had been out of stock for years after the printing of the first translations by Glazemaker published with Riewertsz between the 1650s and the early 1680s. Ten Hoorn's *Alle de Werken* offered reprints of Glazemaker's translations but also issued four new translations produced by his good friend Stephan Blankaart. It is likely that Ten Hoorn acquired manuscript versions of unpublished treatises by Descartes indirectly; with a little help from two members of the 'second generation' in Spinoza's circle: Pieter van Gent and German philosopher Ehrenfried Walter von Tschirnhaus (1651-1708) (see Chapter 6).

Riewertsz and Ten Hoorn produced books in a city crowded with booksellers. During the seventeenth century, Amsterdam and the Dutch Republic became the capital and centre of the European book trade. Estimates of the annual number of publishers active in the Dutch Republic between 1650 and 1700 range between 300 and 450.⁷⁵ Their production was massive: Rindert Jagersma counts 69,987 surviving editions printed between 1600 and 1700 in the records of the Short Title Catalogue Netherlands.⁷⁶ If lost books and single-sheet prints are taken into account, the numbers are even higher. Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen presented a total estimate of 300 million copies of over 360,000 editions printed before 1700 in the Dutch Republic.⁷⁷ The Dutch print industry produced ten times more books per capita than the French or the Spanish.⁷⁸ Specialisation was required in such a competitive economy. Big players like Johannes Janssonius from

⁷³ Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant*, 175; 280; Anonymous, *Relaas van de Beroertens op Parnassus. Ontstaan over het Drukken Van de Beginselen der eerste Wijsbegeerte van de Heer Renatus Descartes* (Amsterdam: Tjerk Pietersz, 1690). On Timotheus ten Hoorn see Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant*, 175-180; G.F.L., Peeters, "Leven en bedrijf van Timotheus ten Hoorn (1644-1715)," *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 25, no. 1 (2002)

⁷⁴ J.C. ten Hoorn, "De Boek-verkooper aen den Leser," in: R. Descartes, *Alle de Werken Van de Heer Renatus, Des-Cartes: Principia Philosophiae of Beginselen der Wysbegeerte [etc.]*, trans. J.H. Glazemaker (Amsterdam: Jan Claesz ten Hoorn, 1690), Vol. 1.

⁷⁵ C. Rasterhoff, "The Markets for Art, Books, and Luxury Goods," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, eds. H.J. Helmers and G.H. Janssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 251. Cf. C. Rasterhoff, *Painting and Publishing as Cultural Industries: The Fabric of Creativity in the Dutch Republic, 1580-1800* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

⁷⁶ R. Jagersma, *Pamfletbandel. Productie, distributie en consumptie van pamfletten in de Nederlandse Republiek rond 1700* (Dissertation University of Amsterdam, forthcoming), 61.

⁷⁷ A. Pettegree and A. der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World. Making and Trading Books in the Dutch Golden Age* (Yale University Press, 2019), 16; 397.

⁷⁸ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World*, 11.

Amsterdam or Abraham and Bonaventura Elzevier from Leiden imported and exported scholarly and literary books in Latin and French from all over Europe, serving an international class of learned readers.⁷⁹ Others specialised in specific genres for the domestic market. Firms run by the Houthaek or Lescailje family for example, mostly sold plays staged in the Amsterdam city theatre (Amsterdamse Schouwburg).⁸⁰ Within this diverse trade segmented by genres and readerships, Ten Hoorn and Rieuwertsz represented only a small niche. What was their position in the Republic's reading culture?

Piet Visser estimates that 10-15% of the more than 230 editions produced by Rieuwertsz can be classified as 'non-religious' books: 'medical, scientific, and mathematical works, historical and literary writings, a bit of occasional printing, and a remarkable number of travelogues'.⁸¹ The rest comprises publications of a 'religious-philosophical' nature. This category also applies to the many pamphlets Rieuwertsz fed into the *Lammerenkrijg* (War of the Lambs), a controversy during the 1650s and 1660s amongst his fellow members of the Mennonite congregation Bij het Lam (see Chapter 3). Rieuwertsz's publishing activities were dedicated to controversies at the fringes of what the Reformed Church would tolerate. The titles in his shop primarily attracted Remonstrants, Mennonites, Cartesians and Spinozists.⁸² Rieuwertsz's Dutch editions of Descartes and Spinoza were probably bought and read by these religious and philosophical minorities.

