



Dutch Crossing

Journal of Low Countries Studies

ISSN: 0309-6564 (Print) 1759-7854 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ydct20>

The Bekker Controversies as a Turning Point in the History of Dutch Culture and Thought

Jonathan Israel

To cite this article: Jonathan Israel (1996) The Bekker Controversies as a Turning Point in the History of Dutch Culture and Thought, *Dutch Crossing*, 20:2, 5-21, DOI: [10.1080/03096564.1996.11784062](https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.1996.11784062)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03096564.1996.11784062>



Published online: 06 Oct 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)

THE BEKKER CONTROVERSIES
AS A TURNING POINT
in the History of Dutch Culture and Thought

JONATHAN ISRAEL

The precise dimensions of the 'bekkeriaanse oorlog' of the 1690s, in terms of numbers of books and pamphlets for, and against, the ideas expressed in Balthasar Bekker's *De Betoverde Weereld* (4 vols., Amsterdam, 1691-3), remains unknown. It is certain, however, on the basis of A. van der Linde's (rather incomplete) bibliographical survey and the numerous addenda listed since, in particular by the eminent Frisian scholar Jacob Kalma, by Jacob van Sluis, who edited the recent volume entitled *Bekkeriana* (Leeuwarden, 1994), and by A.C. Schuytplot, of the Amsterdam University Library, that the final total for the years 1691-4 alone will be nearer 300 than the slightly under 200 items listed in Van der Linde.¹ In any case, it can be confidently asserted that the Bekker furore was the biggest public intellectual controversy waged anywhere in Europe during the early Enlightenment which involved a battle over traditional ideas.²

The commotion was indeed unprecedented. Bekker himself commented, in a pamphlet written nearly two years after it began, that 'nu tsedert 20 maanden sulke geweldige opschuddingen in en buiten de Kerke verwekt zijn als misschien nooit ergens over enigh Boek te voren is geschied' ('in the last 20 months such terrible commotion has occurred inside and outside the church, as perhaps never happened anywhere with any other book').³ Spurred by the uproar, sales for the first two volumes of his enormous text - the rest was not published until 1693 - proceeded at a furious rate. Dissatisfied with the first edition, published in Friesland, in 1691, owing to the many defective and incomplete copies, Bekker had begun personally inspecting, and attesting with his signature, the much larger quantity which was produced from that point on, in Amsterdam. He

himself noted in January 1693, that since then he had signed some 7,000, which means that altogether, including the 750 of the Frisian edition, some 8,000 copies were sold during the first twenty months of the furore - an astounding figure for the seventeenth century.

Yet, while an immense amount was written for, and against, Bekker at the time, and a great deal more has appeared since, it is nevertheless a somewhat curious phenomenon that aside from specialized studies of the Bekker affair as such, remarkably little has been published by cultural or intellectual historians, or for that matter by experts on Dutch literature or art, on the significance of the 'bekkeriaanse oorlog' in the history of Dutch society and culture more generally. Given the present state of study of the topic it is likely to be quite some time yet before anything like a full assessment will be possible. But in the meantime it is both feasible and, I would argue, helpful to attempt to make certain general observations about the place of the Bekker controversies in cultural and intellectual history and that is what I have tried to do in this present article.

In particular, it seems to me necessary to counter the notion which seems fairly widespread among cultural and social historians of the Dutch seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that the uproar was rather surprising, something of a paradoxical anomaly. This is urged on the grounds that belief in an active Satan, in the efficacy of magic and the reality of witchcraft, was already receding in the Republic of the late seventeenth century.⁵ It is argued that the 'commotie rond de *Betoverde Weereld* staat in geen verhouding tot de actualiteit van de aangesneden materie - de eerste paradox rond Bekker' ('the commotion around the *Betoverde Weereld* is out of all proportion to the relevance of the book's substance - the first paradox regarding Bekker').⁶ It is also widely held that the commotion subsided rapidly in the mid 1690s and that from this can be seen that 'al snel onstond er in Nederland een vrijwel algemene instemming met zijn [that is Bekker's] standpunt' ('it was not long before there was virtually general agreement with [Bekker's] views').⁷ To this has been added the notion that there was sharp divergence between the situation in the Netherlands and Germany: 'in Duitsland werd Bekker nog wel bestreden, maar daar was het klimaat - getuige de aanhoudende heksenprocessen - ook ongunstiger voor een herwaardering' ('it is true that Bekker continued to be opposed in Germany, but the climate for a

reevaluation was much less favourable there - witness the continuing witch trials').⁸ Another prevailing notion which I wish to argue against is the idea that the 'bekkeriaanse oorlog' was 'een oorlog exclusief tegen één man gericht, en nauwelijks tegen zijn medestanders' ('a war conducted exclusively against one man, and hardly against his supporters').⁹ Finally, in my judgment we also need to dispel the impression conveyed by Hugh Trevor-Roper, and other scholars of Anglo-American background, that 'Bekker's foreign reputation seems largely a myth' since the 'controversy over his work was conducted almost entirely in the Dutch language', a point of view which implies that books in Dutch had little or no impact outside the Netherlands in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, an assumption which, as I hope to show, the Bekker disputes themselves entirely disprove.

