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FROM MYTH TO HISTORY

On the Reception of German Historical Grammar in Nineteenth-century Dutch linguistics


0. Preliminary remarks

In the essays he dedicated to the history of linguistics in the nineteenth century Aarsleff put forward several interesting claims. Among other things, he stressed the continuity of general grammar, for instance in the revised and extended form of Bréal's semantique, and he pointed out to us that scholars such as the Dane Johan Nicolai Madvig and the Frenchman Michel Bréal were among the first to raise objections to the erroneous course German Sprachwissenschaft had been taking from the early decades of the nineteenth century. Many years ago, Aarsleff's essays encouraged me to go into these questions from an angle of my own, and subsequently I discussed these and related themes in a number of papers. On this occasion I shall test Aarsleff's theses against Dutch material pertaining to these issues. In order to stick to the theme of this volume, material from some of my published and unpublished studies will be incorporated in the present contribution, and in doing so I shall pass from 'myth' to 'history'.

1. Introduction

Not many of his admirers, I think, are aware of the fact that the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945), author of, among other things, The Waning of the Middle Ages (1924; English translation of Herfsttijd der middeleeuwen, 1919), was originally a Sanskrit scholar.¹ Finishing grammar school in 1891, he intended to study Arabic, but as his father did not approve of this idea Huizinga enrolled as a student in Dutch language and literature at Groningen University. In those days, the syllabus of Dutch also contained "the principles of Sanskrit" (van Essen 1989:39), and, to cut a long story short, six years later Huizinga received his doctorate with a dissertation on an Indological subject (De Vidûsaka in het Indisch toneel, 1897).

In 1895-96, Huizinga spent the winter semester at Leipzig University,² but there it soon became very clear to him that contemporary German Sprachwissenschaft as practised by the Junggrammatiker could not provide him with the answers to the questions that fascinated him,

¹ This section is mainly based on the data presented in the fine paper on this topic by the historian Wessel E. Krul (1989), who is currently preparing a life of Huizinga.

Later on, Huizinga admitted that his idea to write a dissertation on a subject like this had had more to do with his literary preoccupations than with his scholarly interests (Krul 1989:371). Probably Huizinga was influenced by the poetry of the contemporary Dutch 'Movement of the Eighties' which dominated the Dutch literary scene for a number of decades. The draft of his linguistic dissertation was published in 1996.

Huizinga's paper can be consulted at the Huizinga Archives, University Library Leiden. It was printed in Noordegraaf 1992.

Thus, one may understand what Huizinga still sought to do after finishing his doctoral dissertation, namely to point out very clearly what he deemed to be the essential flaw in the neogrammarius approach. To that end, Huizinga submitted a paper to Indogermanische Forschungen in October 1898; it was entitled "Uber die Vernachlässigung der Wortbedeutung in der vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft". Like history, linguistics was in need of "ein von der logischen Argumentation unabhängiges Gefühl zur Erkenntnis der Wahrheit". Linguistics should again strive at a rapprochement with poetry, Huizinga argued in rather polemical tones. In the accompanying letter to the editor, Karl Brugmann (1849-1919), he announced that his paper would be followed by "mehrere semasiologische Einzelstudien". "Hoffentlich wird der etwas revolutionäre Charakter meiner kleinen Schrift an sich kein Grund zur Abweisung sein", he added. Brugmann, however, seems not to have been impressed by Huizinga's views, for in a letter of 11 October 1898 he curtly replied: "Sie müssen erst noch mehr lernen, bevor Sie zu lehren anfängen".

Huizinga, however, did not give up so soon. In January 1899, he finished a second paper in German, in which he tried to corroborate his thesis with the help of data on reduplication. It was entitled "Lautwiderholende Wortbildung". Having thanked Brugmann for his comments on the earlier paper, he wrote:


To Huizinga's great disappointment, this second paper was also rejected, however, and it appears that Huizinga has always considered these rejections as a real defeat. Subsequently, he definitively turned to Indian cultural history, and from that subject one can draw a straight line to his famous *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (cf. Krul 1989:379). Maybe we should be thankful to Karl Brugmann for this.

What I would like to do in this paper is to show that Johan Huizinga was not the first Dutchman who was dissatisfied with the course nineteenth-century German Sprachwissenschaft
had taken. To that end, I have singled out four different standpoints, mainly focussing on reactions on Jacob Grimm.