Despite his similar interest in translations of Descartes and Spinoza, Ten Hoorn was a different kind of publisher. His bookshop, located across from the Oude Heeren Logement (currently Grimburgwal), specialised in cheap print for a large audience: mostly Dutch travel literature and medical books. His medical library included lucrative editions by writing physicians such as the aforementioned Stephan Blankaart, Cornelis Bontekoe (1644-1685), and Heydentrijk Overkamp (?-1693), with a special interest in sexuality and reproductive health.⁸³ He regularly collaborated with his brother Timotheus, who published several pornographic novels for a similarly broad readership. Jan Claesz applied various commercial strategies to boost sales and make his customers return to the shop.⁸⁴ Michiel van

⁷⁹ Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World*, 269.

⁸⁰ F. Blom, *Podium van Europa. Creativiteit en ondernemen in de Amsterdamse Schouwburg van de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Querido, 2021), 67-68. On the commercial position of Lescailje see L. van Gemert, S. Muller, M.G. Paijmans, "Big Business! Literatuur als handelswaar in de Gouden Eeuw," *Voors* 30, no. 2 (2012), 16-19.

⁸¹ Visser, "Blasphemous and pernicious," 312.

⁸² Visser, "Blasphemous and pernicious," 314.

⁸³ Cf. Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant*, 279.

⁸⁴ M. van Groesen, "The Atlantic World in Paperback: The Amsterdam Publisher Jan ten Hoorn and his Catalogue of Popular Americana," in *Imagining the Americas in Print Books*,

Groesen characterises the development in Ten Hoorn's publishing activities throughout his active years as a transition from 'fact to fiction'. Factual or quasi-factual travel accounts and medical books were gradually complemented by adventure stories about pirates and the colonial trade – genres that probably sold even better. However, commercial strategy compromised the reliability of his books: 'Fact and fiction were intertwined in a way that made it difficult for his loyal readership to gauge what was true and what had been made up'.⁸⁵ Ten Hoorn's intellectual interests were inferior to his commercial motives. Of course, Rieuwertsz was a businessman as well in the end, but his publishing activities also supported an ideological agenda. Whereas Rieuwertsz welcomed a specific group of readers and dedicated his career to the improvement of religious tolerance and truth, Ten Hoorn was more interested in keeping his business alive, for anyone who could spare a few *stuivers* (five-cent coins).

Thus, different publishers with different motives serving different readerships invested time and money to publish translations of the same philosophical texts. Same texts, different readers: apparently the New Philosophy appealed to vernacular readers for varying reasons. Moreover, these reader groups must have been large enough for Rieuwertsz and Ten Hoorn to accept the financial risks, not just in terms of printing costs, but also considering the censorship in the Dutch Republic.⁸⁶ For even in the Republic's liberal publishing climate there were serious legal restrictions to the production, teaching, or dissemination of works written by Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. A 1653 decree by the States of Holland that officially prohibited publications and gatherings by Socinians – followers of the Italian antitrinitarian theologian Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) – effectively offered a legal ground to also raise suspicion of authors with Cartesian sympathies.⁸⁷ Furthermore, on 19 July 1674 the High Court of Holland, Zeeland, and West-

Maps and Encounters in the Atlantic World, ed. M. van Groesen (Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2019), 230.

⁸⁵ Van Groesen, "The Atlantic World in Paperback," 230.

⁸⁶ Various scholars assessed the (in)effectiveness of censorship in the Dutch Republic. See for example: Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 276; Pettegree and Der Weduwen, *The Bookshop of the World*, 11-13; J. van Eijnatten, "Van godsdienstvrijheid naar mensenrecht.

Meningsvorming over censuur en persvrijheid in de Republiek, 1597-1795," *BMGN* 118, no.1 (2003), 2; O. van Marion, "Verboden in de Gouden Eeuw. Schrijvers, drukkers en hun strategieën," in *Boeken onder druk. Censuur en pers-onvrijheid in Nederland sinds de boekdrukkunst*, ed. M. Mathijssen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 31; I. Leemans, "Censuur als onmacht. De omstreden Nederlandse publieke ruimte 1660-1760," in *Boeken onder druk. Censuur en pers-onvrijheid in Nederland sinds de boekdrukkunst*, ed. M. Mathijssen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 50; Jagersma, *Pamflethandel*, 109.

