

**A trade model to promote Dutch welfare during a period of decline:
the ideas of Dirk Hoola van Nooten (1747-1808)**

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Collection of the Rijksmuseum: Portrait of Dirk Hoola van Nooten,
Hendrik Roosing, J.P. Ney, 1788

Researchmaster Early Modern Intellectual History
Course: Master Thesis Early Modern Intellectual History (CH5050)
Academic year 2014-2015
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-- Abbreviations --

i. Libraries and Archives

KH Koninklijk Huisarchief

UBL Universitäts Bibliothek Leipzig

UU Utrecht Universiteitsbibliotheek

ii. Book titles

GW Montesquieu, *De Geest der Wetten*. Translated by Dirk Hoola van Nooten, 8 volumes (Amsterdam 1783-1787).

KS Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *De Koophandel en het Staatsbestuur, beschouwt in hun onderlinge betrekkingen*. Translated by Dirk Hoola van Nooten (Utrecht 1782).

RV Adam Smith, *Naspeuringen over de Natuur en Oorzaaken van den Rijkdom der Volkeren*. Translated by Dirk Hoola van Nooten (Utrecht 1796).

RMV Dirk Hoola van Nooten, *Rechten van den Mensch: een Volksboek* (Amsterdam 1793).

SL Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*. Translated and edited by Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge 1989).

VR Dirk Hoola van Nooten, *Vaderlandsche Rechten, voor den burger*, 3 volumes (Amsterdam 1793).

Chapter 1

-- Decline and ideas about reform in the Dutch Republic --

--Introduction--

Dirk Hoola van Nooten (1747-1808) was a man with many talents. Van Nooten was a man of 'the Enlightenment', a 'republican', and an 'orangist', all at the same time. He was a member of the city council of Schoonhoven at different stages of the turbulent history of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In that capacity he corresponded with the stadtholder. Second, he became involved in an economic society which discussed the problems of the declining Republic. Third, he proved to be a prolific writer. Between 1771 and 1796 he published translations of works written by Bonnet, Condillac, Montesquieu and Smith, while he also wrote several books on Dutch and natural law. Van Nooten was part of a network of authors, who translated other foreign books which dealt with economic issues.¹

This thesis will be an attempt to describe the preoccupations of Hoola van Nooten, although he is largely forgotten and seemed to have had little lasting influence. This study will be a contribution to the understanding of the tradition of thinkers arguing about the origins of the political and economic decline of the Republic and the remedies they suggested to overcome these problems. With hindsight, we know their thinking was not very successful in political terms. The Dutch lost their political independence, while their economic power decreased compared to some other countries, especially France and England.

However, the study of history should not primarily be concerned with the movements and events contributing to developments which seem important from a present-day perspective. Historical research in general and the study of the eighteenth century more specifically should be concerned with attempts, supported by both the historical imagination and the study of sources, to understand the past in its own terms. In addition, a historian should acknowledge and use the work of the numerous historians who investigated and wrote about the past before him. This is important in order to repeat a historical investigation already done in the past. Moreover, investigating the historiographical tradition can demonstrate which themes previous historians researched, which topics were

¹ Karel Davids, 'From De la Court to Vreede. Regulation and Self-regulation in Dutch Economic Discourse from ca. 1660 to the Napoleonic Era', *Journal of European economic history* 30 (2001), 271.

relatively neglected, and which aspects were overlooked. These remarks tend, of course, to be both too general and cliché. The next section will therefore discuss some aspects of the historiography of the second half of the eighteenth century. The following discussion needs to focus on a few broader themes in this historiography, because the author central to this study has not received much interest from historians. Many works of history were dedicated to the historical period of which Van Nooten was part of, like the Patriot Revolution, the issue of decline, the Enlightenment, and political economy. Therefore I will discuss the writings of a few nineteenth century scholars, most notably Fruin and Colenbrander. Some historiographical trends, like a predominant focus on political history and decline seem to have their origin in these writings. An investigation of these trends will provide a useful starting point for an understanding of Van Nooten. Before turning to Fruin and his successors, we have to focus on the use and usefulness of labels as 'enlightenment' and 'republicanism' in present day historical research.

--Labels--

Herbert Rowen, the biographer of the great statesman Johan De Witt, once wrote an article about Dutch political thought in which he concluded that the Dutch by nature are no great philosophers.² Whether this is true is only speculative and should therefore not concern the historian. However, Rowen's remark points to something different. Until quite recently there was limited attention for the intellectual aspect of the past in Dutch historiography. This change is partly due to international historiographical developments. It is therefore helpful to discuss a part of this international debate about intellectual history. A part of the historiographical discussion about the enlightenment and republicanism will be examined, since these concepts are of great importance to the study of the eighteenth century.

One of the most important contributions to the understanding of 'the enlightenment' was printed in 1932, 148 years after Immanuel Kant published his famous essay 'Was ist Aufklärung?'. Ernst Cassirer, who was a neo-Kantian, attempted to describe in *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* a phenomenology of the philosophical mind. It was an attempt to show the 'unity of the conceptual origin' of the enlightenment and its 'characteristic depth'.³ Cassirer searched for an essence of the enlightenment, which he found in the philosophy of

² Herbert A. Rowen, 'The Dutch Republic and the Idea of Freedom', in David Wootton (ed.), *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society* (Stanford 1994), 310-340.

³ Ernst Cassirer's *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* was first published in 1932. I have quoted from the second edition of the English translation: Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton 1979), xi.

Immanuel Kant, since the human mind discovered its own spontaneous force in the works of philosopher from Königsberg. For Cassirer the essence of the Enlightenment was the moment it came to understand itself. Cassirer's account, however, was criticised for its lack of attention for historical context. For example, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 was not mentioned at all in his chapter about toleration.

Another attempt of identifying an essence of the enlightenment came from Peter Gay in his two-volume *The Enlightenment, an interpretation*, published in 1966 and 1969. Contrary to Cassirer, to whom he dedicated his two books, Gay was not in search for a single core of the enlightenment. Instead, he stressed intellectual diversity, which was apparent by the figures who he discussed in his books.⁴ Despite this multiformity, all these figures had something in common, which Gay called, inspired by Wittgenstein, 'family resemblance'. The philosophers portrayed by Gay had a few common characteristics, like a problematic relation with Christianity, a particular interest in antiquity, and attention for modernity. Other scholars reacted with critical response on Gay's two volumes. According to critics, Gay had failed to write a social history of the enlightenment. His account of the Enlightenment remained schematic and did not focus enough on context and local variations.⁵ After this criticism the focus of 'Enlightenment research' shifted from ideas to the local varieties of enlightenment and to more attention for enlightened practices. Such critique was part of a broader movement in the humanities, namely the 'cultural turn'. It was thought that the 'cultural' aspect of history had been overlooked.

The focus on local variety also became apparent in a renewed focus on the history of political thought. Quentin Skinner published his famous article 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' in 1969. He argued that historians should try to understand the intention the author of a given text had.⁶ Although Skinner criticised 'orthodoxies' focusing on the 'text itself' or the social, political, or religious context of a text, his own approach implies the importance of context as well.⁷ The historical and methodological work of Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock had a considerable amount of influence on the study of political thought. Central to this influence was Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition*, published in 1975. This

⁴ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an interpretation. Volume 1: The rise of modern paganism* (New York 1966) and *Volume 2: The Science of freedom* (New York 1969).

⁵ See Robert Darnton, 'In search of the Enlightenment. Recent attempts to create a social history of ideas', *Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971), 113-132.

⁶ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory* 8 (1969), 48.

⁷ Idem, 3-4.

book describes an intellectual tradition which began with Aristotle's Athens as its starting point. After Athens this tradition continued and led, via Machiavelli's Firenze and Harrington's England, to the ideas of the Founding Fathers. According to Pocock, Aristotle's notion of 'zoon politikon' had inspired a tradition of thought that emphasised virtue instead of rights and which advocated the involvement of citizens in the political affairs of their time.⁸

Pocock's impressive study led to discussions among historians about the validity of Pocock's argument and about other aspects of 'republicanism'. Dutch scholars remarked that the most successful Republic of the early modern period was completely absent from Pocock's account. Pocock explained this omission by arguing that the discussion about political thought in the Dutch Republic was dominated by references to public law instead of virtue. Moreover, thinkers like Pieter de la Court and Spinoza discussed mainly the idea of sovereignty.⁹ The Dutch had followed the 'Venetian' route, because the state hired mercenary soldiers instead of recruiting among its own citizens, like the Romans did. This produced ideas in which ordinary citizens had no share in the politics of their state. Moreover, the power of the Dutch was, like Venice, based on commerce instead of agriculture and the ownership of the land by the nobility. According to Pocock the Dutch commercial overtone led to an emphasis on rights, instead of virtue.¹⁰

So there was no space for the Dutch in Pocock's republican history. Instead of rejecting Pocock's argument, like many later historians did, two Dutch historians tried to fit the Dutch experience in the 'Atlantic tradition'. Eco Haitsma Mulier argued that the ideas of some Dutch thinkers fitted into the republican tradition which Pocock had described. According to Haitsma Mulier political thought in the Dutch Republic had not been restricted to discussions about public law. Moreover, a concern about public wellbeing was central to the concerns of De la Court and Spinoza. Their ideas and approaches were not strictly legalistic.¹¹ Moreover, Haitsma Mulier wrote his dissertation about the influence of the 'myth

⁸ J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Tradition* (Princeton 2003), 167, 184, 213, 462, Idem, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge 1985), 40-42.

⁹ Pocock, 'The problem of political thought in the eighteenth century: Patriotism and politeness', *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 8(1982), 4-6. Idem, 'The Atlantic Republican Tradition: The Republic of the Seven Provinces', *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics and the Arts* 2, 1 (2010), from <http://arcade.stanford.edu/rofl/atlantic-republican-tradition-republic-seven-provinces> [26-05-2016].

¹⁰ Pocock, 'The problem of political thought', 6-7.