As I have argued elsewhere, it seems to me essential, if one is to place the Bekker episode in proper perspective, to grasp that the controversies were by no means only concerned with Bekker's claim that the Devil can not influence the lives of men and women, and that magic and witchcraft have no basis in reality but are merely the result of ignorance, superstition and a feverish imagination. If that were all then the uproar would have had some significance but not that decisive and pivotal position in European, as well as Dutch, intellectual and cultural history which, in my view, it has. For much of the argument was about the further implications of Bekker's work that no supernatural spirits or forces of any kind, apart from the Almighty Himself, not even angels, have any real, or independent, power to act on material things or bodily beings. There was a fierce reaction also to Bekker's Biblical exegesis which went beyond the norms of Cocceio-Cartesian practice and appeared to be (as indeed it was) influenced by Spinoza.¹¹ For it was clear that Bekker's (somewhat strained) proofs that none of the passages in Scripture which refer to the Devil, to angels, or other spirits as intervening in the affairs of men, including Satan's temptation of Christ, should be understood literally showed that Bekker, like Spinoza, considered Scripture to be adapted to the understanding of the common people, that is a common people sunk in ignorance and superstition, rather than cast in terms which correspond to literal truth as understood by a philosopher or scientist.¹²

It is neither an accident, nor a mere polemical ploy, that in the contemporary Dutch literature about Bekker, and still more in the German Bekker

disputes, Bekker's name was continually linked with that of Spinoza. One German author, Friedrich Ernst Kettner, connected the two even in his title - *De Duobus Impostoribus, Benedicto Spinoza et Balthasare Bekkero, Dissertatio historica* (Leipzig, 1694). In the main, Bekker's critics were not endeavouring to prove he was a Spinozist or was propagating Spinoza's philosophy.¹³ Their point was that he had adopted something dangerously close to Spinoza's Bible exegesis in order to deny that supernatural spirits, whether angels or demons, or Satan himself, could in any way act in, or on, the physical world around us, a stance which seemed to contemporaries almost as destructive of traditional ideas about human existence and the world in which we live - as well as of the autonomy (let alone supremacy) of theology based on Scripture - as Spinoza's philosophy. Philosophically, there is no doubt that Bekker was a Cartesian, albeit of a somewhat radical kind, and in no sense a Spinozist.¹⁴ He firmly believed in a providential God who created, and oversees, the life of man and who is quite distinct from the power of Nature. Yet, as Andrew Fix has demonstrated in an excellent recent article,¹⁵ the view put forward by Knuttel and other earlier scholars that the Bekker disputes were, in some sense, a conflict between the Cartesians and their opponents within the Reformed Church, is highly misleading. In fact, Cartesians were often deeply disturbed by Bekker's stance. Indeed, I would go even further than Fix and argue that with the partial exception of Hendrik Groenewegen, the Cartesians as a body firmly rejected Bekker and his ideas.¹⁶ They did so, moreover, with some vigour and were obliged to do so by the determined efforts of the Voetians to claim that Bekker's socially and morally ruinous ideas were the inevitable consequence (like Spinozism) of Cartesianism. The Cocceio-Cartesians within the Reformed Church mostly disowned Bekker and did everything they could to distance both Cocceianism and Cartesianism from the basic contentions of *De Betoverde Weereld*.¹⁷ They could not deny that Bekker had used Cartesian concepts and methods in arriving at his conclusions. So their strategy had to be to claim that he had misused those concepts or as two of his Cocceio-Cartesian critics expressed it: 'doch dus hard Cartesiaansch te zyn is niet Cartesiaansch' ('but to be so dogmatically Cartesian is not Cartesian').¹⁸ Bekker was left to remark sadly that whilst one set of opponents were accusing him of having subjected theology to the tyranny of Cartesian philosophy, which was a distortion of the truth, the followers of Cocceius and Descartes within the Church were endeavouring 'aan te wysen dat my Schrift gansch niet Cartesiaansch noch

Coccejaansch en is' ('to demonstrate that my writing is neither Cartesian nor Cocceian') which was just as distorted.¹⁹