⁸⁷ Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza*, 73.

Friesland issued the *Placaet van den Hoven van Hollandt, tegens de Sociniaensche Boecken Leviathan en andere* against the publication and circulation of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), Meijer's *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpres* (1667) and Frans Kuyper's *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum* (1668).⁸⁸ While the general effectiveness of such decrees remains a matter of scholarly debate, censorship was not an academic matter for those affected by it. The infamous cases of Aart Wolsgryn, Adriaan Koerbagh, Ericus Walten, and Jan ten Hoorn himself, prove that an intervention by the Church or civil authorities could jeopardise financial investments, or worse, imprison the publishers or authors involved.⁸⁹ It is a telling fact that almost all Dutch translations of Hobbes and Spinoza appeared without the full names of their translators and publishers. The risks were real, but apparently did not outweigh the potential financial profit expected from publishing controversial treatises. Who and what justified that expectation? What made non-academic readers willing to spend their money on translations of treatises that could be philosophically complex, mathematically challenging, or stylistically inaccessible? Answering such questions requires a careful reconstruction of the social circumstances and local debates in which translators claimed their part.

1.5 Linguistic practices: Translating in the Dutch Republic

Besides intellectual conditions and social circumstances, a third dimension modulated the translation history of the New Philosophy: the linguistic conventions and translation practices in the multilingual publishing climate of the Dutch Republic. Early modern Dutch translators of philosophical treatises operated in a gradually changing textual culture. These changes concerned the uptake of a vernacular that was gradually changing itself, the function of translations in the transnational and multilingual book trade, and the relationship with rhetorical traditions. While such general trends in the history of literature and translation

⁸⁸ *Groot placaet-boeck* [...]. Vol. 3 (The Hague: Jacobus Scheltus, 1683), 523-524. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 275-276. Cf. Frijhoff & Spies, 1650. *Bevochten eendracht*, 344.

⁸⁹ On the grounds for prosecution in Wolsgryn's case see Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant*, 292-293. On Walten see R. Jagersma, "Het leven van de polemist, vrijdenker en pamflettist Ericus Walten (1662-1697)," *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 36, no. 1 (2013), 41-42; Jagersma, *Pamfletbandel*, 367-456. On Ten Hoorn see Peeters, "Jan Claesz ten Hoorn and Spinoza's Tractaet".

cannot explain the form and style of individual texts, they do offer a framework that allows us to position translations in the fabric of Dutch textual culture.

Hastened by the Reformation and the rise of the printing press, the hegemony of (Neo-)Latin in European textual culture started to decline from the sixteenth century onwards.⁹⁰ Latin remained the norm in the domain of science and natural philosophy, but even there the boundaries between languages became increasingly diffuse. Various scholars portrayed the early modern period as an era of transition characterised by multilingual interaction and co-existence, rejecting the binary view that Latin and vernacular discourses were closed and separate circuits.⁹¹ Even if several milestones in the philosophical canon – Galileo’s *Dialogo* (1632), Descartes’s *Discours* (1637), Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651) – first appeared in the vernacular, Neo-Latin translations always followed soon and contributed considerably to their fame in the Neo-Latinist Republic of Letters.⁹² Vice versa, vernacular translations sparked new readings and commentaries of both Latin and Neo-Latin texts in various European languages.⁹³ Moreover, with the rise of the vernacular, translations of modern languages became increasingly important as well. A considerable degree of the success of the Amsterdamse Schouwburg depended on Dutch adaptations and prose translations of Spanish, French, Italian, and even English plays.⁹⁴ Owing to translation, early modern prose novels by Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes, Scottish poet John Barclay and French noble Honoré d’Urfé

⁹⁰ Jagersma, *Pamflethandel*, 100-102.

⁹¹ J. Bloemendal, “Introduction: Bilingualism, Multilingualism and the Formation of Europe,” in *Bilingual Europe. Latin and Vernacular Cultures, Examples of Bilingualism and Multilingualism c. 1300-1800*, ed. J. Bloemendal (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 2. T. Deneire, “Neo-Latin Literature and the Vernacular,” in *A Guide to Neo-Latin Literature*, ed. V. Moul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 36; J. Leonhardt, *Latin. Story of a World Language*, trans K. Kronenberg (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 10.