¹¹ Eco Haitsma Mulier, 'J.G.A. Pocock and seventeenth-century Dutch Republicanism: A reconsideration', *Theoretische geschiedenis* 8 (1982), 25-28.

of Venice' on constitutional republicanism in the Dutch Republic.¹² Another Dutch historian commented on Pocock's republican history, since Ernst Kossmann accepted Pocock's distinction between 'Venice' and 'Rome'. He argued that the work of Franco Venturi and Pocock resembled this distinction. Pocock had described the tradition of citizens participating in political affairs, while Venturi had portrayed how republics like Genoa and the Dutch Republic attempted to survive during the eighteenth century among large kingdoms, like England and France. Peace and rights were the central concerns of these republics, while warfare and virtue were central to Pocock's narrative.¹³ Kossmann concluded that political thought in the Dutch Republic neither fitted in Venturi's nor in Pocock's model, even though Dutch political thought was influenced by foreign intellectual developments. Moreover, some elements of Venturi's and Pocock's tradition had been used. Kossmann did not explicate how elements from Pocock's or Venturi's model had been used by Dutch authors and to what extent.¹⁴ Haitsma Mulier and Kossmann did not reject Pocock's argument, although Kossmann cynically wrote about the train from Athens that led, via Firenze, to the United States, without stopping in the most significant Republic of the early modern period.¹⁵

Many later historians regarded 'republicanism' as an unhelpful concept for a variety of reasons. In his recent study *The Royalist Republic* Helmer Helmers demonstrated that a concept like 'republicanism' is not helpful with regard to the Dutch Republic, although the United Provinces were arguably the most successful republic of the early modern period. In this study he argued that the 'public culture' of the Dutch Republic can be characterised as 'royalist' for an important period of the seventeenth century. Helmers demonstrated for example that the execution of Charles I in 1649 led to a 'profusion of pro-Stuart texts' in the Dutch Republic and to almost no support for the new-found English Republic.¹⁶ The fact that this Dutch support to the Stuarts in the 1650s did not correspond with the religious or political faultlines within the United Provinces proved according to Helmers there was 'royalism' in the Dutch republic, instead of merely 'orangism'.¹⁷ It was hard to find

¹² Eco Haitsma Mulier, *Constitutioneel republikenisme en de mythe van Venetië in het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederland* (Amsterdam 1978).

¹³ E.H. Kossmann, 'Dutch Republicanism', in Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic, three studies* (Amsterdam 2000), 169-171. Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge 1971), 41-43.

¹⁴ Kossmann, 'Dutch Republicanism', 192-193.

¹⁵ Idem, 192.

¹⁶ Helmer Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch public sphere, 1639-1660* (Cambridge 2015), 4-6.

¹⁷ Idem, 9-11.

principled anti-monarchical republicanism in the Dutch Republic. If there was a something like Dutch republicanism, it was based on ideas of mixed government. Divine right kingship was not considered as principally incompatible with this variant of 'Dutch republicanism'.¹⁸

In a recent article Robert von Friedeburg made a similar argument, although his focus was much broader than the Dutch Republic. He wrote that it is relatively easy to find examples of 'constitutional republicanism' when it is considered as a practice of mixed government or as ideas about such practices. It was, however, difficult to find examples in the early modern period of 'constitutional republicanism' when it is considered as an 'explicit and principled rejection of monarchy', since there were few examples of 'republican' governments without monarchical elements. The Dutch Republic had a stadholder, while Venice had a Doge, and the Swiss Confederation had a prince-bishopric.¹⁹ Only a few authors rejected monarchy in principle, like Harrington and the brothers de La Court, although these authors had their own 'state' in mind when they wrote their treatises.²⁰ Von Friedeburg pointed to the fact that 'republicanism' is not an important historical phenomenon in the Dutch Republic, unless arguments which were not strictly anti-monarchical, like support for mixed-government, are considered as 'republican'. Consequently, it is doubtful whether 'republicanism' is a useful concept to analyse the history of the Dutch Republic.²¹

There are additional reasons to doubt whether 'republicanism' is a useful historiographical concept, since many aspects of Pocock's account became subject to debate. Paul Rahe, for example, showed that Machiavelli was not a classical republican.²² Even more important was the conceptual critique on 'republicanism', summarized by David Wootton. A republican seemed simply someone 'who disapproves of monarchy, who regards kings as tyrants, and courts as corrupting'.²³ However, some thinkers regarded a republic as a state where the rule of law prevailed, which implied a monarchy could be a republic, while others considered every state where more than one governed as a republic. Moreover, others

¹⁸ Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 133, 148.

¹⁹ Robert von Friedeburg, 'Republics and Republicanism', in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750. Volume II: Cultures and Power* (Oxford 2015), 538-539, 543-546.

²⁰ *Idem*, 539.

²¹ *Idem*, 538-540, 543-546.

²² Paul Rahe, 'Situating Machiavelli' in James Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism* (Cambridge 2000), 300-301.

²³ David Wootton, 'Introduction. The Republican Tradition: From Commonwealth to Common Sense' in Wootton (ed.), *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society*, 2.

regarded only a state with a democratic government as a republic.²⁴ Such observations lead to confusion about what 'republicanism' means. This confusion seems unsolvable, simply because there is no way to decide which definition should prevail. There were simply many historical uses of the words 'republic' or 'republicanism'. This issue was only confirmed later by the two volumes on Republicanism edited by Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen. These volumes, with the title *Republicanism, a shared European Heritage*, contain many interesting articles, but do not present a clear view of what republicanism is. To the contrary, some of the volume's articles discussed republicanism as a rejection of monarchy and a plea for active citizenship. Other authors connected republicanism with toleration and commerce. Moreover, republicanism was no longer limited to certain countries, since it was applied to areas and countries all over Europe.²⁵ The application of 'republicanism' to so many aspects of the past and to such a large geographical area diminished its usefulness for historical research.

In many ways the discussion about enlightenment mirrored the debate about republicanism. The disputes about republicanism and enlightenment had a similar beginning and led to comparable results. Both the debate about republicanism and enlightenment began with a thesis that highlighted the importance of ideas. Both were criticised for the neglect of practices and local variants. The result was in both cases a great amount of research focusing social context and practices, which led to an enormous amount of research about a broad range of topics but not to a more general understanding of history.²⁶

This development results in a number of problems. When a concept like 'enlightenment' is equally applicable to Russia, Italy and France, one can doubt if the concept is helpful in making distinctions. Sometimes a concept once used to describe a number of events and developments becomes the notion used for historical period. Indeed, this seemed to have happened with the concept of 'the enlightenment' at a certain stage. The eighteenth century became the enlightenment and the enlightenment became synonymous with the eighteenth century.²⁷ To name one example, Willem Frijhoff wrote a chapter named 'Dutch

²⁴ Wootton, 'Introduction. The Republican Tradition', 6.

²⁵ Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, *Republicanism, a Shared European Heritage 2 Volumes* (Cambridge 2002).

²⁶ Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt (eds.), *1800 Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (Den Haag 2001), 21.

²⁷ Knud Haakonssen makes this remark with regard to eighteenth-century philosophy, instead of history in general. See Haakonssen, 'The history of Eighteenth-century philosophy: history of philosophy?' in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth century philosophy vol. 1* (Cambridge, 2006), 3.

enlightenment and the creation of popular culture' in a volume edited by Margaret Jacob and Wijnand Mijnhardt about the Dutch Republic in the eighteenth century, published in 1992. Although this chapter contains a useful analysis of popular culture, it also includes unspecified references to the 'Dutch Enlightenment'.²⁸ It is ambiguous whether 'enlightenment' is a historical period or a certain movement in Frijhoff's account. Instead, 'the Dutch enlightenment' became an unspecified movement in Frijhoff's account, while it is suggested that this concept is a historical period as well.²⁹ Both uses are not necessarily problematic, as long as 'enlightenment' is used either as a historical period or as a movement. In both cases its use should be qualified. In other words, the concept 'enlightenment' should not, without further explanation, be used simultaneously as a chronological period and as a certain movement.

Therefore we can conclude the usefulness of a historiographical concept is inversely proportional to the number of phenomena and the length of the historical period to which it is applied. No wonder Robert Darnton wanted to consider the enlightenment as a concrete historical phenomenon in his article 'George Washington's false teeth'. He advocated for 'deflation' of the enlightenment. It had to be considered as a movement of 'men of letters' living in Paris in the early eighteenth century with the aspiration to reform minds and institutions.³⁰ Other historians took efforts as well to bring some clarity in our understanding of the enlightenment, most notably Jonathan Israel.³¹ Although his synthesis of the enlightenment is both impressive and instructive, his thesis raises a number of questions. First, the claim that Spinoza is considered to be *the* source of radical democratic notions, secular ideas, and philosophical atomism is hard to sustain. To criticize the case for Spinoza as the source of philosophical atomism, some ideas produced by thinkers with a medical background and also Thomas Hobbes are completely omitted in Israel's account of the development of materialism.³² Second, the distinction made by Israel between a radical, moderate, and counter-enlightenment is problematic, since it reduces complex discussions to a struggle between three different branches of the enlightenment. Moreover, thinkers like

²⁸ Willem Th. M. Frijhoff, 'Dutch enlightenment and the creation of popular culture' in Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, *The Dutch Republic in the eighteenth century. Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca 1992), 293, 294, 299, 301.

²⁹ *Idem*, 301, 304.

³⁰ Robert Darnton, 'George Washington's false teeth', *New York Review of Books* 44 (1997).

³¹ Jonathan, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford 2001), *Idem*, *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford 2006).

³² Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford 2008). Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford 2002).

Bayle, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Hume are difficult to place in one of these wings.

So, there are a number of reasons to be critical about labels like republicanism and enlightenment. First, these concepts are debated to such degree, that too much theoretical discussion and explication is necessary to even use the term in an intelligible way. Such labels require too much qualification necessary before they can be used by a historian. Second, we could repeat what Kossmann wrote about the unhelpfulness of Pocock's thesis with regard to the Dutch Republic in a more general form. The use of a concept current among historians is not always helpful to understand certain developments at a certain place at a certain time. But more importantly, concepts like enlightenment are often more form than matter, because they do not directly clarify the concerns central to certain actors. A man in the eighteenth century may be considered as a republican or as enlightened by the modern historian, but often it was not his primary concern to be enlightened or republican. His actual preoccupations were usually something more specific.

Consequently, this study will not start with a certain label, but with a certain issue central to the second half of the eighteenth century, namely the issue of decline. This issue will be connected to some specific debates about wealth and trade, central to the minds of some thinkers in the closing quarter of the eighteenth century. These issues have to be clarified and conceptualised. This will be done in the following chapters, but a number of writings written by previous historians about these issues have to be examined.