2. 'Logos' vs History: Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831) and Historical Linguistics

It is a well-established fact nowadays that the Dutchman Lambert ten Kate Hermansz. (1674-1731), together with Franciscus Junius (1589-1677) and George Hickes (1642-1715), receives a place of honour as a founding father of Germanic linguistics (cf. Brink 1986). By an older generation of Dutch historiographers Ten Kate's merits were extolled because of his adherence to strict empirical principles: the linguist should find regularities, ten Kate emphasized time and again, not invent them. Thus, he is considered to be a pioneer of the inductive method and a worthy predecessor of the great Jacob Grimm (1785-1863). Among other things, before Grimm, Ten Kate discovered the phenomenon of Ablaut in the strong verb system. It was August Schlegel (1767-1845) who, in his stinging review article of the first volume of J. and W. Grimm's *Altdeutsche Wälder* (1815), told Grimm to follow Ten Kate's model of methodological rigour (cf. Koerner 1989:305-306).

In the Netherlands, Ten Kate was seen as a linguistic hero. For example, Jan Beckering Vinckers (1821-1892), professor of English in the University of Groningen (1885-1892), in translating Whitney's *Language and the Study of Language* (1867) into Dutch, inserted several pages on his compatriot into the first volume. He was of the opinion that it was Ten Kate, not Grimm who laid the very first foundations of the comparative grammar of Germanic languages: "I for myself am fully convinced that Grimm has learned great deal from his study of Ten Kate's work. What Bacon has meant for scientific research in general, Ten Kate has meant for scientific language study in general" (Beckering Vinckers 1877:37). Be this as it may, it is without any doubt Jacob Grimm who is the most important German linguist to be mentioned in connection with the introduction of historical grammar in Holland.

When preparing his *Deutsche Grammatik* Jacob Grimm borrowed a copy of one of the works of Ten Kate from the Göttingen library. To one of his Dutch friends he admitted in 1818 "dass ich wenig daraus gelernt habe, und fast in Bilderdijks Urteil einstimmen muss, wiewohl ich mich bescheidener ausdrücken werde". In saying this, he referred to the judgement on Ten Kate by the Dutch poet and grammarian Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831), who had lectured a couple of years before on Ten Kate's "stupidity that exposed him to all kinds of mistakes and that made him a bad guide on the road he opened up".

Willem Bilderdijk was a well-known poet, and, what is more, a controversial personality and a

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6 For the sake of completeness I would like to point out that *Language and the Study of Language* was adapted from the third edition of 1870 by Jan Beckering Vinckers as *Taal en taalstudie: Voorlezingen over de gronden der wetenschappelijke taalbeoefening* (Eerste Serie: Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn 1877; 2nd ed., 1884; Tweede Serie: ibid., 1881). Note that only the first seven lectures have been translated into Dutch. *The Life and the Growth of Language* (Whitney 1875) was translated by G. Velderman as *De taal in haar leven en ontwikkeling geschildert* (Arnhem: P. Gouda Quint, 1879).
linguist sui generis. He is an interesting case: his formative period was the last quarter of the eighteenth century and he witnessed the rise of historical grammar in the nineteenth century. However, until this day, no-one has ventured to write a fully-fledged monography on Bilderdijk as a linguist, and I think that is quite understandable. The vast material is complicated and is rather dispersed. At any rate, he was a prolific author on things grammatical: he wrote three hundred thousand lines of poetry and published some thirty volumes on linguistics. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) was one of the philosophers he greatly admired, as becomes clear from his correspondence and his frequent references to Leibniz’s Collectanea Etymologica (1717). If the word 'philosopher' had not been misused to such a considerable degree, Bilderdijk argued, he would not have hesitated to present his Nederlandsche Spraakleer ('Dutch grammar') of 1826 as a real "philosophical grammar", having reduced all elements in it to a set of fixed principles. A contemporary critic, however, the grammarian and philosopher Johannes Kinker (1764-1845), curtly concluded that Bilderdijk’s book was nothing but a special grammar, be it a very special one indeed.

Having lived in England for some time, Bilderijik was acquainted with the works of James Harris (1709-1780) and John Horne Tooke (1736-1812). In the wake of Charles de Brosses's (1709-1777) Traité de la formation mécanique des langues et des principes physiques de l'étymologie (1765) and Antoine Court Gébelin's (1728-1784) Histoire naturelle de la parole ou grammaire universelle (1776, repr. 1816) he practised what was called by Kinker a pure "empirical general linguistics", striving at the reconstruction of the 'root letters' in the lingua primaeva.

His highly speculative etymological investigations did not find much support in Dutch linguistic circles. I would like to add, however, that in a certain sense Bilderdijk himself had risen above his age: in grammaticics he tried to distance himself from the system based on Latin which"most unfortunately had been imposed on the Dutch nation" (cf. Bakker 1977:132).