The 'bekkeriaanse oorlog' was most certainly not waged against Balthasar Bekker alone: neither did it end with Bekker's death. To claim that it did is to misunderstand the real nature of the episode. Nor is it true that the 'scherpslijpers onder de gereformeerde predikanten buiten hun eigen kring op weinig bijval konden rekenen'.²⁰ If Bekker's book was not banned in Amsterdam, or by the States of Holland, it was banned in Utrecht, and the Hof and States of Gelderland were poised to ban it had the States of Holland done so.²¹ At least some regents thought the book should be banned. Doubtless many more hesitated or were in two minds about it. In Rotterdam the city government supported the Voetian *kerkeraad* in putting pressure on Pieter Rabus, the editor of the Republic's only Dutch-language regular journal, the *Boekzaal van Europe*, to cease its (cautious and very limited) support for Bekker. Nor is it true that there was scant backing for the anti-Bekker campaign in society more generally. Bekker, who noted that 'men klaagt, dat self de fraaiste luiden door myn Boek bedorven worden' ('they complain that my book corrupts even the most respectable people'), echoed the conflicting responses in society with the words: 'is een deel onverstandig volk daar tegen, siet, siet men hoe de gemeente aan dien man geergerd is, en hoe groten opschuddinge so hy wederom op stoel komt, staat te vreesen, moet men bekennen, dat het grootste en beste deel der stad en der gemeente voor my is' ('if some ignorant people are against me - see, see, they say, how this man has incurred the wrath of the congregation, and how much commotion is to be feared if he returns to his position, - it has to be granted that the larger and best part of the city and the community are on my side').²³ And while, doubtless, there was widespread sympathy for his cause in Amsterdam and elsewhere, as he claimed, it is also clear that the uproar pervaded the whole of society and that many people were aroused against him. In other words, a full-scale *Kulturkampf* was underway and it is likely that, outside Amsterdam, support for Bekker was both more muted and less extensive than in the great city where he lived and preached. The situation seems to have been rather similar in Hamburg, likewise a great mercantile city with strong international connections and numerous religious minorities, where one of Bekker's leading German critics, the famous Pietist pastor of the St Michaeliskirche, Johann Winckler, was active. Winckler tells us that Bekker's book was extensively read in

Hamburg and that his ideas made strong headway there, which is why he denounced Bekker publicly from the pulpit. But there too the effect was to set in motion a battle of ideas. 'Es hat nicht nur die Christenheit sondern die gantze Welt billig bisher geglaubet dass böse Geister waren' ('not only the Christians but the entire world has always believed that there were evil spirits').²⁴ Bekker's book could not simply sweep all that aside in a day, as we see not only from Winckler's words but also from the studiously guarded words of the *Journal de Hambourg*.

The argument that the Bekker controversies were something of an anachronism, largely superfluous to the real state of mind prevailing in Dutch culture and society at the time, is disproved by the fact that the controversy, even if it did subside markedly in the mid 1690s, nevertheless persisted with some vigour, in the Netherlands, as well as in Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia, for something like a quarter of a century, down to around 1720. Thus, the perceived threat from Bekker's ideas was regularly discussed at annual gatherings of the Dutch Reformed Church synods for many years after Bekker's death, in 1698. When the South Holland Synod pondered the 'verderfelijke sentimenten vanden overleden Dr Bekker' ('pernicious sentiments of the late Dr Bekker') (at its meeting at Gouda, in July 1701, it was recorded that the synods of North Holland and Utrecht, like that of South Holland 'de naem van Bekker noch in Actis behouden' (meaning that they too retained the Bekker issue as a regular item for discussion on their annual agenda) and, regarding Bekker's 'sentimenten' that all the synods were agreed 'daer tegen met allen betamelicken ijver en nasporingh te waken' ('to guard against them with all appropriate zeal and watchfulness').²⁵ Two years later, the same synod agreed to draw up 'sekere geextracteerde staaltjens uyt de laeste boek van [Willem] Goeree waar in hij het gevoelen van Balthasar Bekker niet alleen met veel vrijmoedigheyd verdedigt, maar besonder ook bekritiseerde de synodus van Noord Holland over het removeren van voornoemden Bekker van syn predikdienst' ('some samples extracted from Goeree's latest book in which he not only boldly defends Bekker's ideas but also criticizes the North Holland synod for removing the aforementioned Bekker from his office'), alleging that the synod had acted out of 'wraakheyt, om maar dien hupsen man van den cansel te schoppen' ('vengefulness, to kick this good man from the pulpit').²⁶ These extracts were required not only for passing on to the other synods but to be used to mobilize the secular authorities. A delegation from the Holland

synods took the extracts, from Goeree, to the Pensionary of Holland, Heinsius, to try to persuade him to intercede with the States of Utrecht, the authority with jurisdiction over Goeree who was then reported to be living in Maarsse.