--Political and cultural decline--

This thesis will discuss the influence of foreign thinkers on Dirk Hoola van Nooten's propositions to reform the minds and institutions of the Dutch Republic at the end of the eighteenth century. He wrote in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, but Van Nooten was hardly the first to notice the political and economic decline of the Republic. The English ambassador William Temple already had written in the 1670's that the Dutch Republic was the envy of some, the fear of others, and the wonder of all their neighbours.³³ During the eighteenth century it was still the wonder of all their neighbours, but often for the opposite reason. Many observers wondered why the political and economic power of the Dutch Republic declined, which was apparent both during the negotiations of the Treaty of Utrecht and during the war of the Austrian succession. The French diplomat Melchior de Polignac allegedly told the Dutch that 'we negotiate about you, in your territory, but without you' during the negotiating of the Treaty of Utrecht. Meanwhile, Amsterdam was surpassed by

³³ William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (London 1673), i.

London as the world's leading centre of finance³⁴, the size of the population hardly grew compared with France and England.³⁵ Moreover, the profits coming from trade drastically decreased, largely because of England's growing power.³⁶ Karel Davids reported a 'slowdown in technological change' in many different contexts, for example in agriculture, inland transportation, and domestic industry.³⁷

Decline did not escape the attention of the Dutch, since both contemporaries and historians commented on this phenomenon. Contemporary observers pointed to moral defects, political problems, and economical issues. Moral critique dominated the first half of the eighteenth century. Justus van Effen (1684-1735), fulminated in *De Hollandsche Spectator*, a journal he founded himself, against the French ideal of 'politesse', which he understood as too much emphasis on social differences, fashion, and effeminacy. This tradition was continued by *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, a journal which appeared in print from 1749 until 1770.³⁸ Often these journals did not transcend the intellectual level of the 'coffeehouse wit', but they still show that some contemporaries argued that the problems of the Republic were caused by the attitude and habits of its people. Decline was a moral problem. Others pointed to the failings of the government, while some suggested the economic model had failed. Before giving these persons their due attention, we should look more closely to some nineteenth century historians commenting on the end of the eighteenth century.

Robert Fruin (1823-1899) was the first professor to hold the chair of Dutch national history at the University of Leiden. Shortly after his death, some of his lectures and notes were published by H.T. Colenbrander (1871-1945), one of Fruin's students. In 1901 Colenbrander published Fruin's *Geschiedenis der Staatsinstellingen in Nederland, tot den val der Republiek*. According to Fruin, the death of stadtholder William III marked the end of the cooperation between different parts of 'the state'. William's personal leadership had connected the different parts, which made it easier to make political decisions, although this role resulted in the neglect of the traditional privileges. After William's death, the privileges

³⁴ Youssef Cassis, *Capitals of Capital. A History of International Financial Centres, 1780-2005* (Cambridge 2006), 8-15. Pepijn Brandon, *War, Capital, and the Dutch state* (Leiden 2015), 264-309.

³⁵ Jan Lucassen and Rinus Penninx, *Newcomers: Immigrants and their descendants in the Netherlands 1550-1995* (Amsterdam 1997).

³⁶ Johannes de Vries, *De economische achteruitgang van de Republiek* (Leiden 1968).

³⁷ Karel Davids, *The Rise and Decline of Dutch Technological Leadership. Technology, Economy and Culture in the Netherlands, 1350-1800. Volume 2* (Leiden 2008), 525-528.

³⁸ Wyger Velema, 'Polite Republicanism and the Problem of Decline' in Idem, *Republicans, essays on eighteenth-century Dutch political thought* (Leiden 2007), 86-89.

were respected once again, but the state became indecisive.³⁹ Moreover, once decisions were made, these were not executed by lower parts of the state. The administration became irresolute and powerless. The same was true for the separate provinces.⁴⁰ Fruin wrote about the 'progressive decline of the government' and the enormous amount of public debt created by expenditures of the state during the 'great wars', by which Fruin probably referred to the war of the Spanish Succession.⁴¹

Although Fruin recognised the decline of political organisation, he seemed to be in search for the development of a central bureaucratic state. He highlights the fact that William IV became the stadtholder of all the provinces of the Republic. The Dutch were 'finally' able to make a decision about this issue.⁴² The evolution and continuation of the Dutch state were central to Fruin; one supposes in order to describe the origins of the liberal state of his own day. The development of democratic sympathies around 1740's, the attempts to restore trade in 1751, the influence of the American Revolution, and the patriot movement are only mentioned as part of the progressive story of the Dutch State.⁴³ However, a historian commenting on the state in the eighteenth century Dutch Republic cannot ignore the fact that the state was crumbling away and that the state of the 1780's had no uncomplicated and unproblematic connection with the nineteenth-century constitutional kingdom of the Netherlands.

Although Fruin's lectures were essentially a descriptive history of the Dutch 'state', there seems to be a lack of coherence between the facts he presented and the narrative he unfolded. Fruin clarified his view on the Dutch eighteenth century in his essay 'De drie tijdvakken der Nederlandsche geschiedenis'. In this essay he presented a comprehensive view on Dutch political history, which he divided in three parts. The first part was the period prior to the Dutch Revolt when the seventeen provinces were part of larger realms. With the Dutch Revolt began a Republican period, which ended by the emergence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.⁴⁴ The political situation before the Revolt had been very promising, since the seventeen provinces had the potential to become a unitary state able to compete with the great powers of their day. This process had already been underway at the time the Revolt started. Then the promising beginnings of a unitary state were replaced by the provincial

³⁹ Robert Fruin, *Geschiedenis der Staatsinstellingen in Nederland, tot den val der Republiek, uitgegeven door H. T. Colenbrander* (Den Haag 1901), 303.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, 304, 309.

⁴¹ *Idem*, 307.

⁴² *Idem*, 317.

⁴³ *Idem*, 320, 324, 334, 340.

⁴⁴ Robert Fruin, 'De drie tijdvakken der Nederlandsche geschiedenis', *De Gids* 29 (1865), 248- 249.

interests, which led to freedom, but also to discord and a powerless state. Thus, the Revolt brought freedom, but this freedom was paid for by the disappearance of a powerful administration. Instead of being part of larger realm, seven of the original seventeen became a weak collection of provinces, with limited possibilities, due to the limited resources and number of people.⁴⁵ In Fruin's view the republican period was ultimately a learning experience for the Dutch, who had the chance to experience freedom in the absence of a powerful state. After the downfall of the republic, freedom was internalised. The Dutch were able to enjoy freedom while simultaneously having a strong state after the emergence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.⁴⁶ The new Kingdom actually was a perfection of the old monarchy prior to the revolt. The political order of the Republic had been a 'vervlogen tusschentijd'.⁴⁷

We have seen that Fruin considered the decline of the Dutch as a political problem, ultimately originating from the Dutch Revolt itself. The Revolt led to a power vacuum, which eventually led to the downfall of the Republic in 1795.⁴⁸ The Dutch hegemony in the seventeenth century, in the period it had been a Republic, was simply an anomaly. According to Fruin decline had been inescapable. The power of the Republic should unavoidably become proportional to its power.⁴⁹

Fruin's account contains several shortcomings. The eighteenth century was only important because its failures ultimately led to the establishment of the Dutch Kingdom, while he paid little interest in the dynamics of Dutch history in the eighteenth century. Second, although Fruin paid attention to the influence of foreign powers on Dutch state formation, his history is essentially a national history of the Dutch. There is also a methodological issue. He failed to pay attention to the economic problems, the attempts of self-aware citizens to restore trade and political power of the Republic or the proposals to reform society. He neglected cultural phenomena as well. To be sure, Fruin explicitly limited himself to the political features of the Dutch national development.⁵⁰ So Fruin kept non-political history out of consideration from a methodological point of view.

A much more fair treatment of the eighteenth century came from P.J. Blok, Fruin's successor in Leiden. He maintained the orientation to national history and the predominant focus on its political part as well. Blok paid attention to intellectual developments, a broader

⁴⁵ Fruin, 'De drie tijdvakken', 250, 252-254.

⁴⁶ Idem, 268-269.

⁴⁷ Idem, 269.

⁴⁸ Idem, 262.

⁴⁹ Idem, 252.

⁵⁰ Idem, 248.

conception of politics, and a Marxist understanding of the direction of eighteenth-century Dutch history. He concentrated on the history of political institutions in the *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Volk*, published in 1925, but he included a chapter about the 'heralding of a new age' as well. According to Blok the Republic had been in a 'general crisis' around 1780. This crisis had a political, theological and economical aspect, since there were not only discussions about the feasibility and defects of the political order, but the status quo of religious ideas, trade, science and letters were discussed as well.⁵¹ People felt they had to take position with respect to new ideas. Consequently, there emerged a conflict between two classes. On the one hand there was the group of wealthy men, excluded from political power, while on the other hand there was a group of patricians. The first group was inspired by the ideas of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hume, Priestley, and Price.⁵² The majority of the people, however, did not want the political order to change and wanted to keep the old system intact. Consequently, a struggle emerged between 'the new spirit' and conservative forces. This battle was not limited to politics, since there were disagreements about the arts, writing history, and philosophy as well.⁵³ So, Blok viewed the period of the last quarter of the eighteenth century as a struggle, partly intellectual, between old and new. This struggle was instigated by the decline of the economic power of the Republic and inspired debates about the causes of decline and possible remedies. Blok concluded that there was an urge for innovation and reform, although the severe political circumstance limited the possibilities to achieve these goals.⁵⁴

Blok's understanding of history requires some criticism, since he seemed to divide the actors in the last quarter of the eighteenth century in a progressive and conservative camp, although he does not use this terminology. The former advocated innovation, whereas the latter wanted to keep things as they were. With such an interpretation of history, Blok has put this period in the context of nineteenth-century understanding of the French revolution, since the conservative party wanted to keep the old order intact or restore it, whereas the progressive one wanted to turn it upside down. This understanding of history seems fundamentally flawed, because it does not consider the eighteenth century in its own right. It does not illuminate the urge of some thinkers to reform society, since one assumes they were not aware of the upcoming revolution in 1789. The framework in which Blok places these

⁵¹ P.J. Blok, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche volk. Deel 3*. A.W. Sijthoff, (Leiden 1925, Third revised edition), 553-4.

⁵² Idem, 555-556.

⁵³ Idem, 562-564.

⁵⁴ Idem, 570, 576-577.

intellectual debates does not convince, although he does a great deal to describe the problems of decline contemporaries faced.