Bilderdijk was familiar with many languages: not only the modern languages, but also Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian and various other more exotic languages. He owned the works of Ten Kate; on his shelves he had, for instance, a copy of Friedrich Schlegel's Über die Weisheit und Sprache der Indier (1808) and some other books on Sanskrit (cf. Noordegraaf 1989), and from Jacob Grimm he received a copy of the Deutsche Grammatik. Thus, one can say that Bilderdijk was well qualified to promote the historical study of language in the first decades of nineteenth-century Holland. Yet, he never did. Bilderdijk knew the works of Ten Kate very well, and, in fact, he borrowed a lot from them, but in spite of this, he always placed ten Kate in an unfavourable light. According to Bilderdijk, ten Kate's mind is full of confusion, he is an ignorant, incompetent and stupid 'digger', an idol worshipped undeservedly.

And what about Jacob Grimm? The second decade of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of a regular correspondence between Bilderdijk and Grimm (for details see Soeteman 1989). In 1812, Grimm still subscribed to Bilderdijk's planned History of the Dutch language, a

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7 Willem Bilderdijk is described as a passionate and reactionary neurotic, a follower of the house of Orange, an exile, and an admirer of Napoleon. He was a Romanticist and an egocentric, and what is important, a religious man, too. Huizinga called him "the great disagreeable". In 1795, when the Stadtholder William V fled to Britain and the Batavian Republic was founded, Bilderdijk refused to take the oath to the new regime. He was forced to go into exile, leaving both his family and his burden of debt behind. When in London, he fell in love head over heels with his young pupil Katharina, with whom he lived till his death in a 'Gewissensche'. In his Bible Bilderdijk just noted: 'uxorem accepi'. In 1815, King William I tried to have him appointed professor of Dutch at the University of Amsterdam, but in vain, the opposition was too strong. In 1817, he opened a private seminar in Leiden for the study of history and public law. As a 'Privat-docent' he had quite a lot of influence on a number of talented young men who based their political and religious movements partly on his ideas. In these fields his influence may be felt until the present day.
project which was never realised, but in later years he became dissatisfied with the views of the Dutchman. In 1819, he sent Bilderdijk the first volume of the *Deutsche Grammatik*, and in 1822 he sent a copy of its second edition to his Dutch penfriend, in spite of the fact that "vous ne m'en avez rien dit sur la première édition [...]. Je l'ai pris d'abord pour un signe de votre désapprobation; plus tard j'ai préféré de croire, que vous avez voulu vous éviter l'embarras d'entrer en discussion sur des objets, qui à cause de la prolixité de leur détail ne peuvent point être traités dans quelques lettres" (Soeteman 1989:240). Five years later, in 1827, Grimm wrote to another Dutch penfriend: "Von Bilderdyk hörte und sehe ich nichts mehr; auf zusendung meiner grammatik hat er mir nicht geantwortet, auch seit dem allen verkehr abgebrochen" (Soeteman 1989:241). Bilderdijk cloaked himself in silence. Why didn't he no longer reply to his "très estimable Ami", and how can we explain Bilderdijk's negative attitude towards historical linguistics?

One might say that Bilderdijk's social position was rather precarious in those days; he was too busy trying to survive, and had no opportunity to engage in a demanding correspondence. One might wonder whether Bilderdijk dislikes Germans, or conclude that, all in all, he had a conservative mind, not only in political issues, but in linguistics too, as Soeteman (1989:242) did: "Bilderdijk verharrte in Spekulation und Selbstüberschatzung". Or - and this explanation is not irreconcilable with the first - one could argue that Grimm's approach did not fit in with the position Bilderdijk defended. To my mind, this last explanation would appeal more to a historian of linguistics than the other ones.

I think one could argue that Grimm's approach did not fit in with the position Bilderdijk defended. Presumably, he even looked upon it with some dédain. We can regard Jacob Grimm as an early positivist, an opponent of speculation in linguistics. According to Grimm not a single element of language will remain ambiguous: in the course of time all veils will be removed (Bakker 1977:131). However, when we study Bilderdijk's position, we have to take into account his pervasive mysticism. I assume that Bilderdijk did not believe that prolonged empirical and inductive study along historical lines would eventually provide us with the results he desired. In the wake of De Brosses Bilderdijk tried to find the 'general language', and in the quest for this 'general language' Dutch should play an important role. The general language consists of a few 'root letters', as he calls them. The language we use has become very corrupted, but, what's more, the very foundations of language have been contaminated. Bilderdijk criticized the contemporary linguists who sought to unveil these foundations of language, for even the most brilliant etymologists had not proceeded far enough, he argued. They did not take into account the metaphysical dimension of language, and therefore the present study of etymology was "cancerous", Bilderdijk said. Real knowledge of the meaning of what he called the 'sounds of speech' and 'the parts of speech' cannot be obtained by empirical research, but exclusively through direct information from a Higher Being, through inspiration. What Bilderdijk, a religious man, was striving at was a mystical, higher etymology, with the help of which he sought to know the soul, and, in it, the full spiritual world. In this way, eventually, the human spirit could elevate