Nor had Bekker's name been forgotten in the inland provinces. During the debate on the Bekker issue at the meeting of the South Holland synod, at Gouda, in July 1708, the Groningen representatives in attendance assured their South Holland colleagues that 'niemant in die provintie wordt toegelaten om praeparatoire of peremptoire geexamineerd to worden' with regard to joining the ministry, 'ten zij alvorens betuijgde van de gevoelens [van Bekker] ontdaen en gesuyvert te syn' ('no-one in that province can be admitted to a preparatory or peremptory examination unless they declare to be clear of [Bekker's] ideas').²⁷ It was recorded in the acta of the South Holland synod's debate on Bekker, at Gorinchem, in July 1714, that besides South Holland, the Synods of North Holland, Utrecht, and Groningen still had a regular 'Bekker' slot on their annual agenda.²⁸

Nor did the intellectual debate in the Dutch language simply cease, though it is true that, from the late 1690s onwards, the main discussion of Bekker's system was conducted either in German or in Latin books published in Germany. If the works of Goeree, and a number of others, defended Bekker, there was also still a continuing stream of condemnations of Bekker's views.²⁹ In 1700, Herman Bouman's *Aanleydinge, om klaar te kunnen uytvinden wanneer men in de H. Schriftuur van Duyvel, Satan, Boose Geest, etc. in ons Nederduyts leest, hoe het selve te verstaan zy* appeared in a second and expanded version. The book *De Leere van Jfr. Antonette Bourignon verdedigd*, which appeared at Amsterdam, in 1701, was accompanied by *een brief tegen het vals getuignis van D.B. Bekker*. In 1715, the Franeker Cartesian professor Ruard Andala published his *Thesium controversarum pneumatologicarum* at Franeker.

The notion that the 'bekkeriaanse oorlog' was entirely focused on a single figure, that of Bekker himself, is likewise a misconception. In fact many of the books and pamphlets directed against Bekker assert that the real threat being posed to Dutch society and faith came from the growing host of mockers of the doctrines of the Church, those styled by Jacob Koelman, one of Bekker's fiercest critics, as 'David-Joristen, Nieuwe

Sadduceen, Nieuwe-Epicureers, Atheisten en Schrift-verachters'.³⁰ Groenewegen, one of Bekker's mildest critics, was every bit as determined as Koelman to convince his readers that the real issue was not Bekker but the advance of scepticism and the atheism of 'Hobbes and Spinoza'.³¹ J. Sylvius deplored the huge impact of Bekker's book and the encouragement which it gave to the growing army of the impious, 'die menigmaal met de reden en filosofie soo veel op hebben dat sy de Bybel, ja dikwils met Spinoza God zelf daar aan wagen' ('who often have such high regard for reason and philosophy that they set them next to the Bible, often even, as did Spinoza, next to God').³² In this respect the Dutch situation was no different, except perhaps in degree, from that prevailing in Protestant Germany where in 1698 the *Nova Literaria* of Lübeck praised the efforts of pastors who defended belief in the Devil and sought to counter 'die vorige und heutige Atheisten, Naturalisten und nahmentlich D. Beckern in *der Bezauberten Welt*'.³³

If many people sympathized with Bekker and his ideas, few of these ventured to defend him in print against the torrent of anti-Bekker condemnations and disapproval. Although the Bekker disputes were a fierce struggle in society and culture, a *Kulturkampf*, and not a hue and cry against one man, in terms of quantity of publications those who sided with Bekker were a comparatively small minority and those who pronounced in his favour mostly chose to publish anonymously or shelter behind obscure initials, an indication that Bekker's ideas were far from being the commonplace in Dutch society that some scholars maintain. Even during the first decade of the following century, Goeree was one of the very few who put his own name to texts defending Bekker and found himself coming under some pressure as a result.

One writer who supported Bekker in no uncertain terms, and whose name did become publicly known during initial furore, was the outspoken Ericus Walten (1663-97).³⁴ Walten was also closely connected with the unauthorized appearance of a series of celebratory medals with hard-hitting Latin tags applauding Bekker and ridiculing his opponents.³⁵ But Walten is the exception who proves the rule. As a consequence of his energetic efforts on Bekker's behalf he too became the target of a relentless campaign which eventually resulted in his arrest and investigation by the Hof of Holland. It is true that Walten was arrested and imprisoned not because he defended Bekker's views on the Devil and

spirits but on account of his virulent remarks about Reformed preachers and on charges of blasphemy. It is true also that Walten had political enemies of a kind that Bekker did not have. But the fact remains that the anger and resentment directed against him arose from his special role in the Bekker controversies, from the fact that he was one of the very few writers who sided with Bekker whose name was known, and that he belonged undeniably to that insidious army of mockers and 'Spinozisten' lurking, or perceived to be lurking, behind Bekker. Walten's papers and possessions were seized. A lengthy investigation began. He died in goal, in The Hague, in 1697.