After Blok, political history remained the predominant focus of historians. Colenbrander (1871-1945), for example, published his three books about the patriot movement between 1897 and 1899. According to him, the Dutch owed their new insights and reform plans to the French.⁵⁵ Besides, the patriots were often not able to act on their own behalf. Colenbrander described the Dutch as the marionettes of the French and English, making all kind of mistakes and odd errors. The fate of the Dutch was determined by foreign ministers.⁵⁶

Colenbrander's account was criticised by Pieter Geijl (1887-1966), whose own understanding of the same period was different. He advocated the existence of the 'Dutch tribe', which pointed to the collective history of Dutch speaking people living in the Netherlands, Belgium, and South-Africa. The crisis of the last quarter of the eighteenth century was therefore a crisis of 'both Netherlands', a crisis equally suffered by Belgium and the Netherlands. He criticised Colenbrander by stressing the unique character of the political reforms of the patriots, although he admitted that they were clearly inspired by French ideas.⁵⁷ Despite his broad thesis about 'both Netherlands', Geijl focused on the particular character of the Dutch reforms in contrast with other countries. Moreover, he mainly described the last quarter of the eighteenth century as a political crisis.⁵⁸

Other historians focused on politics as well, although in a way more similar to the Marxist understanding of history implicit in Blok's writings. C.H.E. de Wit published in 1965 *De Strijd tussen aristocratie en democratie in Nederland 1780-1848*, in which he described a contest between aristocratic regents and democratic minded citizens excluded from political power. The conflict described by Witt was settled with the introduction of the constitution written by Thorbecke in 1848.⁵⁹ Blok's understanding of the eighteenth century as a dichotomy between a progressive and conservative camp was transformed in a conflict between two political parties. The problem is similar; the history of the patriot movement until the Thorbecke's constitution is not understood from the perspective of eighteenth

⁵⁵ Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Blauwdrukken*, 19.

⁵⁶ H. T. Colenbrander, *De Patriottentijd, 3 delen* (Den Haag 1897-1899). Pieter Geijl, 'De Hollandse Statenpartij. Naar aanleiding van Colenbranders Patriottentijd. *De Gids* 113 (1950), 30-40.

⁵⁷ Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Blauwdrukken*, 19-20.

⁵⁸ Pieter Geijl, *De Nederlandse Stam* (Amsterdam, 1948-1959, second revised edition), part 3, book IX, 80-88. See also Geijl, *De Patriottenbeweging 1780-1787* (Amsterdam 1947).

⁵⁹ Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Blauwdrukken*, 20. C.H.E. de Wit, *De Strijd tussen aristocratie en democratie in Nederland 1780-1848: kritisch onderzoek naar een historisch beeld en herwaardering van een periode* (Heerlen 1965).

century problems, but from a Marxist pre-understanding.

Whereas many historians concentrated on the political aspects of the eighteenth century and pointed to the political decline, others argued it was a period of cultural decline as well. Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) had not that much to say about culture or politics during the eighteenth century. According to Huizinga the seventeenth century had been a 'wonder', which was 'full of life and tumult', whereas almost every aspect of civilization went into decline during the eighteenth century. Life in the eighteenth century had been dull compared to the seventeenth century.⁶⁰

The tradition of historiography from Fruin until Huizinga has a strong reliance on decline, national history, and its political aspect. The focus on political history became less predominant by the writings of Eco Haitsma Mulier and Ernst Kossmann. They had, as already demonstrated, no alternative understanding of political thought in the Dutch Republic in its international context, although they criticised the work of Pocock. Moreover, their work had a predominant focus on the seventeenth century.⁶¹ Both historians were instrumental in the increasing attention for intellectual aspects of the past. Wijnand Mijnhardt also greatly contributed to the understanding of the intellectual life in the Dutch Republic. His work concentrated on cultural history, since he focused on learned and academic societies in the Dutch Republic. His work offered an alternative for the focus on political history that appears in the writings of Fruin, Colenbrander, and Blok. Besides, Mijnhardt's approach offered an alternative for the point of view that the eighteenth century had been a period of decline, which was an implicit part of the political approach of Fruin, Colenbrander, and Blok, but also in Huizinga's cultural point of view. Contrary to these authors, Mijnhardt argued there had been flourishing cultural practices in the second half of the eighteenth century in his dissertation about learned societies in the Dutch Republic. Mijnhardt was mainly concerned with cultural societies that had been preoccupied with science and 'humanities', but he also paid attention to societies concerned with the decline of the political and economic power of the Republic. Some learned societies discussed problems related to trade, agriculture, and domestic production. The *Amsterdamsche Maatschappij ter bevordering van den landbouw*, founded in 1776, is one example, while the *Vaderlandsche Maatschappij van Reederij en koophandel* in Hoorn, founded in 1777 is another. A third society

⁶⁰ Eco Haitsma Mulier, 'De achttiende eeuw als eeuw van historisch besef', *Documentatieblad Achttiende eeuw* (1994), 147. Johan Huizinga, 'Nederlands beschaving in de zeventiende eeuw, een schets' (1941), *Verzamelde werken*, dl. 2 (Haarlem, 1948), 412-507.

⁶¹ Haitsma Mulier, 'J.G.A. Pocock'. Idem, 'The language of seventeenth-century republicanism in the United Provinces: Dutch or European?' in Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Languages of political theory in Early-modern Europe* (Cambridge 1987).

was established in 1784, the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*, which focused mainly on the reform of education. This learned society had 53 different departments and 3500 members in 1800.⁶²

Mijnhardt was together with Joost Kloek the co-author of *1800 Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving*, which was published in 2001. This book was meant both as a synthesis of the existing body of knowledge and as an original thesis about the culture of the Dutch Republic during the eighteenth century. This panoramic work offered a broad on the discussions among contemporaries about the right order of society, the various new forms of communication, and also new ideals of citizenship. The authors of *Blauwdrukken* explicitly concentrated on the cultural dimension of new ideas of society and the so-called blueprints. Therefore, the influence of foreign ideas on the learned societies and the 'blueprints' remain largely unexplored, although the emergence of a secular conception of society 'invented' by Hobbes and Locke and the influence of Hutcheson's ideas about sociability on the practice of sociability are mentioned in *Blauwdrukken*.⁶³ How these ideas are pursued was, however, not explicated. Probably this is unavoidable in an overview like *Blauwdrukken*. More important is, however, the fact that the political dimension is largely absent from *Blauwdrukken*. For example, Niek van Sas criticised the focus on culture in *Blauwdrukken* and argued Mijnhardt and Kloek treated the political events at the end of the eighteenth century as a disruption of the cultural attempts to reform the Republic.⁶⁴

Although Van Sas could have been right in his observation that political events are given very little attention in *Blauwdrukken*, the alternative focus on political history falls short as well. On the one hand, the cultural vision falls short, because it almost completely excludes political history. The focus on learned societies seems to have this effect. On the other hand one can argue that focusing on the political events in the last quarter of the eighteenth century has proven to fall short in increasing our understanding of the eighteenth century. The Patriot Revolution is, of course, significant in its own right, but historians from Fruin until the De Wit already had a predominant focus on political events.

This study wants to avoid both the political and cultural vision by focusing on the attempts to reform society. According to Mijnhardt, the link between politics and learned societies was often problematic, for learned societies could be considered as non-political. This means that learned societies largely did not discuss societal reform or problems in the

⁶² Wijnand Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750-1815* (Amsterdam, 1987), 110-111.

⁶³ Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Blauwdrukken*, 67-69, 71.

⁶⁴ N. C. F. van Sas, 'De Burger als eunuch', *Low Countries Historical Review* 117 (2002), 496-8.

government.⁶⁵ Only from the 1770's a few learned societies did discuss such problems. The *Konstgenootschap*, founded in 1773, aimed to be a society discussing social and economic problems. Co-founder Johannes van Haefthen wanted this society to contribute to the 'utility of the fatherland'.⁶⁶ *De Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* en *De Oeconomische Tak* were two other societies that discussed the economic decline of the Dutch Republic. Mijnhardt is probably right when he argued that the relation between these societies and the government made it difficult to discuss political policy. Nevertheless, *De Hollandsche Maatschappij* organised an essay-contest about the economic problems. A number of these essays proposed measures in order to restore Dutch glory. These propositions will be discussed in the next section, which deals with the relation between 'politics' and 'economy'.

--Decline and reform--

In 2005 Istvan Hont published his book *Jealousy of Trade. International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical perspective*. In this book Hont 'fit together' several essays written between 1983 and 1994, while he wrote an extensive introduction to connect the themes explored in the different chapters. He wrote how economic concerns became central to 'politics' during the eighteenth century. According to Hont, economic considerations had been absent in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, while Karl Marx had no space for political ideas in *Das Kapital*. Between Hobbes and Marx there was a genesis of a political theory that had a central place for notions as commerce, trade and welfare. The eighteenth century gave birth to a notion of the world as consisting of competing nation-states. Hont saw the genesis of this idea in the work of the German natural law theorist Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1696) and described a genealogy of 'political economy' from Pufendorf to the ideas of David Hume (1711-1776) and Adam Smith (1723-1790).⁶⁷

Hont described how economic considerations became central to 'politics' in the work of a few eighteenth-century authors. Other historians wrote about a number of thinkers that commented on the dynamic between 'political economy', public debt, and warfare. Michael Sonenscher's *Before the Deluge* is a case in point. He showed the intimate connection between political thought and discussions about public debt in France in the decades before the French Revolution. This study illuminates how a few thinkers wrote sophisticated comments about domestic financial problems and proposed solutions to solve these problems as well.

⁶⁵ Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom*, 106-108. Kloek and Mijnhardt, *Blauwdrukken*, 113.

⁶⁶ Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom*, 106-108.

⁶⁷ Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade, International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge MA, 2005), 1-2.

In other words, *Before the Deluge* demonstrates the historical relation between financial problems and societal reform. Although the problems of the Dutch Republic were quite different compared with those of France, it will be helpful to consider Sonenscher's work more closely in order to study the Dutch proposals to solve the Dutch economic problems.