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8 Here Bilderdijk reminds us of his notorious compatriot Goropius Becanus (1519-1572/3). In 1810, Bilderdijk submitted a *Mémoire* to the government of the 'Batavian Republic', in which he argued that the study of Dutch was "du plus grand intérêt pour la science universelle des langues" because of its "ancienneté et sa pureté". "D'après cet apperçu l'on se flatte, que [...] le Hollandais sera toujours envisagé par les vrais savans comme une des langues qui doivent inspirer le plus d'intérêt, et dont il n'est pas indifférent pour la véritable érudition de conserver et de protéger l'étude methodique et scientifique, surtout relativement à l'Etymologie universelle et comparative" (cf. *Mengelingen en fragmenten, nagelaten door Mr. W. Bilderdyk*. Amsterdam: J. Immerzeel 1834, 97-101). In a lecture given in those days Bilderdijk reproached "the scholars of so many countries and so many ages" for not having been able to find the 'general language' "which was sought so far away but which in fact it is so close to us" (Kluyver 1906:19).
I would like to thank Dr Cornelis Soeteman, Professor Emeritus of Leiden University, for his willingness to provide me with interesting material pertaining to Bilderdijk's relations with German scholars.

3. A classicist's verdict: Hendrik Jan Nassau (1791-1873)

It is true to say that Grimm was well-known in the Low Countries from an early stage of his career, corresponding with some thirty scholars both in Belgium and Holland (cf. Soeteman 1983). The volumes of his *Deutsche Grammatik* (1819-1837) were studied very soon after they appeared, but it was not until the 1840's that they were used on a larger scale. It is especially Matthias de Vries (1820-1892), "the founder of modern Netherlandic philology" (van Haeringen 1954:10) who should be mentioned here. De Vries studied classical philology at Leiden, but even in his student days he showed a keen interest in the Dutch language, in particular in its older stages. In 1853, he was appointed professor of Dutch language and literature at Leiden University. It was Jacob Grimm who was his venerated guide in linguistics, with whom he corresponded regularly, and whom he visited several times.

On 20 November 1853, Grimm wrote to De Vries:


Obviously, Grimm was not greatly pleased with this criticism. Thus, a couple of weeks later, De Vries replied in a reassuring tone:

> Die paper you were referring to in your recent letter, verehrter Herr, is probably the paper by Dr Nassau in the *Nieuw Nederlandsche Taalmagazijn* ('New Dutch Language Magazine'), I (1853), 21-26. It is not very important, as it points out a few minor inaccuracies in your great dictionary. For instance, it puts forward that you often compare Dutch words with German words, without taking into account that they are identical as to their sound form, but not as far as their meaning is concerned, such as Dutch afspitsen and German absputzen. It is really a shame that Dr Nassau dares to bother you with these details, instead of being grateful for your masterly achievements (cf. Soeteman 1982:46).

A few years later, however, in 1858, Nassau would repeat his critical but fair comments in a more elaborate way, in a booklet of some hundred pages entitled *De Nederlandische taal en Grimm's Deutsche Wörterbuch; aanteekeningen en bedenkingen* ('The Dutch Language and Grimm's Deutsche Wörterbuch; remarks and objections'). Hendrik Jan Nassau (1791-1873) was a classical scholar, who had obtained his doctorate with a dissertation on Cicero's *De Senectute*. First and foremost an educationist, his intellectual ancestry can be traced back to late eighteenth-century rationalism (De Vos 1939:129). A teacher first, he was later appointed government supervisor for primary school education. It was not only Grimm he ventured to attack. He also levelled his criticism at Grimm's Dutch disciple Matthias de Vries.
As I just mentioned, in 1853 De Vries was appointed professor of Dutch at Leiden University. From his inaugural lecture, De Nederlandsche taalkunde in haren aard en hare strekking ('The study of the Dutch language in its nature and its purpose'), it becomes clear that the 'new school in linguistics' had made decisive breakthrough. De Vries had discovered what was the "wahre Wissenschaft", namely 'the historical study of the living language'. The methodological guidelines to be followed were those of unprejudiced observation, without any a priori. Thus, De Vries pleaded for a strict, inductive method, taking his cues from the natural sciences: language, too, is a part of nature, and therefore the linguist should conform to the canons of the prestigious natural sciences (Noordegraaf 1990:718).

In 1854, Nassau published an extensive review of De Vries's lecture, in which he also worded his opinion on the state of the art of linguistics in general. In other words, De Vries's lecture provoked him to make some critical remarks on the 'German School'. In his lecture of 1853 De Vries had remarked that Grimm had constructed an "edifice of Germanic linguistic science" which would give him "immortality". In reaction to De Vries's remark, Nassau replied that in his opinion much more was needed for that. When I have in mind a many-sided edifice for linguistic science, he argued, I am thinking of a whole, a system, in which many questions are discussed, mainly questions of a theoretical nature (Nassau 1854:243). What Grimm had been practising in his Deutsche Grammatik was not science of language in a broad sense, but just "language archeology", and this archeology is only a matter of secondary importance, it is just an instrument, not the main issue. As he noted later: "Comparative study of language is a separate branch of the science of language" (Nassau 1879:366). To put it briefly, Nassau argued against the idea of 'Sprachwissenschaft ist Sprachgeschichte' and considered comparative philology to be an auxiliary discipline. He took Grimm to task for confining himself to "language archeology".