⁹² J. Bloemendal, *Latijn. Cultuurgeschiedenis van een wereldtaal* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Genneep, 2016), 190; I. Pantin, “The role of translations in European scientific exchanges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, eds. P. Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 178.

⁹³ J. M. Pérez Fernández and E. Wilson-Lee, “Introduction,” in *Translation and the Book Trade in Early Modern Europe*, eds. J. M. Pérez Fernández and E. Wilson-Lee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 12; see also L. Rens and G. van Eemeren, *Genres in het ernstige Renaissancetoneel der Nederlanden tot 1625* (Hasselt: Heideland-Orbis, 1977); H. Meeus, *Repertorium van het ernstige drama in de Nederlanden 1600-1650* (Leuven: Acco, 1983); G. van Eemeren and H. Meeus, *Genres in het ernstige renaissancetoneel der Nederlanden 1626-1650* (Leuven/Amersfoort: Acco, 1988).

⁹⁴ Blom, *Podium van Europa*, e.g. 60. On the Dutch adaptation of English drama see p. 105-106; Hermans, “1550-1700. De wereld binnen taalbereik,” 255.

enriched Dutch literary history.⁹⁵ In some cases, Dutch translations even provided the model for interpretations in yet another European language.⁹⁶

The high demand for intermediaries between languages and between classical and vernacular knowledge domains also changed the translator's function and strategies. Whereas translating had traditionally been instrumental as an exercise to learn the classical languages, within early modern print culture the skill became highly valued for different reasons.⁹⁷ Instead of merely imitating the past to master Cicero's language, the early modern translator was increasingly tasked with satisfying the needs of readers in the present. This schematic characterisation does not capture the complexity and diversity of medieval and early modern translation practices, but it is helpful to understand the general development from the 'word-for-word' literalism dominant among (late) medieval translators to a more libertine tendency to 'domesticate' the source in the target language that prevailed in the early modern culture of translation.⁹⁸ In contrast with the medieval translator, who above all maintained the source's foreignness by respecting its syntactic integrity, this early modern descendant tried to bring the text 'home' in a style familiar to the reader. To phrase the difference in a well-known dichotomy: the former was text-oriented, the latter reader-oriented.

With its pivot to a reader-oriented approach, translation acquired the potential for social reform. Luther's Bible from 1534 – written for 'the mother in the house, the children in the street, the common man in the market' – had fulfilled this potential most dramatically.⁹⁹ A century later, translation became a threat to the authority of the Protestant Church itself. While the 1637 Dutch *Statenvertaling* had been initiated during the 1618-1619 Synod of Dort, the Church remained especially wary of translations of books that were less supportive to the Reformed faith, such

⁹⁵ L. van Gemert, "Stenen in het mozaïek. De vroegmoderne roman als internationaal fenomeen," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal en Letterkunde* 124, no.1 (2008), 23-25; J.A. Parente, "Romancing the Nation. History and the Origins of the Novel in the German Empire and the Netherlands," *Journal of Dutch Literature* 9 (2018), 3-21.

⁹⁶ Burke, "Cultures of translation," 27.

⁹⁷ J. Jansen, *Imitatio. Literaire navolging (imitatio auctorum) in de Europese letterkunde van de renaissance (1500-1700)* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2008), 144.

⁹⁸ Burke, "Cultures of translation," 26; Hermans, "Images of Translation," 124; D. Schoenaers, "Tot 1550. Advocaten van de volkstaal," in *Vertalen in de Nederlanden. Een cultuurgeschiedenis*, eds. D. Schoenaers et al. (Amsterdam: Boom, 2021), 35-36.

⁹⁹ Cited in J. Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible. Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 11-12. The original quote reads: 'denn man mus nicht die buchstaben inn der Lateinischen sprachen fragen / wie man sol Deusch reden / wie diese Esel thun / Sondern man mus die mutter ihm hause / die kinder auff der gassen / den gemeinen man auff dem marckt drümb fragen'. M. Luther, "Ein sendbrief D. M. Luthers. Von Dolmetzchen und Fürbit der heiligenn," in *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1909), Vol. 30, Part II, 632-646.

as Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and Hobbes's *Leviathan*. The outrage and attempts at censorship by Dutch church ministers with regards to libertine authors writing in Dutch (Balthasar Bekker, Frederik van Leenhof, Isabella de Moerloose, Adriaan Koerbagh, Ericus Walten) also confirms the fear of the mobilising force of the vernacular. For similar reasons, producing new Bible translations was not the priority of English, German, and Dutch theologians during the second half of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century. Instead, their scholarship was dedicated to a close scrutiny of the original texts that served as a defence against the arrogance of radical critics like Meijer, Spinoza, and Toland.¹⁰⁰ Translators were agents of social change, and therefore faced opposition from those in power.