The title of his book *Before the Deluge* points to the dangers of public credit. Although modern economists see public credit as a phenomenon connected with stable government and as a way to achieve economic growth, Sonenscher emphasises that the phenomenon of public credit was in the eighteenth century connected with warfare. Most of the government loans were intended for expenditure on arms and soldiers. Consequently, the government borrowed money 'against the state's future tax revenue' to pay for its wars. As a result the rising possibility for states to borrow money was not seen as a blessing by many contemporary observers. According to them, public funded warfare could lead to the collapse of state and civilization. On several occasion they referred to the biblical flood.⁶⁸

Observers frequently pointed to the possibility that the fatal alliance between public debt on the one hand and standing armies and warfare on the other could lead to revolution.⁶⁹ A situation in which a state easily could borrow a great amount of money resulted in a number of problems, since borrowing money made it easier for a government to start a war. Secondly, the increase of public debt avoided the immediate increase of taxation, but it created conflicts about the rationing of the tax burden at a later moment. Besides, the government increased its policy options by borrowing money, but became dependent on traders and producers in order to generate enough welfare to be able to raise enough taxes. Finally, government became directly dependent on creditors. In other words, public debt created new ways of uncertainty into politics. This created some sort of paradox, which Sonenscher called a 'political double-bind'. The constitutional order which made public credit possible or even secure, led eventually to new problems for the stability of the state. At one point or another, the state may have to choose between the interests of its creditors or the survival of the state. This dilemma could force the government to default on its debt and opting for bankruptcy.⁷⁰ This prospect created massive uncertainty into public life which was central to the thought of a number of observers in the eighteenth century, especially the French cleric and political writer abbé Sieyès (1748-1836).⁷¹

⁶⁸ Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge, Public debt, inequality, and the intellectual origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton 2007), 1-6.

⁶⁹ Idem, 6.

⁷⁰ Idem, 7-8.

⁷¹ Idem, 10-18.

Sonenscher tries to describe some of the intellectual origins of the French Revolution, which was foreseen quite often during the eighteenth century.⁷² He points out that these origins were both political and social. Sonenscher describes how certain ideas were connected to social developments and political problems in France, while he simultaneously demonstrates how the fear for 'le déluge' was connected with theological expectations and eventually led to type of speculation about the future, largely forgotten due to the ideas of Comte, Hegel, and Marx. So, Sonenscher points to a way of thinking which was central to some thinkers living in the eighteenth century, but largely alien for us, familiar with the connection between public credit and economic growth, but unaware of the connection between warfare, taxes, and bankruptcy.⁷³

Paul Rahe presents another example of the impact of warfare on political thinking in France. He refers to a number of military defeats that troubled some minds in France. Rahe suggests the events that took place on 13 August 1704 had a great significance. At this date, the armies of France and England clashed. The English defeated under the leadership of John Churchill the French armies of comte de Tallard. This occasion not only signified a French defeat on the battlefield, but also was a destruction of the French ambition to install a French nominee on the imperial throne. According to Rahe this was the first great defeat the French suffered in 150 years. Moreover, it was the first of a range of military beatings inflicted by the armies of Churchill and the foreshadowing of 'series of setbacks that would bedevil monarchical France as the century wore on'. In addition, these French defeats and setbacks were the immediate context of Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques* and Montesquieu's *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*.⁷⁴

Problems seemed to be completely different a few hundred kilometres to the north of France. The Dutch Republic was not nearly as powerful as the French monarchy. Its armies did not attempt to defeat the soldiers of other countries in order to establish a universal republic. However, a few analogies can be made. The Republic had great problems with its public debt, while the public administration was under the scrutiny of many commentators. The studies of Rahe and Sonenscher are also instructive since they provided an understanding of political thought which combines attention to social and economic problems and political history. Besides, both give an explanation for the fascination thinkers like Sieyès and Montesquieu had for antiquity. These thinkers were worried that the cycle of

⁷² Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 6.

⁷³ Idem, 3.

⁷⁴ Paul Rahe, *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift. Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville & the Modern Prospect* (New Haven 2009), 3-4.

rise and decline in the political history of the romans would be repeated in their own lifetime.⁷⁵ As we will see, a few Dutch thinkers combined an interest in contemporary economic problems with a fascination for ancient history as well. Moreover, the analogies between France and the Republic were not only thematic, but also had a substantial element. The works of Montesquieu and Condillac were, among others, translated into Dutch from the 1770's onwards. Dirk Hoola van Nooten was the translator of these works. He used his translations and other works to clarify the economic problems of the Dutch Republic and to propose a few remedies. He described his ideas about 'decline' and 'political economy' in order to illuminate the situation of the Dutch Republic. In order to understand his work, it is necessary to pay attention to the Dutch context of the debate in which Van Nooten was involved. *De Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* and *De Oeconomische Tak* provide useful starting points, since these two organisations had the aspiration to reform society.

De Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen was founded in 1752 in Haarlem as a merger between three smaller organisations. *De Maatschappij* organised an essay contest in 1771 about the question in which way Dutch trade could be restored. Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel won the contest with his essay. In his essay he pleaded for transformation of *De Hollandsche Maatschappij* 'into an economic society concerned with the promotion of Dutch welfare'. This plan met with resistance, since the directors of *De Hollandsche Maatschappij* wanted to respect the 'scientific' character of their learned society. After a period of lobbying the directors of *De Hollandsche Maatschappij* agreed to establish a new 'economic branch' which had as its goal the promotion of commerce, agriculture, manufacturing, and fishery.⁷⁶ The structure of *De Oeconomische Tak* was based both on an English and Spanish example. Van den Heuvel took inspiration from the English *Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, which was founded in 1754 by William Shipley. Besides, Van den Heuvel derived ideas from a model invented by the Spanish political economist Pedro Campomanes. The most important idea he derived from Campomanes was to organise *De*

⁷⁵ Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 6. Rahe, *Soft Despotism*, 5-7. See also Paul Schuurman, 'Determinism and Causal Feedback Loops in Montesquieu's Explanations for the Military Rise and Fall of Rome', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21 (2013), 507-526. The ancient cycle of decline and fall was also used in the debate about the social conflict between the rich and the poor. Rousseau, Abbé de Mably, Helvétius and Diderot were involved in this debate. See Sonenscher, 'Property, community, and Citizenship', in Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth century history of political Thought* (Cambridge 2006), 469, 480-487.

⁷⁶ J. Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak tot Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor nijverheid en handel* (Haarlem 1952), 1-9.

Oeconomische Tak in a number of local departments.⁷⁷ Within a few months this society established 57 departments all around the Republic and had more than 3000 members. This society had two problems. To begin with, the local departments of *De Oeconomische Tak* were not allowed to discuss matters that touched rules established by the government. The government suspected *De Oeconomische Tak* of having political aspirations.⁷⁸ Secondly, the *Oeconomische Tak* consisted of different groups with a variety of interests. Some of the members advocated the importance of domestic production, while others did much more emphasise the importance of agriculture or trade. Although trade was the backbone of Dutch prosperity, most members of the *Oeconomische Tak* found domestic production more important. This contradiction led the demise of this society, since it only had 274 members in 1795.⁷⁹

Hoola van Nooten would contribute to the founding of a local branch of *De Oeconomische Tak* in Schoonhoven and he was familiar with the essay-competition which had led to the establishment of this economic society. Koen Stapelbroek argued that the essay-competition must be placed in an ongoing debate about Dutch foreign trade policy. A number of thinkers debated in the 1740's and 1750's about the question whether there still was a relation between 'the flourishing of the linen industry in Haarlem and Leiden and the Dutch staplemarket' and about the question whether this dynamic still prevailed in the modern 'jealousy of trade'. The 'propositie' of stadtholder William IV from 1751 was part of this debate as well.⁸⁰ The 'propositie' was an attempt to reorganize the Dutch 'commercial system'. It proposed to stimulate trade by reducing some tariffs in several classes. The result would have been a 'limited free port'.⁸¹ According to Stapelbroek the different essays should be seen in the context this debate. He suggested that the issue of the decline of the Dutch economy as discussed earlier in the 'propositie' was discussed again in the essay-competition, shortly after William V became a stadtholder.⁸²

Van den Heuvel demonstrated in his essay a concern about the elements of the Dutch economy, like guild organisation and the outsourcing of factories to the country side, while he discussed the Dutch role in the commercial struggle between France and England as

⁷⁷ Koen Stapelbroek, 'The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay on the Restoration of Dutch Trade and the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences', in Koen Stapelbroek and Jani Marjanen, *The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke 2012), 261-263.

⁷⁸ Stapelbroek, 'The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay', 263. Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak*, 11-16.

⁷⁹ Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom*, 109-110.

⁸⁰ Stapelbroek, 'The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay', 265-268.

⁸¹ Nijenhuis, 'For the Sake of the Republic', 3.

⁸² Stapelbroek, 'The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay', 269-270.

well.⁸³ The others essays should be considered in this context as well. Adriaan Rogge argued that trade depended on manufacturing and discussed the options the Dutch had to protect their staplemarket.⁸⁴ In short, the people involved in the discussion about Dutch decline argued about the causes of decline, which of the trade theories was helpful in order to understand the decline, and about possible remedies.⁸⁵ This hypothesis is confirmed by Van den Heuvel's 'aanspraak' to the leaders of the Haarlem Society of May 1777, a few years after the essay-competition. This 'aanspraak' was a proposal to reform the Dutch economy by promoting domestic manufacturing and trade. Moreover, Van den Heuvel argued that the success of each particular economic sector depended on the other sectors. Moreover, there was no opposition between the interests of inhabitants of the different provinces. Van den Heuvel proposed the foundation of a national fund to promote domestic industry and the cooperation between the different local branches of the economic society.⁸⁶

In this thesis I want to consider the ideas of Dirk Hoola van Nooten in the context of the debate described by Stapelbroek. Van Nooten wrote a number of books and translations which also wanted to reconsider the Dutch place in the European 'jealousy of trade'. He analysed the problems of Dutch commerce and proposed a few solutions. He changed his mind about this issue a few times during the years he wrote and translated his works, which makes him an interesting thinker to investigate. It will be argued that Van Nooten changed his mind about the mutual nature of international commercial due to the wars with England and France during the closing decades of the eighteenth century. He adopted the ideas of Adam Smith in order to come to terms with the relatively weak position of the Dutch in Europe. His own political preferences did not play an important role in the transformation of his ideas.

Van Nooten published a translation of *Recherches philosophiques sur les preuves du Christianisme* in 1771, which was a work of Christian apologetics written by Charles Bonnet, a thinker from Geneva. In 1782 he produced a Dutch translation of *Le commerce et le Gouvernement*, a work about the importance of trade written by the French cleric Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714-1780). Only one year later he published the first part of his translation of Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois*, which appeared in print in ten volumes between 1783 and 1787. In the 1790's he published several works written on natural law, while in 1796 the first part of the Dutch edition of *The Wealth of nations* went to press. The

⁸³ Stapelbroek, 'The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay', 269-271.

⁸⁴ Idem, 272.