Following Grimm, De Vries had also propagated "the historical study of the living language". Nassau, however, argued that the most important question one could ask in these matters was not: Where does this or that word come from?, but: What does it mean at this particular moment? In most cases, the former meaning of a word has completely become detached from what it means today. Present-day language has its "autonomy", thus its history may be irrelevant. As to the proper knowledge of language, observation of the living language is more important than etymological learning. Consequently, it is not relevant to ask whether a word has developed organically and whether a word is inconsistent with the "organism" of the language. It appears that Nassau did not put much faith into concepts such as "language organism". He uses the phrase "alledged language organism" (1854:249), and in this connection he refers to the Danish linguist Johan Nicolai Madvig (1804-1886). His quotation is taken from the original Danish version of Madvig's 1842 essay "Über Wesen, Entwickelung und Leben der Sprache", which reads in the German translation of 1875: "Organismus der Spracherscheinung ganz unklare, aber um so vornehmer auftretende Vorstellung von der 'organischen Natur' der Sprache" (Madvig 1875:85). I assume, for that matter, that Nassau had a good working knowledge of Danish, so that he could read Madvig's texts in the original. As to Madvig: this Danish classical scholar was not a stranger to the Dutch world of learning; in 1840, he had been appointed member of the Royal Dutch Institute of Sciences and Arts and many a Dutch student was to learn Latin and Greek from Madvig's school grammars, which by then had already been translated into Dutch.10

From Nassau's writings it becomes clear that this Dutch scholar was sceptical of historical

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10 An old man, Madvig visited Leiden University in 1875 at its tercentenary, where he met, among others, his long-time opponent the distinguished Greek scholar Carel Gabriël Cobet (1813-1889), and where he was hailed by the Leiden student community (see Van Proosdij 1954). The copy of Madvig 1875 in the Leiden University Library, from which I just quoted, was donated by Madvig on that occasion.
linguistics. He denounced the shortcomings of this branch of language study as it was practised by many contemporary German scholars, in particular by the younger ones. Being one-sided, it concentrated on ancient sound forms, on etymology, neglecting and depreciating "the most elevated and difficult part of the study of language",\footnote{An allusion to Lambert ten Kate, whose famous 'Introduction to the knowledge of the elevated portion of the Dutch language' (Aenleiding tot de Kennisse van het verhevene deel der Nederduitsche Sprake (1723) may best be characterized as an historical grammar of Dutch in the broadest sense of the word (Knol 1977: 104).} namely the study of the meaning of words and expressions (1879 [1856]:253). The essential things about language are to be found in its interior part, Nassau said. "Words are sounds, representing an idea, a concept. Each word has its own meaning ... Each language has its own way, which varies in different ages, to bring this and that word together in one sentence and to connect them in one way of saying. It is this which is the core of language and of the science of language; language forms are not" (1878 [1860]:184).

From Nassau's collected works it becomes clear that he was particularly interested in questions concerning the meaning of words and expressions (cf. De Vos 1939:133). I will not elaborate on Nassau's observations pertaining to synchrony, communication, and the arbitraire du signe. Suffice it to say that his critical review of the state of the art of linguistics contains a number of objections, almost all of which are to be found again in essays published by other Dutch and European linguists in the next ten years or so. It is obvious that there are parallels between Nassau's views and the objections raised against the German school by Madvig from the early 1840's on, but whether one should speak of actual influence, I leave open to discussion.