Yet, despite their obvious attempts at social reform, some of the translators foregrounded in this study only partly fitted the reader-oriented paradigm. In theory, their efforts to bring the New Philosophy to vernacular readers do imply a reader-oriented approach. My case studies will reveal complex relationships with the sources, but in general, conveying the message was more important than maintaining the authenticity and linguistic integrity of the source. However, prioritising the reader's needs seems to be at odds with Koerbagh's and Meijer's normative programme for linguistic reform. Previous studies have revealed that translators like Glazemaker and Balling were influenced by Meijer's purist ideals.¹⁰¹ We also know that these ideals remained, in fact, ideals: purist vocabularies deviated from regular Dutch language use in the early modern melting pot of languages and dialects, where the use of loanwords was (as it still is) completely normalised. In other words, purist language norms did not necessarily increase readability and accessibility for lay readers. Quite the contrary: Jacob Copper's explicit refusal to use purist language in his 1682 Descartes translations indicates that purisms were likely to even estrange readers from the terminology of the New Philosophy.¹⁰² Purist translators 'foreignised' their sources in new ways: instead of bringing their

¹⁰⁰ Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 50.

¹⁰¹ F. Akkerman, *Studies in the Posthumous Works of Spinoza. On style, earliest translation and reception, earliest and modern edition of some texts* (Dissertation Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1980), 103; 108; F. Akkerman, "Glazemakers wijze van vertalen," in *Glazemaker 1682-1982. Catalogus bij een tentoonstelling over de vertaler Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker in de Universiteitsbibliotheek van Amsterdam*, ed. M. Keyser (Amsterdam: Universiteitsbibliotheek van Amsterdam, 1982), ix; C.L. Thijssen-Schoute, "Jan Hendrik Glazemaker. De zeventiende eeuwse aartsvertaler," in *Uit de republiek der letteren. Elf studiën op het gebied der ideeëngeschiedenis van de Gouden Eeuw* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 207.

¹⁰² J. Copper, "Den Overzetter tot den Lezer," in R. Descartes, *De verhandeling van den Mensch, en de makinge van de Vrugt In 's Moeders Lichaam*, trans. J. Copper (Middelburg: wed. Remigius Schrijver & Adolphus Rammazeyn, 1682), *r-*v.

readers back to the foreign country of the past, they sent them forward to the utopia of the future.

In their negotiation between the technical or even purist vocabularies of philosophy and the ‘common speech’ of ordinary language users, translators prolonged a tradition that was much older than Koerbagh’s and Meijer’s attempts at linguistic reform. Lodi Nauta recently traced this association between intellectual and linguistic reform back to the humanist critique of scholasticism articulated by Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) and others. He observes a change in the object of language critique from the earliest humanists to pre-Enlightenment philosophers like Hobbes and John Locke:

‘The main target of the Enlightenment critique of language was thus no longer the technical language of the scholastics [...]; the dominant focus had shifted to the political and social vocabulary that was believed to keep people in enslavement.’¹⁰³

Hobbes’s views on language arguably prefigured this shift because of his sensitiveness to the political risks of abusing language through rhetorical manipulation. He was critical of scholastic terminology, but also held ambivalent views about common speech, which he also considered a source of misunderstanding, confusion, and superstition.¹⁰⁴ Hobbes’s paradoxical solution was to rely on clear definitions only, and to redefine ambiguous terms based on the accepted meaning of those terms in ordinary language. In Nauta’s words: ‘We should avoid its ambiguity by clearly defining our terms, yet these definitions cannot stray too far [from ordinary language, LvdD] either.’¹⁰⁵ This conflict between redefinition and the inevitability of common language was also a fundamental challenge to translators who wished to reform the vernacular. As compilers of normative dictionaries, Koerbagh and Meijer could ignore the inevitability of common language to a certain extent. For translators, however, following the rules of common language was a *sine qua non*. In the end, they had to deliver a readable interpretation of the source that could be sold to actual Dutch readers. The case studies in my thesis will reconstruct how translators of the New Philosophy dealt with that dilemma: the contradictory aim to reform the Dutch language while helping their readers to understand the source.