⁸⁵ Idem, 271.

⁸⁶ Idem, 264.

printing stopped after the first part, although the manuscript survived, which is now in the library of the University of Utrecht.

Van Nooten's ideas evolved overtime, which is apparent from his publications. When the local department of the *Oeconomische Tak* was founded in Schoonhoven in 1778, Van Nooten held a lecture in which he blamed the economic misery on foreign influences which had affected traditional morals. At some point between 1778 and 1783 he changed his mind drastically.⁸⁷ In the preface of his edition of Condillac he argued that more and more states came to understand their own commercial interests. State and trade had become inseparable.⁸⁸ He did not take position himself, but only presented a history of trade which began with the ancient Phoenicians and ended with the competing states of his own time.⁸⁹ In his translation of *De l'Esprit des lois*, Van Nooten argued Montesquieu had no clear view on the relation between commerce and the state. Moreover, he argued trade had no negative impact on morality. His main targets were laws and monopolies which had hampered free trade.⁹⁰ In *De Rijkdom der Volkeren* Van Nooten went beyond this standpoint and argued that the 'jealousy of trade' had been a delusion. States did not compete with each other in a commercial war. On the contrary, they were in need of each other.⁹¹ States should not support trade, domestic production or agriculture, but should instead shape the conditions in which 'full competition' could take place. States should not intervene in the proceeding of the market, but should limit themselves to maintain law and order.⁹²

In this thesis I will consider this development as closely linked, the failed attempt to stimulate commerce by the 'Propositie', but with the political attempts to address decline as well. To begin with, one can think about the fiscal problems which started from the war of the Spanish succession onwards. Second, the war of the Austrian succession led to a French invasion of Flanders in April 1747. Like in 1672, the danger posed by the French armies led to turmoil. Making William IV (1711-1751) stadtholder of all provinces then was considered as the political solution for the problems of the Republic. Unfortunately, he died a few years

⁸⁷ Karel Davids, 'Tussen Smith en Schoonhoven: De verloren wereld van Dirk Hoola van Nooten (1747-1808)' in Theo Engelen, Onno Boonstra en Angélique Janssens (eds.), *Levenslopen in Transformatie, liber amicorum bij het afscheid van prof. Dr. Paul. M. M. Klep* (Nijmegen 2011), 226, 230. Dirk Hoola van Nooten, *Aanspraak aan het Departement van den Oeconomischen Tak te Schoonhoven* (Gouda 1778).

⁸⁸ Dirk Hoola van Nooten, 'Voorrede' in Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *De Koophandel en het Staatsbestuur, beschouwt in hun onderlinge betrekkingen, vertaald door Dirk Hoola van Nooten* (Utrecht 1782), iv-vi.

⁸⁹ Idem, vii, lix, lxi.

⁹⁰ Hoola van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.II, 20.1 [333].

⁹¹ Van Nooten, 'Voorrede' in Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, [xxiv, xxxviii].

⁹² Idem, xxxvii-xli, xliii-vlix.

later, while his son William V (1748-1806) was still very young, which made him dependent on regents, most notably his mother and the Duke of Brunswick. These attempts failed. The 'propositie' did not lead to renewed commercial success and the House of Orange was not a powerful political guide in the second half of the eighteenth century. I will argue that Van Nooten became increasingly disillusioned with political attempts to restore trade. In his translations of works written by Condillac and Montesquieu, he proposed a trade model, based on the cheap import of raw materials, its use by manufactories to make products, and the export of these products to abroad. This model had to be supported by the government. In his translation of *De Wealth of Nations*, he argued that the state should not have an active trade policy. It will be argued that Van Nooten changed his mind due to wars with England and France. These wars had decreased the power of the Dutch, which made it necessary to adopt a different 'trade model'. He took over Adam Smith's idea that states could profit from each other's wealth. A wealthy state was not a commercial enemy, but provided an opportunity to make profit.

The second chapter of this thesis will provide a short account of Van Nooten's own life, his unfolding world of ideas, and his involvement in the *Oekonomische Tak*. Besides, it will describe the publication history of his translations and his works on natural law. The third chapter will provide an account of Van Nooten's ideas about the foundations of the state. It is necessary to investigate these foundations in order to understand Van Nooten's economic ideas. The fourth chapter involves Van Nooten's conceptualisation of the political and economic problems of the Republic. This chapter demonstrates how Van Nooten considered England as the cause of few problems with regard to commerce. Van Nooten thought that government had an essential role in supporting and encouraging commerce in several ways, although he had changed his mind when he published a part of *De Rijkdom der Volkeren*.

This study can be seen only as a preliminary investigation of the influence of translations on Dutch political thought in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. There are more translations, but these cannot be discussed here, because of limited lines and time available for this thesis. By focusing on a thinker who was an administrator of the government, a member of an economic society, and a translator at the same time, I hope to illuminate some of the connections between politics, foreign ideas, and sociability. This study will concentrate on the connection between individual and society. Its value lies in the fact that many of the writings of Van Nooten are given little attention by modern historians. A systematic investigation into the relation between the situation of the Republic, the

emergence of economic ideas, and the reception of Montesquieu and Smith's ideas is not done before.⁹³

This approach has a few limitations as well. Van Nooten's ideas have not received much attention from modern historians. Therefore, the formal aspects of Van Nooten's writings receive relatively much attention and hence the themes explored in his writings have to be investigated. This is not done before, but it is necessary in order to understand the 'project' of Van Nooten. In this thesis a serious attempt will be made to understand the complexity of Van Nooten's economic and political ideas. This thesis will move from the analytic to the descriptive, and then shift back again to finish with an interpretative effort and some preliminary remarks about Van Nooten's world of ideas.

⁹³ Eco O. G. Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment: The Dutch Writing of History' in Margaret C. Jacob en Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century. Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca 1992), 184-186.

Chapter 2

-- Dirk Hoola van Nooten: life and work --

-- Biography --

Dirk Hoola van Nooten was born in Schoonhoven in 1747, a Dutch city near Rotterdam. For a great part of his life he stayed there, while making a career in the municipality. He followed in the footsteps of his family by entering the city administration. Both his paternal and maternal family belonged to city patriciate, while both families had also sympathy for the House of Orange. His maternal grandfather Dirk Hoola entered the city administration as a *schepen* in 1672 after William III became stadtholder. Van Nooten's father Jan van Nooten remained part of the city council in 1748 after William IV came into power, while only a year later he became *burgemeester* of Schoonhoven. Hoola van Nooten studied law in Leiden and earned his promotion in law in 1768. In 1771 he married with his niece Cornelia Maria van Nooten, with whom he got four children. Van Nooten died on January 20, 1808.⁹⁴

Van Nooten published a translation of a work written by Charles Bonnet in 1771. Besides this translation there is no information about Van Nooten's professional activities in the period between 1768 and 1772. In that year Van Nooten became a member of the municipal college of *électeurs*, which nominated persons for several municipal offices. Van Nooten became a member of the *Vroedschap* in 1775 and worked as a *schepen* during six terms between 1775 and 1788. During this period he translated and published *De Koophandel en het Staatsbestuur en De Geest der Wetten*. He fulfilled the office of burgomaster and treasurer in the period between 1788 and 1794. The duties connected with these offices probably prevented him from publishing more works, since from 1794 onwards Van Nooten published his work on 'human rights', domestic law, and the first part of *De Rijkdom der Volkeren*.⁹⁵

The political career of Van Nooten was closely connected with the fate of stadtholder William V (1748-1806).⁹⁶ During the Patriot Revolution Van Nooten was removed from his position in the city council. The arrest of William's spouse Wilhelmine near Schoonhoven proved to be a turning point, since this arrest led to the invasion of the Prussian army in

⁹⁴ Davids, 'Tussen Smith en Schoonhoven', 222-224.

⁹⁵ Idem, 225-227.

⁹⁶ Idem, 224-227.

September 1787. After these events Van Nooten wrote two letters to the stadtholder in which he complained about his difficult situation and asked for his help. He wrote in a letter that he had been one of the first 'victims' of the Patriots and had welcomed the stadtholder when he returned. He even had invited him in his house.⁹⁷ In a second letter he lamented the dreadful circumstances in which he lived and asked for the stadtholder's help.⁹⁸ This time he was successful, since William V appointed him as a burgomaster of Schoonhoven. After the foundation of the Batavian Republic in 1795 he was again removed from his offices. He worked as a lawyer between 1795 and 1808.⁹⁹

Van Nooten must have had a large network of people he knew. He must have known most members the local elite in Schoonhoven, booksellers, publishers, and thinkers. His friends Johan Luzac, Petrus Dreux, and Jeronimo Bosch wrote poems on the occasion of Van Nooten's promotion in law. Van Nooten would exchange letters with the neo-Latin poet Bosch for several years.¹⁰⁰ This thesis will concentrate on Van Nooten's writings and will not delve into the ideas and writings of Van Nooten's circle. Further research is necessary for this purpose.

-- Van Nooten's library--

Besides being a city magistrate, Hoola van Nooten was an avid reader and writer. His large collection of books, paintings, and portraits was auctioned in the Dom church of Utrecht on December 12, 1808.¹⁰¹ This Catalogue included 3208 books, papers, and other writings. From the books of his library can be inferred that Van Nooten had a variety of interests. He had a great interest in theology, since the theological section of the catalogue was the largest in the catalogue with a total of 571 books, including works written by Cocceius and Vossius, early Christian works of Athanasius and Augustine, and many commentaries on the Bible.¹⁰² Given the fact that van Nooten was a member of the Reformed public church it was not surprising he had books written by Calvin as well.¹⁰³

Van Nooten must have been interested in the 'biological' aspect of the natural

⁹⁷ Koninklijk Huisarchief, Archive stadtholder Willem V, A31, nr.1430, 'Brief van Hoola van Nooten, 27 oktober 1787'.

⁹⁸ Koninklijk Huisarchief, Archive stadtholder Willem V, A31, nr.1433, 'Brief van Hoola van Nooten, 1 november 1787'.

⁹⁹ Davids, 'Tussen Smith en Schoonhoven', 225, 234.

¹⁰⁰ Idem, 224.

¹⁰¹ Catalogus Van een zeer fraaie Verzameling Latynsche, Fransche, Engelsche, Hoog en Nederduitsche Boeken, Nagelaten door Mr. Hoola van Nooten, auctioned in Utrecht on December 12, 1808. UBL, 893h.

¹⁰² Catalogus, 1-2, 18.