Finally, it is erroneous to suppose that because the Bekker controversies were fought out mainly in the Dutch language, with only a handful of publications appearing in Latin or French, that therefore the impact was largely confined to the Netherlands. It is perfectly true that the impact in Britain was slight. In a treatise on apparitions and spirits, published in London, in 1705, John Beaumont tells us that he had 'perused Dr Bekker's said volumes in French', but that in general the Bekker business was little noticed in England.³⁶ But, in the period down to the 1730s, as I have argued elsewhere, England tended to go her own way, in intellectual matters, and diverged quite sharply from what was being read and discussed on the continent. As far as Germany, Scandinavia and Switzerland are concerned, it is evident that Bekker was by far the most important and widely read, as well as being - as Christian Thomasius attests³⁷ - the most uncompromising and forthright author who sought, within a Christian framework, to disenchant the general public with the whole gamut of traditionally accepted beliefs about Satan, angels, demons, apparitions, witches and magic. Zacharias Gropius, in his *Systema novissimarum contraversiarum*, of 1719, reviewed all the disputes over the Devil, demons, and witchcraft, in Germany, over the previous few decades, and discusses a variety of authors but gave much more prominence to Bekker than to Van Dale, Thomasius, or anyone else.³⁸

It is apparent that the German edition of Bekker's work which appeared under the title *Die Bezauberte Welt* at Hamburg without the name of the printer being given and with the place of publication falsely stated as 'Amsterdam', in 1693, was impressive neither quantitatively nor qualitatively. 'Diese Übersetzung des Bekkerischen Buchs ins deutsche', commented the East Prussian author, Michael Lilienthal in 1741 'ist

dermassen schlecht gerathen, dass offft kein Verstand darinn zu finden ist. Die Translateur hat weder die holländische noch die deutsche Sprache, am wenigsten aber den Inhalt des Buchs verstanden' ('This German translation of Bekker's is so bad that it often makes no sense at all. The translator has no grasp of either Dutch or German, and even less of the book's subject-matter').³⁹

But the inadequacy of the German version did not prevent Bekker's text from having an immediate, and broad, impact on society not just in Hamburg but in many parts of Protestant Germany and Scandinavia. A significant factor here was the persistence still at this time, in the Hanseatic cities of a Low German which was in fact closer to 'Nederduyts', as the Dutch language was then often called, than to High German, which meant that texts in Dutch tended to be relatively accessible. Dutch was also quite widely known and read at this time (more so, certainly, than English or French) in Scandinavian countries and certain Dutch books, such as the writings of Pieter de la Court, were very frequently encountered in Scandinavian libraries. Thus, for instance, the auctioning off of the *Bibliotheca Rosenkrantziana*, one of the largest libraries in Denmark, in Copenhagen in June 1696, included large numbers of books by De la Court, Grotius, Spinoza, Heereboord, Van Leeuwenhoek, Christiaan Huygens, Cornelis Bontekoe and others, a high proportion in Dutch.⁴⁰

Consequently, Bekker's work could be, and was frequently read by pastors, academics, officials, noblemen and others in Germany and Scandinavia in Dutch rather than German or French, though according to Lilienthal the French version was also read in Germany and was 'weit besser' than the German rendering.⁴¹ The famous ducal library at Wolfenbüttel, for instance, has two copies of Bekker's *Betoverde Weereld* in Dutch but apparently no copy in German; it also possesses dozens of the Dutch-language pamphlets for and against Bekker, bound together in hefty volumes and inscribed in a contemporary German hand. That this was a typical feature of major libraries, public and private, in northern Germany is evident from numerous surviving sale and auction catalogues. In Hamburg, Johann Winckler, Bekker's chief opponent in the city, assembled an impressive library and one which was well stocked with Spinozana as well as Bekkeriana. He too had the Dutch, not the German

version of Bekker's book and, in addition, had more than twenty other Dutch books and pamphlets published for or against Bekker.⁴²