5. General grammar vs historical grammar

In the late 1850's, De Vries's views on language study were challenged by Taco Roorda (1801-1874), a professor of Indonesian languages and one of the prominent nineteenth-century representatives of the tradition of general grammar in the Netherlands.\footnote{A theologian by education, Roorda showed a keen interest in philosophy, and in the field of linguistics he had developed into an expert on several non-Indo-European languages (Hebrew, Arabic, Javanese). In 1855 he published his Javaansche Grammatica ('Javanese Grammar'), which was "by 19th-century standards a first-rate and original work and exerted a wide influence on Indonesian linguistic studies" (Uhlenbeck 1964:50). When studying Javanese he did not opt for a historical-comparative approach, but preferred working along the lines of the general linguistic theory he had expounded in his Over de deelen der rede en de rede-ontleding ('On the Parts of Speech and on speech-analysis'; 1852, 1855\textsuperscript{2}, 1864\textsuperscript{4}), a book devoted to 'logical analysis' (from logos, 'word', 'speech', not from logic) which was meant to serve as a "basis for the scientific study of language". In this connection, I would like to stress that in Roorda's view 'logical analysis' is not restricted to sentence analysis; it comprises a full linguistic analysis. An excellent monograph on Roorda was published by Van Driel in 1988; see also van Driel 1988b:170-173.} Roorda's so called 'logical analysis' with its emphasis on language as a vehicle for thought fits into the Humboldtian-Kantian view of language. The debate between Roorda and De Vries in the years 1855-1858 concerns the history and development of the Dutch language; I have reported on it elsewhere (Noordegraaf 1985, 1990). The controversy between the two scholars seems to dwell upon matters of spelling, but in fact it was more than this. It was a clash between two different views on language and linguistics, that is, between an historical and inductive approach one, and a more or less synchronic and deductive one. Roorda's references are to Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), Heymann Steinthal (1823-1899), and Karl Wilhelm Ludwig Heyse (1797-1855),
whereas De Vries, explaining his own theoretical views, employed biological terminology taken not only from Jacob Grimm but also from August Schleicher (1821-1868): language is an autonomous organism and lives through periods of growth, prosperity and decline. With regard to the idea that human language is something like a living organism, Roorda claims that this was the consequence of a completely wrong conception of language which should be regarded as entirely passé following the publication of Humboldt's Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues (1836). With regard to language classification, Roorda rejected De Vries's three-part classification of languages, borrowed from Schleicher's 1850 Die Sprachen Europas in systematischer Übersicht, as inadequate and incomplete. He was of the opinion that both Die Classification der Sprachen (1850) by Steinthal and Heyse's System der Sprachwissenschaft (1856) contained superior observations.

The crucial issue in the discussion then was the fact that Roorda did not show himself to be particularly interested in the historical development of a language, preferring to study a language as it was "at a certain moment"; he mainly considered language as "Etwas von heute" (Grimm), having the ability to look at the facts of a language "without any historical bias and with a remarkable insight in the synchronic reality of a language", as Uhlenbeck (1964:52) put it. I think we can associate Roorda's position with Humboldt's well-known statement that language is an energeia, not an ergon.

Note, however, that De Vries, who was engaged in raising the study of the mother tongue to what he considered to be a really 'scientific' level, contented himself with a rather defensive approach. He launched a harsh attack on Roorda's unorthodox views concerning the interpretation of the data of the older stages of Dutch. As it happens, Roorda had argued that inflexion as used in written Dutch was not authentic but artificial or imported from Germany. However, he had interpreted the facts incorrectly, and, quite obviously, De Vries felt compelled to defend his newly-found territory. What strikes me in this connection is the fact that he did not call into question the validity of Roorda's 'logical' approach in the field of Javanese studies, nor did he turn against Roorda's Over de deelen der rede, at least not in writing.

Roorda's Javanese Grammar (1855) gave the study of Javanese a scientific basis and exerted a wide influence on Indonesian linguistics. Several grammars, not only of Javanese but also of other Indonesian languages, were modelled after it (Uhlenbeck 1964:50; cf. van Driel 1988a:278). However, in the 1860's Roorda's views on language provoked another discussion, this time in the very field of the study of Indonesian languages. This time Roorda had to cross swords with Herman Neubronner van der Tuuk (1824-1894), a doctor honoris causa of Utrecht University, who had been sent by the Dutch Bible Society to Sumatra to study the Toba Batak language. He was a quite eccentric character. After many years in the colonies, he returned to the Netherlands to work his notes gathered in Sumatra and to prepare his grammar (1858-1868). From the brochures Van der Tuuk published around the mid 1860's, it becomes clear that this field linguist was by no means ready to subscribe to Roorda's linguistic views, or to accept Roorda's Javanese grammar as a model for the description of other Indonesian languages (Uhlenbeck 1964:51). The basis of the severe clash which ensued between these two linguists (see for details Van Driel 1984) lay in the fact that van der Tuuk followed the methods of historical-comparative trend; his approach has been characterized as typically pre-junggrammatisch. One can understand a language solely "the historical way", Van der Tuuk argued, rejecting once and for all Roorda's "philosophical" approach: the history of the study of language shows that one cannot penetrate deeply into a language with the help of a philosophical method. Van der Tuuk's heroes were Franz Bopp (1791-1867) and Jacob Grimm, whereas he considered Wilhelm von Humboldt to be merely "a dabbler in linguistics".