¹⁰³ Nauta, *Philosophy and the Language of the People*, 18.

¹⁰⁴ Nauta, *Philosophy and the Language of the People*, 181.

¹⁰⁵ Nauta, *Philosophy and the Language of the People*, 183.

1.6 Research questions

The dimensions represented by ‘the mind, the mouth, and the tongue’ offer a framework that will reveal the complex function of translations of the New Philosophy in Dutch vernacular discourse. To find an appropriate language for the natural light, translators negotiated between intellectual conditions, social circumstances, and the linguistic practices of early modern Dutch discourse. What determined the outcome of those negotiations? How did the first Dutch translations of the New Philosophy express the rationalist principle that language was an unreliable medium for rational knowledge? What was the social and intellectual background of their producers, and what was at stake in the local debates in which their translations were intervening? How were translation practices simultaneously conditioned by specific socio-linguistic norms and general conventions in early modern Dutch discourse? Those will be the leading questions of this book.

Part I (‘Translating the New Philosophy’) regards the Dutch translation history of the New Philosophy through the lens of four case studies about the first and most important Dutch translators of Descartes, Spinoza and Hobbes: Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker, Pieter Balling, Abraham van Berkel and Stephan Blankaart. Each case study starts with a reconstruction of the intellectual conditions and social circumstances of the translator in question (‘Profile’). These profiles present the four translators as actors who used translation as a rhetorical intervention in different local debates. The second section of each case study (‘Poetics’) is dedicated to the practices of translators: their methods of translation, treatment of sources, and attempts to reduce misunderstanding. This two-fold structure mirrors Peter Burke’s distinction between ‘the ends (or “strategies”) and the means (the “tactics” or “poetics”)’ of early modern translators.¹⁰⁶ Burke defines the poetics of translation ‘not in the sense of rules to be followed mechanically but rather as what the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu called a “habitus”, in other words a principle underlying and controlling spontaneity and improvisation’.¹⁰⁷ *Habitus* has elsewhere been defined as ‘the system of durable dispositions and beliefs that underlies a given culture, acquired by individual members through socialization’.¹⁰⁸ A translator’s poetics was conditioned by such socially determined systems of

¹⁰⁶ Burke, “Cultures of translation,” 11.

¹⁰⁷ Burke, “Cultures of translation,” 25.

¹⁰⁸ V.B. Leith and al., “Pierre Bourdieu 1930-2002,” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, eds. V.B. Leith and al. (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010) Second edition 2010, 1674.

durable dispositions and beliefs, including possibilities for collaboration, access to source variants, and the preferred vocabularies and modes of speech among his implied readers. Practical and social circumstances restricted a translator's 'spontaneity' considerably. By analysing translations of Descartes, Spinoza and Hobbes against their socio-intellectual background, I propose to read the first Dutch transmission of the New Philosophy simultaneously as a product of a specific habitus and as a rhetorical intervention in the socio-intellectual conditions of that habitus by individuals. Bourdieu's notion offers an analytical tool for the comparison between the studied translators summarised at the end of chapter 6.

Besides their immediate social circumstances, translations emerged in a wider textual culture that equally conditioned their function and linguistic shape. However, the relationship between individual texts and textual conventions cannot sufficiently be captured with a case study approach. The specificity of a translator's style, the unicity of his terminology, or his possibilities for innovation – these characteristics can only be described comparatively, that is, in comparison to contemporary discursive conventions. And comparative questions require a different methodology: one that takes into account a corpus of comparable material and relies upon a method fit for processing and analysing that material. These questions will be addressed in Part II, 'Contextualising the New Philosophy'. Part II takes up a comparative lens to review the translations studied in Part I. Expanding the findings from the case studies, the comparative lens aims to contextualise the first Dutch translations of the New Philosophy in wider contemporary discourses. The aim is to describe the first Dutch translations of Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes in terms of (1) their embeddedness in philosophical discourse and (2) their possibilities to reform philosophical language within early modern Dutch textual culture.

