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Lemma Grotius

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Grotius, Hugo (de Groot, Huigh or Hugo), b. Apr. 10, 1583, Delft, the Netherlands, d. Aug. 28, 1645, Rostock, Germany, after a shipwreck; jurist, well known in Europe as an expert in international law and political theory; humanist and brilliant scholar.

G.'s early linguistic ideas were presented in a chapter of a juvenile historical work, the Latin treatise *Parallelon Rerum Publicarum*, published posthumously. Writing legal publications in Dutch, he also coined Dutch law terminology. A prodigy in the field of Latin poetry and philology, he studied at the University of Leiden, became a lawyer and married Maria van Reigersberch on July 17, 1608. He was involved in the political controversy between Prince Maurice of Nassau and Johan van Oldenbarneveldt, the grand pensionary of the States-General. In the theological disputes underlying this controversy, he took the side of the Arminians, who defended free will, against the Gomarists, who argued for predestination. G.'s stance led to his imprisonment at Loevestein Castle in 1619, from which he escaped to Paris in a book chest two years later. During his exile in Paris he continued his scholarly work and carried out diplomatic duties by representing the Swedish monarch at the French court.

In his *Parallelon*, G. joined the contemporary debate on the value of the vernacular by comparing the attitude of the Dutch towards their mother tongue with that of the Greeks, Romans and French toward theirs. He argued that the Greek, Romans and French had set a good example by their concern for their respective languages. Likewise, he praised his Dutch ancestors who refused to accept funding requests from their sovereign lords, unless they were stated in Dutch. These excellent examples contrasted starkly with the prevailing attitude towards the Dutch vernacular, a language which he took to be unrivalled in its richness and its functional possibilities. Hence, according to G., the Dutch language fully deserved to be used as a scholarly and scientific medium. He supported his plea for elaboration of function with arguments demonstrating the excellence of the Dutch language.

Grotius discussed antiquity, which was an important criterion in the evaluation of languages: the older the language, the better it was supposed to have preserved the qualities of the first, undoubtedly perfect language. Dealing with the origin of language, he argued that language was a product of human ingenuity and related to the development of societies. This view shows striking similarities with statements on this matter made by → Plato and Diodorus Siculus. Grotius had a conventional-

ist view on the relationship between words and things in reality. Both in derivation and compounding, however, "the nature of things" is said to be imitated, an idea that was put forward earlier by the versatile engineer Simon → Stevin (1548–1628), a friend of G.'s father, Jan Cornets de Groot (1554–1640). Close scrutiny of the *Parallelon* and Stevin's previously published works reveals striking similarities which convincingly demonstrate G.'s indebtedness to Stevin. Two examples to illustrate this are G.'s evaluation of a language on its aptness for derivation and compounding (the same criterion that Stevin had applied) and his rule governing compounding (in modern terms: the first element is the modifier and the second element the head) which he formulated much as Stevin had done.

G., who wrote his *Parallelon* after having studied at the University of Leiden, adopted linguistic ideas not only from Stevin but also from the illustrious Leiden circle of scholars such as Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538–1614), Franciscus Raphelengius (1539–97) and Josephus Justus → Scaliger (1540–1609). He proves to have been familiar with relatively new discoveries which these scholars were discussing in their correspondence and their Latin publications; he commented, among other matters, on Crimean Gothic, Persian and their similarities with Dutch. If it was not a matter of oral communication, G. possibly owed his information to Vulcanius' *De literis & lingua Getarum sive Gothorum*.

G. was not a linguist in his own right, and his *Parallelon* does not show an original view of language. It shows influence from both the scholarly humanist circle and the non-Latin circle, represented by Stevin. In his prime, G. promoted his favorable attitude towards the vernacular and his plea for elaboration of its function by writing treatises in Dutch and coining Dutch law terminology.

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