¹⁰³ Idem, 16.

sciences, since works written by Johannes Burman and Boerhave were mentioned in the catalogue used at the auction in Utrecht.¹⁰⁴ His interests were not restricted to the empirical side of the natural sciences, since he also had ‘theoretical’ books like Newton’s *Principia philosophiae naturalis*, works by Leibnitz, and a copy of Descartes’ *Principia philosophiae*.¹⁰⁵ Van Nooten’s library included some fine historical works as well, for example works written by Scaliger and Lindenborgh, while he also possessed Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionaire Historique et Critique*.¹⁰⁶ Other topics featured prominently among his book possessions. The presence of number of famous books on politics is a convincing witness of his political interests. There were older books about politics, like Plato’s *Politeia*. Hobbes’s *De Cive* and *Leviathan* are mentioned on the same page as Thomas More’s *Utopia*, while he had also the complete works of Machiavelli.¹⁰⁷

Being a lawyer, it was not surprising to find many works on law and jurisprudence among his books. A total of 532 titles included, of course, the *Corpus Iuris* and many other works on Roman law. Van Nooten seemed interested in books written by theorists of law. This section included, of course, Grotius’ *Iure Belli ac pacis*, but also works of Suarez, Locke, Huber, Pufendorf, Burlamaqui, and Wolff.¹⁰⁸ Many of these authors were contemporaries of Van Nooten. Indeed, he also appeared to have had much interest in contemporary writings of both ‘wits’ like Voltaire and philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Schiller, Lessing, Gottfried Johann Herder, Brissot de Warville, Beccaria, and Hutcheson.¹⁰⁹

These works by ‘modern’ authors were supplemented by many authors from ‘classical’ times, both Christian and pagan. Van Nooten possessed the complete works of Plato and Aristotle, works by Herodotus, Livius, Seneca, and Flavius Josephus as well.¹¹⁰ He had all the classics. Virgil, Horace, and Terence were present among his books, while he also had writings of Sophocles, Plutarch, Epictetus, Seneca, Tacitus, and Cicero.¹¹¹

The presence of these classical authors seems to suggest that Van Nooten was fascinated by antiquity. That he was, besides a lawyer with a profound interest in the history and theory of law, someone who was deeply impressed with the inheritance of the classical perspective. The importance of antiquity for eighteenth-century authors and thinkers is

¹⁰⁴ Catalogus, 43.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, 4, 20, 44.

¹⁰⁶ Idem, 8, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Idem, 64, 66.

¹⁰⁸ Idem, 3, 21, 22-25, 61.

¹⁰⁹ Idem, 21, 59-61, 65, 76.

¹¹⁰ Idem, 6, 7, 29.

¹¹¹ Idem, 29, 70-73.

discussed by modern historians, especially by Wyger Velema. He has written a number of articles and books in which he stressed the importance of the classical tradition in the eighteenth century. In his inaugural lecture he argued that a variety of figures living in the Dutch Republic during the eighteenth century were actually classical republicans, who were fascinated by the example of classical Rome. These authors thought that virtue was the cornerstone of the Republic and argued that participation of the citizens in political affairs was essential for the wellbeing of the Republic.¹¹²

The discussion in the previous chapter already suggested how confusing a term like 'republic' and ancillary concepts like citizen participation and virtue are. However, there are additional reasons to put 'fascination for antiquity' in perspective. First, such fascination can be found in most centuries between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the twenty-first century. The examples of Athens and Sparta, Greek and Roman poetry, and the historians and philosophy of the ancients formed inspiring examples for many, although they occasionally were a negative reference point, especially for a few Christian thinkers. Even today the history of the romans still appeals to the imagination, which is proved by the popular accounts written by Mary Beard and others. Admittedly, there is a significant difference between the present-day attention for the classical past and the way eighteenth-century authors were fascinated by the ideas and history of antiquity, thought in terms derived from that classical past, and used its vocabulary in their own writings.

Even if the fascination with antiquity in the eighteenth-century is stronger than in the centuries before and after, this 'fascination' is often more a matter of form than matter itself, since it is often used to make a statement about history or to remark about analogies between classical and contemporary events. In any case, few of those living in the eighteenth century were fascinated by antiquity for its own sake. They had certain interests, aims, and preferences and used classical examples, language, and expressions derived from the past. Of course, this deserves the attention of modern historians, but it can only serve as a starting point, for it barely clarifies the aspirations and political inclinations of historical actors. The classical past can be used in many ways and is useful for almost every thinker.

Van Nooten's obvious interest in antiquity therefore cannot be seen as the key starting point in understanding his writings. Moreover, Van Nooten's own work is full of references to both 'ancient' and 'modern' authors. Bayle, Rousseau, and Hutcheson are

¹¹² Wyger Velema, *Omstreden oudheid. De Nederlandse achttiende eeuw en de klassieke politiek* (Amsterdam 2010).

mentioned, but Cicero and Plutarch as well. Therefore we should turn to the use of both classical and modern works in the translations and works of Van Nooten.

-- Van Nooten's early work: Christianity and decline --

Hoola van Nooten's career as an author began when he finished his studies in law with a dissertation on bills of exchange in 1768. This dissertation, however, offered no original perspective on this topic when compared with other dissertations at that time.¹¹³ Only a few years later he published a translation of *Recherches philosophiques sur les preuves du Christianisme*, a work of Christian apologetics written by Charles Bonnet (1720-1793), a thinker from Geneva. This translation appeared in print under the title *Philosophische Navorschingen van de bewyzen voor het Christendom* in 1771 and was dedicated to his nephew Jan van Tarelink, a former 'scheepen' and 'thesaurier ordinaris' of Amsterdam. The translation consisted of the text of the *Recherches philosophiques* and also a small part of another work of Bonnet, the *Peligenesi philosophique*. Van Nooten possessed an edition of both works in his collection. He initially began with a translation of the *Peligenesi*, but he was surprised to find a copy of the *Recherches philosophiques*, which had many similarities with the former work. According to Van Nooten this pointed to fraud. He wrote to Bonnet in order to ask if he was the author of both works, which was confirmed by Bonnet. Van Nooten translated the *Recherches philosophiques*, but also included a part of the *Peligenesi*.¹¹⁴

In the text Van Nooten included the footnotes of Johann Lavater (1741-1801), a Swiss theologian, philosopher, and poet. The *Recherches philosophiques* was translated into German by Lavater, but he also included a number of remarks and observations in the form of footnotes as well. Although Van Nooten would write extensive footnotes in his translations of works written by Condillac, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith, there are no footnotes in the *Navorschingen* from his hand. He only included Lavater's notes. Possibly there was limited space to write down footnotes, for example by restrictions from the publisher on the number of pages available for the publication of Bonnet's book. However, it seems more likely that Van Nooten had not yet developed his ideas on religion and statecraft, because he did not comment on these topics in his short introduction. This omission cannot be seen a matter of occasion, since Bonnet's book provided the opportunity to comment on a wide variety of topics, like the laws of the natural world, miracles, and the reliability of the gospel.¹¹⁵ Bonnet

¹¹³ Davids, 'Tussen Smith en Schoonhoven', 230.

¹¹⁴ Catalogus, 60, Van Nooten, 'voorreden', in Charles Bonnet, *Philosophische Navorschingen van de bewyzen voor het Christendom* (Den Haag 1771), xi-xiii.

¹¹⁵ Bonnet, *Philosophische Navorschingen*, 42-65, 100-103, 163-170.

also discussed the relation between religion and the political order, since he opposed the idea that the Christian doctrine was not beneficial for 'the fatherland'.¹¹⁶

Van Nooten did not comment on all these matters. He restricted himself to brief remarks which were often meant as a clarification for the Dutch reader who was unfamiliar with some of Bonnet's cultural, geographic, and intellectual reference points.¹¹⁷ The short introduction of Van Nooten made clear he translated Bonnet's book because he was worried about the theological ideas of deists. Van Nooten argued he had the highest respects for deists, partly because they simply were members of society and partly because deists were self-declared enemies of prejudice and proponents of truth and philosophy. At the same time he thought deists had their own prejudices, because they thought that Christianity was founded on prejudices. According to them, the Bible was not a divine book, the teaching of the Bible was composed of fanaticism, delusions, and stupidity. They also claimed that the Bible was made by feeble minds.¹¹⁸ According to Van Nooten the deists had investigated the subject matter in an imperfect and dishonest way. They had scrutinized the Christian faith in search for the truth, but were actually afraid to find it. Van Nooten believed that man was created for eternity and that the Christian expectations about the afterlife were derived from that belief. These expectations Van Nooten held for 'certain'. Deists believed in the immortality of the soul as well. This belief, however, did not lead them to concerns about their own souls. Consequently, Van Nooten invited them to look carefully to the arguments upholding the Christian faith by reading Bonnet's book. On the one hand Van Nooten pointed to arguments supporting the Christian faith, but on the other hand seemed to contradict his argument by referring to the limited human capacity to think. Consequently, there were reasonable arguments that supported the Christian faith, but human beings had a limited capacity to think, which should lead them to recognize God as their master.¹¹⁹

To summarize, Van Nooten seemed to be mainly concerned by challenges to Christianity. His introduction in *Philosophische Navorschingen* is all the available evidence about the issues which fascinated Van Nooten between the early 1770's until 1778, when he published a speech. Van Nooten was a founding member of the local department of *De Oekonomische Tak* in Schoonhoven and he gave a speech on that occasion on November 25, 1778. That speech was published in that same year. In this speech he related the prosperity of the 'fatherland' to the morals of its inhabitants. There had been many nations that had

¹¹⁶ Bonnet, *Philosophische Navorschingen*, 283-299.

¹¹⁷ Van Nooten in, Bonnet, *Philosophische Navorschingen*, 25-28, 54, 56, 211, 212, 329.

¹¹⁸ Van Nooten, 'Voorreeden', in Bonnet, *Philosophische Navorschingen*, vi-vii.