1.7 A brief discourse on method

In this study, the relationship between discursive conventions and individual texts will be examined using several forms of computational analysis. Computational methods for text analysis are applied throughout this thesis, but most prominently in Part II. Chapter 2 provides a detailed description of the methodological design, which I will denote 'computational discourse analysis'. This approach enables me to examine the formal characteristics of early modern discourse about the New Philosophy at a corpus level. Computational discourse analysis should not be

understood as a single tool but as a range of different distributional models applied to test statistical hypotheses about language use in heterogeneous corpora with several authors. The main assumption behind such distributional models is that we can represent textual units – ranging from individual words, word combinations (n-grams), and sentences, to entire documents – as a distribution of co-occurring words, which allows us to quantify the similarity between those textual units.¹⁰⁹ That assumption is fundamental to all software implementations used in this study (see 2.2) – automatic collation, automatic loanword detection, and text classification. A distributional approach thus enables large scale analysis of literary and philosophical vocabularies and styles. The outcome of such analysis supports a systematic examination of the linguistic conditions in which the New Philosophy was read, translated and adapted during the Early Enlightenment.

In this thesis it is not my aim to offer a theoretical reflection on the epistemological status of quantitative data and computational methods for literary and historical questions. Others have done that extensively and eloquently, proposing a wealth of methodological styles such as ‘distant reading’, ‘macro-analysis’, ‘algorithmic criticism’, or ‘the historian’s macroscope’.¹¹⁰ The disciplines dedicated to this debate (humanities computing, digital history, digital humanities) have been developing and evaluating computational methods for over forty years, both internationally and in Dutch academic circles. Several inaugural lectures by Dutch scholars in digital humanities, digital history, Dutch literature, and linguistics account for the fact that computational methods are nowadays fully integrated and institutionalised in the variety of methodologies of Dutch humanities research.¹¹¹ Recent PhD theses by Folgert Karsdorp, Corina Koolen, Andreas van Cranenburgh, Melvin Wevers, Roel Smeets and Milan van Lange demonstrated the

¹⁰⁹ D. Jurafsky and J.H. Martin, “Vector Semantics,” in *Speech and Language Processing*, D. Jurafsky and J.H. Martin (London: Pearson Education, 2015), 2.

¹¹⁰ F. Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013). M. Jockers, *Macroanalysis. Digital Methods and Literary History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013). S. Ramsay, *Reading Machines. Toward an Algorithmic Criticism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011). I. Milligan, S.B. Weingart, and S. Graham, *Exploring Big Historical Data: The Historian's Macroscope* (London: Imperial College Press, 2015).

¹¹¹ A.P.J. van den Bosch, *Het volgende woord* (Inaugural lecture University of Tilburg, 2008); Bod, R., *Het einde van de Geesteswetenschappen 1.0* (Inaugural lecture University of Amsterdam, 2012); E. Stronks, *Loden letters, digitale dartels* (Inaugural lecture Utrecht University, 2012); K.H. van Dalen-Oskam, *De stijl van R.* (Inaugural lecture University of Amsterdam, 2013); J.J. Noordegraaf, *De digitale erfenis – enter en return* (Inaugural lecture University of Amsterdam, 2014); N. van der Sijs, *De voortzetting van de historische taalkunde met andere middelen* (Inaugural lecture Radboud University Nijmegen, 2014); C. van den Heuvel, *Kennisnetwerken: Digitale methoden en geschiedbeoefening* (Inaugural lecture University of Amsterdam, 2015).

relevance of computational text analysis for specific, disciplinary debates in history, literary studies, and computational linguistics.¹¹² Moreover, a 2019 volume of *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* dedicated to the relationship between theoretical debates and digital humanities showcases the rich interactions between computational approaches and current theoretical debates in Dutch literature and linguistics.¹¹³ We have passed the stage where the debate about computational methods remained a theoretical conversation between a handful of digital humanities scholars. Today, the proof is in the pudding.