Awareness of the Bekker disputes in Germany and Scandinavia was added to by the extensive coverage of the episode provided in the prestigious Leipzig journal, the *Acta Eruditorum*, which reviewed the first two books of *De Betoverde Weereld* in its issue of January 1692, and subsequently returned to the subject several times, as well as by lesser journals such as the *Journal de Hambourg* and the *Lübeck Nova Litteraria*. As a result, the general perception of the Bekker ferment in much of northern and central Europe diverged markedly from that found in Britain. As Wilhelm Heinrich Beckher expressed it, in his account of the Bekker controversies published at Königsberg and Leipzig in 1721, the Dutch *predikant* 'omnium non tantum Belgarum oculos in se convertit, sed sui statim etiam famam per circumjacentes terras extulit, inque omnium ore et sermone esse coepit, quilibet flagrabat desiderio illum legendi, liber undique circumferebatur legebaturque'.⁴³ ('He turned the eyes not only of all the Dutch upon himself but rapidly spread his notoriety abroad through the neighbouring lands, so that his name began to be in everyone's mouth and speech, everyone burned with a desire to read his book and it circulated and was read everywhere'.) Beckher further states that the huge text was translated into French, Italian, Spanish and German 'brevissimoque tempore spatio totam ferme Europam pervolaret' ('and in a very short space of time spread over nearly the whole of Europe').⁴⁴

The Bekker furore, then, was a landmark in European, as well as in Dutch, intellectual and cultural history. It was an upheaval both in elite and academic culture, on the one hand, and in popular culture, on the other. It was indeed a key development, and one which has for far too long been denied its rightful place as a central episode in that turbulent phase of intellectual transition leading to the Enlightenment which Pierre Hazard, way back in 1935, dubbed 'la crise de la pensée européenne'.

Once all this is accepted it is not at all surprising, or superfluous or 'paradoxical', that the initial uproar over Balthasar Bekker's *Betoverde Weereld*, of the years 1691-4, should have had a long, nagging aftermath which dragged on for something like a quarter of a century in the Netherlands and also other lands, including Sweden-Finland where Bekker's book was still regarded as forbidden literature in the 1720s. That

the Bekker ferment reflects a fundamental clash of philosophical and theological world-views is certain. What remains unclear in how far this tumultuous upheaval in intellectual and popular culture was also reflected in other areas of culture such as the theatre, poetry and art. Whether or not there was a ripple effect in areas such as these flowing from the Bekker disputes, is, arguably, a question well worth exploring.

University College London

NOTES

1. See A. van der Linde, *Balthasar Bekker, Bibliografie*, The Hague, 1869; and Jacob van Sluis (ed.) *Bekkeriana*, Leeuwarden, 1994; on the role of Kalma and Schuytplot, see Van Sluis, *Bekkeriana*, pp. 7-8.
2. See Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 925, 931; see also my article 'Pamphlet Controversies in Dutch and German Intellectual Life in the Age of Bekker and Van Leenhof' in *XVIIe Siècle* (forthcoming)
3. *Onderszoek en Antwoord van Balthasar Bekker... Op 't Request door de Gedeputeerden der Noordhollandsche Synod tot Edam in den Herfst des jaars 1691 ingegeven aen de Ed. Gr. Mog. Heeren Staten van Holland... tegen sijn Boek de Betoverde Wereld* (Amsterdam 1693), p. 93
4. *Ibid.*, p. 94; Knuttel reports that, by the spring of 1692, 750 copies of the Frisian, and 5,000 copies of the Amsterdam edition were in circulation; see W.P.C. Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker. De bestrijder van het bijgeloof*, The Hague, 1906, p. 267; Van Sluis repeats Knuttel's figures, see Van Sluis, *Bekkeriana*, p. 25.
5. Hans de Waardt, *Toverij en samenleving. Holland 1500-1800*, The Hague, 1991, pp. 253-5.
6. Van Sluis, *Bekkeriana*, p. 14
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*