In hindsight it can be easily concluded that the Roorda-van der Tuuk controversy was anything but a fruitful exchange of theoretical views; the discussion was marred too much by strongly personal overtones. Note that, as fas as I can see, Van der Tuuk's polemic against Roorda was the only time that the latter's approach in linguistics was brought under discussion.
'from outside'. However, there was also an interesting intra-paradigmatic debate, to which ample attention has been paid in recent literature (van Driel 1988a:221 ff.). In the late 1850's and the early 1860's, Roorda's work on logical analysis was severely criticized by Lammert A. te Winkel (1809-1868), who was an expert in historical grammar. In contrast to his Leiden friend De Vries, however, he was also very interested in what we would call general linguistics. In two brochures written in reaction to Roorda's logical analysis, and in numerous papers Te Winkel followed the lead of Steinthal's *Grammatik, Logik und Psychologie* (1855), discussing at length problems concerning the foundations of linguistics and questions of a general linguistic nature. It is evident that Te Winkel accepted the importance of logical analysis, but as he did not appreciate the way Roorda worked out his ideas on that subject, he did not hesitate, with the support of Steinthal's psychological theories, to tackle Roorda.

Be this as it may, Te Winkel considered logical analysis to be apart of general grammar, and without any reservations about its scientific status he subsequently discussed questions such as: What is general grammar? What is its objective and its relation to special grammar? In other words: in the 1850's and 1860's general grammar was anything but dead for him. It appears that Te Winkel saw no incompatibility between his studies in the field of general grammar and his activities in the field of historical linguistics. Like Roorda, he, too, regarded a non-historical approach as methodologically valid. As Nassau had done several years before, Te Winkel held the opinion that comparative historical grammar did not encompass the whole study of language. And in the same vein as W.D. Whitney (1827-1894) several years later (Whitney 1875:318-319), Te Winkel noted that the substantial growth of comparative historical grammar had been at the expense of the development of a real "science of language". In the 1860's he did his best to contribute to the development of that very science of language.


Since the beginning of the latter half of the nineteenth century historical linguistics had gained a firm foothold in the linguistic curricula of the Dutch universities. This development was formally laid down in the new Higher Education Act of 1876. The doctorate in Dutch language and literature was introduced and to meet the examination requirements new chairs in linguistics were created. Because of this, Germanic linguistics became fully established as an important subject, and with it comparative-historical linguistic method. Thus, on the whole it can be said that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, Dutch linguistics was predominantly historically oriented. But the historical-comparative approach was not appreciated as positively in all individual circles. In his introduction to *Taal en taalstudie* (1877-1881), Jan Beckering Vinckers reminded his readers of the fact that not so long ago it was still considered a ridiculous show of pedantry - "ein Attentat gegen den heiligen Geist der Philologie", as Wundt was to put it later - in circles of Dutch classicists for Madvig to call upon the use of Sanskrit to explain certain linguistic phenomena in Latin and Greek. In the 1870's, the Leiden professor Carel Gabriel Cobet (1813-1889) turned against several of the 'homines comparativi'. He put the findings of their "nova Etymologiarum ars" on a par with the results of the etymology practised by Alexandrian scholars (Beckering Vinckers 1877:iv). However, around the turn of the century most of the younger linguists felt themselves especially inspired by German linguistics. It is not surprising that Hermann Paul's (1846-1921) *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte* (1880, 1920) was compulsory reading for every Dutch linguist for many decades.

But besides the old-fashioned philologists who wanted to have nothing to do with the comparativists, there were also Dutch linguists who raised more theoretically founded objections to an exclusively historical approach. In the 1920's this was done by Hendrik J. Pos (1898-1955), a trained classical philologist who was appointed professor of general linguistics at the...
Amsterdam Vrije Universiteit in 1924. Roman Jacobson says of Pos that he "has taken a prominent part in advancing the phenomenology of language and the theory of structural linguistics" (Salverda 1991:222).

In the "Einleitung" of his Heidelberg doctoral dissertation *Zur Logik der Sprachwissenschaft* (1922), Pos presented "einen kurzen Überblick [...] über die bisherige Entwicklung der Sprachwissenschaft" (cf. Pos 1922:12-16). He considered the Graeco-Roman grammatical and philosophical tradition to be real "Sprachwissenschaft", thereby explicitly (1922:14) denying Paul's dictum "Sprachwissenschaft ist gleich Sprachgeschichte". However, Pos criticized both the classical grammarians and the neogrammarians for their "Einseitigkeit". The ancient grammarians were right in putting forward "das Problem Sprache", but they did not have the right methods. The Neogrammarians did use the right methods, but their conceptions of language and of the human mind were wrong.