Nevertheless, it is important to be upfront about the limits of my computational approach for the specific questions at stake. The most important limits concern data availability, data harmonisation, and the conceptual implications of computational text analysis for the relationship between language and ideas. First, the volume of the digital archive for early modern Dutch textual material leaves much room for improvement. The total digital corpus studied in this thesis consists of manually produced, machine-readable transcriptions of 395 different editions of Dutch texts printed between 1640 and 1720. This sample includes a considerable part of all digitised copies of printed books currently available and yet it comprises less than 1.0% of the 40,738 editions printed between 1640 and 1720 and documented in the Short Title Catalogue Netherlands (STCN).¹¹⁴ The inevitable biases involved in such a low proportion do not allow for a balanced sample of the total textual culture in terms of author gender, genre, location or publication year. Second, the lack of spelling standardisation in early modern Dutch complicates computational analysis. Additional pre-processing is required to harmonise the texts in terms of spelling normalisation and lemmatisation. In Chapter 2 I explain the measures I took to reduce the effect of spelling variation and morphological

¹¹² F. B. Karsdorp, *Retelling stories. A computational evolutionary perspective* (Dissertation Radboud University Nijmegen, 2016); A.W. van Cranenburgh, *Rich statistical parsing and literary language* (Dissertation University of Amsterdam, 2016); J.H.F.W. Wevers, *Consuming America* (Dissertation Utrecht University, 2017); C.W. Koolen, *Reading beyond the female: The relationship between perception of author gender and literary quality* (Dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2018); R.J.H. Smeets, *Character Constellations: Representations of Social Groups in Present-Day Dutch Literary Fiction* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021); M. van Lange, *Emotional Imprints. A Computer-assisted Analysis of War-related Emotions in Dutch Parliamentary Debates, 1945–1989* (Dissertation Utrecht University, 2021).

¹¹³ M. Kestemont & D. Van Hulle, “Theorie en de digitale geesteswetenschappen. Ten geleide,” *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde. Theorie en de digitale geesteswetenschappen* 135, no.4 (2019), 301.

¹¹⁴ In July 2021, the research interface Nederlab (<https://www.nederlab.nl/>) offered access to 626 machine-readable copies of printed texts first published between 1640 and 1720 and currently available on the Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren (DBNL), the most comprehensive collection of full digital copies of literary texts. The size of the production between 1640 and 1720 is based on Jagersma, *Pamfletthandel*, 73.

variation. Finally, the application of computational methods to study relationships between intellectual and linguistic dimensions of early modern Dutch discourse raises age-old questions about the connection between words and ideas. I propose a Foucauldian perspective on this issue in Chapter 2, but here it suffices to say that the computational methods applied in Part II quantify the linguistic, ‘material’ layer of discourse, not the immaterial, ‘conceptual’ layer. This thesis is a cultural history of translation practices that also uses computational methods to describe linguistic conventions. It is not a computational history of ideas.¹¹⁵

These practical and conceptual limits are serious, but not unbridgeable. I hope to show that a comparative approach based on quantified intertextual relationships yields valuable insights even with a corpus that is relatively small compared to the massive volumes available to computational linguists or scholars of English literature. The current state of the digital archive is insufficient to make valid claims about longitudinal trends in Dutch historical debates concerning the New Philosophy, but it does offer a useful sample of early modern discourse in general. As long as historical observations are rooted in the available source material, sampling opens up promising possibilities for a systematic contextualisation of specific genres, in casu: Dutch translations of the New Philosophy. These translations did not appear in an intellectual, social and linguistic vacuum, and should not be studied without including that context. Spinoza may have believed in unmediated, intuitive knowledge, but fact is that most of his ideas would have been lost if his friends had not carefully transcribed, edited, translated, and printed his manuscripts. Words and signs are all we have left of him (even his bones are gone!) and they have been transformed by social and linguistic dynamics more than he would have liked to admit.¹¹⁶ I have taken the liberty to transform the translations of the New Philosophy with yet another textual representation – computational code – hoping to add new truths to the history of the Dutch Early Enlightenment.

¹¹⁵ Arianna Betti dedicated her work to the theoretical and practical problems involved in such a computational history of ideas. See: A. Betti, H. van den Berg, Y. Oortwijn, and C. Treijtel, “History of Philosophy in Ones and Zeros,” in *Methodological Advances in Experimental Philosophy*, eds. E. Fischer and M. Curtis (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 295-332; A. Betti and H. van den Berg, “Modelling the History of Ideas,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 4 (2014), 812-835.

¹¹⁶ Although Spinoza still has a grave in the churchyard of the Nieuwe Kerk in The Hague, his remains are not in it. They were reportedly stolen shortly after the philosopher’s burial in 1677. A. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (London: Vintage Books, 2004), 19.