-
10. H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1967, p. 102.
 11. On the philosophical clash underlying the furore, see especially Wiep van Bunge, 'Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics and the Challenge of Spinozism'. *The British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 1, 1993 and Andrew Fix, 'Bekker and Spinoza' in Wiep van Bunge and Wim Klever (eds) *Disguised and Overt Spinozism around 1700*, Leiden, 1996, pp. 23-40; see also Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, pp. 927-33.
 12. Van Bunge, 'Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics', pp. 70-4
 13. Jacobus Koelman was something of an exception in insisting on Bekker's Spinozism, but his only solid argument was that Bekker subscribed to Spinoza's view that 'De Schrift spreekt na de bevatting van 't gemeene volk, dewelke zy niet geleert, maer gehoorsaem zoekt te maken' ('Scripture speaks according to the understanding of the common people, for it wants them to be not learned but obedient'), Jacobus Koelman, *Wederlegging van Balthasar Bekkers Betoverde Wereldt*, Amsterdam, 1692, p. 130; see also Fix, 'Bekker and Spinoza', pp. 23-4, 33
 14. Van Bunge, 'Balthasar Bekker's Cartesian Hermeneutics', pp. 60-4; Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 926; see also Andrew Fix, 'Angels, Devils and Evil Spirits in Seventeenth-century Thought: Balthasar Bekker and the Collegiants', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50, 1989, pp. 527-47
 15. Andrew Fix, 'Balthasar Bekker and the Crisis of Cartesianism', *History of European Ideas* 17, 1993, 575-88
 16. Groenewegen's *Pneumatica*, one of the most important and interesting books spawned by the Bekker furore, was chiefly concerned with combatting the monism of the 'Helhond' Spinoza and reasserting the Cartesian dichotomy of spirit and extension: 'hierom is de Philosophie van Descartes, die daar in distincter handeld dan eenige onder die ik oyt heb ondersogt de alderbequaamste om dese Basiliksen met een ysre Hand-schoen in haar Hol te grypen: en dat zal alle vrome en ongeaffecteerde lieden langs zoo meer blyken' ('which is why Descartes' philosophy, which is clearer in this than any other philosophy I have seen, is best equipped to catch this basilik in its den with an iron glove and this will become more and more obvious to all right-minded people'); Henricus Groenewegen, *Pneumatica, Ofte Leere van de*

Geesten, zijnde Denkende en Redelijke Wesens, Enkhuizen, 1692, part 1, p. 30; Groenewegen's Cartesianism was so pronounced that his section on miracles was censored by the classis of Enkhuizen; by avoiding direct criticism of Bekker, or even mentioning his name, Groenewegen tries to take the heat out of the Bekker furore while restating the Cartesian position on spirits in a less contentious manner than Bekker

17. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 926-7
18. Balthasar Bekker, *Brief...Aan twee eerwaardige predikanten D. Joannes Aalstius tot Hoornaar end D. Paulus Steenwinken tot Schelluinen over deselver Zedige Aanmerkingen*, Amsterdam, 1693, p. 7
19. *Ibid.*, p. 8
20. De Waardt, *Toverij en samenleving*, 258
21. Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague (ARH), Oud Synodaal Archief (OSA) 85 Acta Synodi Provincialis Ducatus Gelriae, Nijmegen, August 1693 art. 21; at one point Bekker himself refers to the efforts to ban his work at Nijmegen and Zutphen, see Balthasar Bekker, *Nodige Bedenkingen op de Nieuwe Beweegingen verwekt door den Circulairen Brief*, Amsterdam, 1692, p. 57
22. J.J.V.M. De Vet, *Pieter Rabus (1660-1702)*, Amsterdam, 1980, pp. 270-3
23. Bekker, *Nodige Bedenkingen*, pp. 7-8
24. Johann Winckler, *Die warhaftig vom Teuffel erduldeten Versuchung Christi aus Matthaei Cap. IV. v i/ii wider Balthasar Beckern*, Hamburg, 1694, p.4; where he continues 'und gleichwol ist es geschehen dass vor wenigen Jahren Balthasar Becker ein Doctor Theologiae und Reformierter Prediger zu Amsterdam sich kein Gewissen gemacht in offentlich Schrifften die Christen zu bereden dass sie die Teuffel nicht zu furchten hetten, gestalt kein Teuffel bey uns auf Erden were der uns versuchte, verführte, plagte und dergelichen sondern sie weren alle in der Hölle fest verschlossen.' ('and it happened that some years ago Balthasar Bekker, a Doctor of Theology and a reformed preacher in Amsterdam, did not refrain from trying publicly to convince the Christians that they need not fear devils, arguing that there is no devil on