In a number of the 23 propositions added by Pos to his second dissertation, *Kritische Studien über Philologische Methode*, defended at the Vrije Universiteit at Amsterdam in 1923, one finds once more a rejection of the positivism and the historicism of the Junggrammatiker, the same critique of Paul and an emphasis on the priority of the systematic, synchronic method that has over the historical approach (Salverda 1991:226). In Pos's lectures on general linguistics (1924-1932) the history of linguistics was discussed at length (cf. Noordegraaf 1991a). Throughout these lectures, Pos paid serious attention to the various representatives of general grammar. The unpublished lecture notes show that Pos went ad fontes and that he had personally studied most of the French, German, English and Dutch sources he discussed. For instance, after, in the 1929-30 curriculum, having devoted a full semester to historical comparative grammar in the nineteenth century, Pos turned to general grammar in the next semester. Among other things, he took to task Theodor Benfey (1809-1881) for having claimed in his *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* of 1869 that in the course of the nineteenth century all philosophy in linguistics had evaporated under the increasing pressure of the empirical study of language. "The nineteenth century is surely more complicated than that it can be characterized by only one feature", Pos noted. Even in the Golden Age of historical linguistics general grammar continued to produce all kinds of different works. In other words, Pos emphasized the continuity of general grammar.

According to Pos, nineteenth-century general grammar reached its pinnacle in Humboldt. In his lectures in spring 1930, Pos discussed Humboldt's *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues* (1836), a book he had already referred to in a positive way in his 1924 inaugural lecture. In a grammar book from 1922, Pos's contemporary, the Dutch anglist Etsko Kruisinga (1875-1944), "traced the trend of scholars to accord greater prominence to the living language to Humboldt's emphasis on language as an energeia" (van Essen 1983:100). Thus, all in all, I am almost tempted to say that Pos's anti-neogrammarian stance in the early 1920's might be due to a certain affiliation with Humboldt. But this is clearly a subject for further investigation.

7. Some final remarks

The reader who is familiar with Aarsleff's writings on nineteenth-century linguistics may have realized what revision I have been striving at: in his essays Aarsleff has given credit to J.N. Madvig and in particular to the French scholar Michel Bréal (1832-1915) for taking to task the German historical school for its one-sidedness. However, giving prominence to the living language, discussing questions of a theoretical nature and rejecting the Schleicherian concept of language as an organism was not a prerogative of Bréal. It has been remarked that such a reaction to the conceptions of the German historical school occurred quite regularly (Leopold 1982:63), and my findings seem to corroborate this claim. Among other things, the idea of language as something comparable to a living organism was dismissed by Dutch linguists as early as the late
1850's, and no scholar in Holland has defended it since. In this connection I would like to give
my compatriots more credit than they have received as a result of their publishing in the language
of a small nation and of the fact that their critical remarks have, I must admit, been put forward
in a less coherent way than Bréal's were.

Actually, Nassau's and Roorda's reactions to certain aspects of linguistics practiced in
Germany at that time took shape in the 1850's and 1860's, before Bréal's writings had appeared
in print. In this connection, I would like to emphasize that Dutch linguists did not draw on
French eighteenth-century rationalistic thought or on the Idéologues. It was in German thought
that they found a major source of inspiration, in linguists such as Humboldt, Heyse, and
Steinthal. It was the latter who, as early as 1855, discarded the concept of language as a natural
organism (cf. Steinthal 1855:379), and who in 1864 turned against Schleicher even more sharply:
"Aus der sogenannten jüngern Schule der vergleichende Grammatik [...] erschallte die
wunderliche Parole: die Sprachwissenschaft ist eine naturhistorische Disciplin, und die Sprache
ein Naturorganismus"; this is a slogan "die eine mangelhafte kritische Grundlage verrath"
(Steinthal 1864:17). It is this line of thought that Aarsleff did not take into consideration in his
essays. As it happens, for the Dutch linguists the French connection was not the most important

I would like to conclude that we should be ready to accept that, in general, criticism can be
levelled at certain conceptions in linguistic theory from a number of different viewpoints: thus,
in the case of the German Sprachwissenschaft, a rationalistic one (Bréal), a positivistic one
(Whitney) or an idealistic one (Roorda). Be this as it may, the Dutch case mirrors quite clearly the
discussions which were held in nineteenth-century linguistics. In their discussions with Grimm
and the German historical school the Dutch linguists, too, were fulfilling some of the tasks
Saussure would leave to linguistics: "de se délimiter et de se définir elle-même", to define and to
delimit itself (Saussure 1916:20).

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13 However, I would like to give one example which makes clear that Bréal's linguistic works were
indeed studied in the Netherlands. Johannes van Vloten (1818-1883), professor of Dutch at the Deventer
Athenaeum Illustre, forcefully rejected Schleicher's organicism and all its implications (Van Vloten
1871:68 ff.), thereby referring among other things to Bréal's De la forme et fonction des mots (1867) and Les
idées latentes du langage (1868). From his references, however, it appears that Van Vloten was also inspired
by some papers by Steinthal. See also Boeckh 1877:726 for an explicit endorsement of Steinthal's
assessment of this matter.

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