- this earth who tempts and torments us and suchlike, but that they are all firmly locked away in hell'); on Winckler's encounter with Bekker see Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker*, pp. 257-8
25. ARA OSA 97 Acta Synodi Suycet-Hollandiae, Gouda, July 1701 art.7
 26. Ibid. Acta Synodi Suycet-Hollandiae, Gorcum July 1703, art. 9 'Bekker'; ARA OSA 215 Acta Synod of Overijssel, Steenwijk, May 1704, art 6. 'Licencieus boek-drukken'; the extracts were taken from Goeree's *Mosaische Oudheden* but pro-Bekker sentiments were expressed also in other works of Goeree notably his *De kerklyke en weereldlyke historien*, Amsterdam, 1705.
 27. ARA OSA 97 Acta Synodi Suycet-Hollandiae, Breda, July 1708, art. 6 'Balthasar Bekker'
 28. Ibid vol 98, Gorcum, July 1714, art. 5
 29. Van Sluis, *Bekkeriana*, pp. 67-8, 74
 30. Koelman, *Wederlegging*, preface V, and pp. 195, 430
 31. After setting out Spinoza's general metaphysical position and doctrine of substance, Groenewegen insisted that Descartes' dichotomy of mind and extension was the only effective philosophical reply, Groenewegen, *Pneumatica* pp. 25-30, 48 and part II preface and pp. 2-3; although the main stress is on Spinoza, Groenewegen also frequently refers to Hobbes, even more so that does Koelman; Bekker, who had met Spinoza in The Hague and entered into discussion with him and studied and been much preoccupied with his philosophy did, and could, not deny his encounter with Spinoza but showed a brisk impatience with the allegation that he had been influenced by Hobbes: 'Sal ik hier noch eens moeten seggen', he wrote, in July 1692, 'dat ik aan Hobbes niet gedacht hebbe in al den tyd dat ik met dit werk te schrijven bezig was noch geweten dat hij van die dingen schreef?' ('Do I have to say here yet again that I never gave a thought to Hobbes during all the time that I was writing this book, and never knew that he wrote of these things?'), see Balthasar Bekker, *Kort Bericht...Aangaande alle de Schriften welke over sijn Boek De Betoverde Weereld enen tijd langs heen en weder verwisseld zijn*, Franeker, 1692, p. 62

-
32. J. Sylvius, *Consideratien over het Boek van de Heer Balthasar Bekker genaamt De Betoverde Weereld*, Amsterdam n.d. but 1691, p. 9
 33. *Nova Literaria Maris Balthici et Septentrionis*, Lübeck, 1698, p. 82
 34. On Walten see especially, Wiep van Bunge, 'Eric Walten (1663-1697): an Early Enlightenment Radical in the Dutch Republic' in Van Bunge and Klever, *Disguised and Overt Spinozism*, pp. 41-54
 35. Knuttel, *Balthasar Bekker*, pp. 268-9
 36. John Beaumont, *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits, Apparitions, Witchcrafts, and other Magical Practices*, London 1705, pp. 348-60
 37. Christian Thomasius, *Kurtze Lehr-Sätze von dem Laster der Zauberey*, Halle, 1704, pp. 585-9, 614-15
 38. Zacharias Grapius, *Systema novissimarum controversiarum seutheologia, recens controversa*, 2 vols, Rostock 1719, ii, pp. 80-99
 39. Michael Lilienthal, *Theologische Bibliothec*, Königsberg, 1741, pp. 1106-9. On the German edition of Bekker's book, of 1693, see Wiep van Bunge, 'Einleitung' to Balthasar Bekker, *Die Bezauberte Welt (1693)* in the series *Freidenker der europäischen Aufklärung. Herausgegeben von Winfried Schröder*, Abteilung I Texte vol. 7 (Stuttgart, 1996), p. 37.
 40. *Bibliotheca Rosenkrantziana sive Catalogus Librorum...Jani Rosencrantzii*, Copenhagen, 1696
 41. Lilienthal, loc.cit.
 42. *Catalogus Bibliothecae Wincklerianae a theologo quondam celeberrime Johanne Wincklero pastore et seniore Hamburgensium*, Hamburg, 1721, pp. 317
 43. Wilhelm Heinrich Beckher, *Schediasma Critico-Litterarium De Controversiis praecipvis Balthasari Bekkero batavo quondam motis, ob librum cui titulum fecit Die Bezauberte Welt*, Königsberg and Leipzig, 1721, p. 15

-
44. Ibid.; besides the Dutch version which was republished later, in 1715, and (at Deventer) in 1736, translations were published in French, German, and English; no version in Italian or Spanish is known but it is not impossible that clandestine manuscript versions in these languages were in circulation. From as early as 1693-4 there were also reports of a Latin version of Bekker's book compiled by his son, Johannes Henricus Bekker; although this Latin version was never published, and may not have survived, there is, in my opinion, no reason to doubt that it existed; see W.E. Tenzeln's Leipzig journal *Monatliche Unterredungen einiger guten Freunde von allerhand Büchern und andern annehmlichen Geschichten* 1694, p. 658. Tenzeln remarks that the German edition (which he says appeared in Amsterdam) came out soon after publication of the latter two books of the Dutch version but makes no comment about the quality of the German rendering. The non-appearance of this Latin version, I would suggest, is more likely to be due to pressure from the Church authorities than to lack of interest on the part of publishers.