¹¹⁹ Idem, vii-x.

become powerful and prosperous, but went into decline after a period of flourishing.¹²⁰ During the first stage a nation became successful. At that point its population still respected values like simplicity, honesty, and sincerity. These values led to uncomplicated practices, like agriculture and honest industry and trade. Second, the parents communicated their values to their children. Meanwhile, the government made efforts to create proper laws which could uphold the institutional structure.¹²¹ During the first stage, the combination of virtue, laws, and hard works payed off and increased the welfare of the state and its citizens. As long as the tastes and customs of the state's founders were respected this success would last.¹²²

The success of a society was built both on the respect for the old values and on the absence of destructive values like excess, luxury, and foreign manners.¹²³ Foreign splendour and pride formed a threat for the old simplicity and honesty in a few different ways. Foreign trade, brought prosperity and foreign products, but also introduced 'foreign morals' conflicting with the old values. Second, foreign morals were also brought to a state by foreign people, attracted by its prosperity. Third, children from prosperous merchants often were sent abroad to explore new cultures and to learn about trade, but these young people returned with corrupt manners.¹²⁴

The state and its civility reach now its finest point. It has an abundant number of philosophers among its inhabitants, great architecture enriches the cities, foreign food is introduced, and even more foreigners are attracted to the riches of the cities.¹²⁵ These phenomena displace more and more the old domestic values and habits. Old simplicity disappears and everyone becomes a citizen of the world. But once the old values are exchanged for new ones an abundance of civilization emerges. All these philosophers, debauchery, foreign manners, luxury, and arts lead to the decline of agriculture, trade, seafaring and manufacturing. However, people are accustomed to a high level of consumption, although there is not enough wealth to sustain this level. The value of money decreases by inflation, while the willingness to work disappears.¹²⁶ In the end the old welfare and prosperity is gone and the once prosperous state becomes a victim for its enemies.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Dirk Hoola van Nooten, *Aanspraak aan het Departement van den oeconomischen tak te Schoonhoven* (Gouda 1778), 3-7.

¹²¹ *Idem*, 7-8.

¹²² *Idem*, 7-10.

¹²³ *Idem*, 8.

¹²⁴ *Idem*, 10-11.

¹²⁵ *Idem*, 11-12.

¹²⁶ *Idem*, 12-15.

¹²⁷ *Idem*, 16.

Van Nooten made therefore a general statement when he argued that the taste for new and strange things and the phenomenon of the so-called civilization announced the imminent collapse of a society.¹²⁸ The moment barbarity made way for the 'golden age' of arts and sciences, it brought luxury and excess. The state went into decline by foreign habits.¹²⁹ This cycle was repeated in ancient history time and again. The people from Babylon, the Persians, the empire of Alexander the Great and the triumph of Rome were long gone, but all of them prospered for a certain period.¹³⁰ Especially the Greeks proved to be a case in point. As 'barbarians' the Athenians were able to defeat their enemies in the battles of Marathon and Salamis. Athens flourished after these battles and Pericles attempted to refine the manners of the Athenians by introducing civilization, arts, and sciences, which softened their morals.¹³¹ Athens' civilization produced many great minds, like Herodotus, Euripides, Sophocles, Socrates, Demosthenes and Hippocrates, but also military defeats during the Peloponnesian wars and during the battles against the uncivilised Macedonians.¹³²

The Romans were successful due to the fact they had capable generals and statesmen, hardworking people, and good laws, but no arts, sciences, learned men or so called civility.¹³³ The success of the romans was based on virtue and simplicity. All citizens contributed to the state and every farmer was a good soldier. The farmer Cincinnatus was a leading example since he became general of the Roman army and defeated the enemies of the romans, only to return to his former profession.¹³⁴ The very same 'spirit' was the reason the romans were able to defeat Carthage. When Scipio had defeated the city and asked the Roman senate what he had to do with the libraries of Carthage, the Senate answered only to keep a few books on agriculture.¹³⁵ After defeating Carthage Rome had no military enemies, but this did not lead to a safe situation, since they became their own enemies. Once the romans were able to unmask thinkers like Carneades, but later they went into decline due to an overdose of civility, arts, and sciences. This process began during the Roman-Seleucid war (192-188 BC), when the romans adopted elements of the Asian way of living.¹³⁶ This process led to a Roman 'golden age', as was proved by Cicero, Livy, Salust, Virgil and Horace. Unfortunately, the 'golden age' led to the disappearance of the old morals and to the decline

¹²⁸ Hoola van Nooten, *Aanspraak*, 16.

¹²⁹ Idem, 17.

¹³⁰ Idem, 7.

¹³¹ Idem, 18-19.

¹³² Idem, 20.

¹³³ Idem, 20.

¹³⁴ Idem, 21.

¹³⁵ Idem, 23.

¹³⁶ Idem, 24.

of the Roman state. Van Nooten did not describe this period of decline. He did not describe how this process of decline actually took place.¹³⁷

Van Nooten showed himself a critic of civility, although he was quick to stress that art and sciences were important.¹³⁸ So, on the one hand civility at first led to a 'golden age', but later it caused the decline of a state. Civility could be seen as an indispensable aspect of a society, but its emergence formed a point in the circle of rise and decline where the state went into decline. This cycle repeated itself continually, also in contemporary times. According to Van Nooten the Dutch Republic was already affected by foreign taste and manners. Decline had already started in different sectors of the economy, like agriculture, trade, manufacturing, and seafaring, but there was hope, since the old domestic values were restored, amid all the problems. The Dutch put their trust in values which were true, necessary and essential.¹³⁹ The solution came from *De Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* and the essays of Rogge, Van den Heuvel, and Zillessen. Van Nooten did not comment on the propositions of these authors. Solutions were not easy, since the whole country had to cooperate to find a solution for the economic problems of the Republic. Van Nooten hoped that the *Oekonomische Tak* would contribute to solutions for the problems faced by agriculture, trade, production, and seafaring. Unity and the absence of private interests were the most important conditions to make this happen.¹⁴⁰ Van Nooten hoped that the fatherland, with the help of God, would flourish again. The dedication of merchants, farmers, and craftsmen would contribute to the start of a new period of commercial success. The old wealth and prosperity would be restored.¹⁴¹

For several reasons Van Nooten's speech was odd and surprising. First there was an imminent and immense sense of decline present in his speech, which is further enhanced by the analogies with the classical past. This analogy, however, is not taken to its logical conclusion. The decline of the Greek city states and the Roman Republic had been caused by an overdose of civilization, but Van Nooten did not elaborate on the ultimate effect of civility on Dutch society. He mixed up a number of contradicting statements with a few equally contradictory observations. Van Nooten argued that civilization inevitably led to decline, but also stated that civility was indispensable. He observed that civility already had destructive effects on the Dutch and that some hard work was already done to prevent decline, while he

¹³⁷ Hoola van Nooten, *Aanspraak*, 25.

¹³⁸ *Idem*, 27.

¹³⁹ *Idem*, 28-29.

¹⁴⁰ *Idem*, 29-32.

¹⁴¹ *Idem*, 33.

did not seem to know how decline could be prevented. There is as much hope as pessimism in Van Nooten's speech. Moreover, from his speech it is not clear what the most important problem of the Dutch Republic actually was. Van Nooten hints both at the economic structure and certain moral tastes. This balance would shift in his later writings.

A few years later he delivered another speech at a meeting of the local department of *De Oeconomische Tak*. On 1781, December 28 he argued that merit was essential in a civil state. Merit, or actually achievements, should be encouraged by prestige, praise, and reward.¹⁴² This speech was largely a continuation of the speech from 1778, although the focus and accents were shifted. We can only speculate whether this speech is a display of all his thoughts and ideas at that moment. Possibly this was not the case, since we should make a distinction between the ideas of a person and the occasion of speaking.¹⁴³ The speech of 1781 also deals with imminent decline. Van Nooten makes suggestions about the negative effects of civility, but there is also attention for solutions to moral problems, since Van Nooten explained how the essential combination of the civil state, ruler and citizen should function.

Van Nooten admitted that the Dutch Republic faced serious problems. He called the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War 'harmful and unfair', besides that it had an extremely negative effect on trade and commerce.¹⁴⁴ As a consequence of many disasters, the prosperity of the Republic was under threat.¹⁴⁵ In this speech Van Nooten had more attention for possible solutions compared with his previous speech, where he mainly lamented about how overdose of civility and the influence of foreign tastes threatened the 'fatherland'. In the first speech Van Nooten mainly stressed the moral roots of the economic problems. He said almost nothing about solutions.¹⁴⁶ In the second speech this balance was reversed, since Van Nooten barely explicated the problems of the Republic, besides referring to 'disasters' and the consequences of war. Instead he argued at length about a moral program that both citizens and rulers should follow.

He mentioned that every person depends on other people in order to live well. Van Nooten argued there was a difference of living in an 'unsociable way' and living in a civil society. The unsociable way of living excluded mankind from a number of needs. Moreover, in the solitary way of living an individual can only meet another person as an enemy. Here

¹⁴² Dirk Hoola van Nooten, *Redevoering ten betooge Dat het voor eene Burgermaatschappij van het gewichtigste belang zij, dat waar verdiensten door aanzien, door aanprijnsingen, en door belooningen, bij het volk eerwaardig gemaakt worden.* (Gouda 1782), 1.

¹⁴³ Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early modern England* (Cambridge 2006), 1-35.

¹⁴⁴ Van Nooten, *Redevoering*, 41.

¹⁴⁵ Idem, 42, 46.

¹⁴⁶ Hoola van Nooten, *Aanspraak*, 32.

Van Nooten seems to hint on Hobbes' famous idea that a man living in the state of nature only had enemies (*homo homini lupus*). Man was a wolf to a man, instead of a god, like Spinoza would later argue (*homo homini deus*).¹⁴⁷ Life in a civil society was a pleasant affair, since it enabled individuals to act generously and help his fellows. Besides he could add to the common wellbeing, without ceasing to pursue his own true interests. According to Van Nooten, the pursuit of private interests was not opposed to the common interest, because true happiness was only possible when one acted in the interest of society.¹⁴⁸

Van Nooten argued that everybody should act in the interest of society. This maxim was equally applied to ruler and citizens. The ruler should act according to his conscience and in the interest of the citizens, but citizens had the duty to act justly.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, every citizen could contribute to the general wellbeing. The theologian by preaching according to the right doctrine, a lawyer by assisting the helpless, a physician by healing the sick, soldiers by fighting heroically, and the merchant helped his fellow citizens by creating wealth.¹⁵⁰ This 'society of mutual benefit' was partly realised by the establishment of laws which prevented that everybody did whatever they want.¹⁵¹ But this warrant was not enough. There was still a gap between what the law prescribed and true virtue. The driving force which closed this gap was 'ambition' or 'merit'.¹⁵² Virtue was its own reward, but it was still helpful that deeds and achievement were publicly recognised in three different ways, namely by prestige, praise and rewards. Prestige was automatically connected with good deeds, but it was the task of the government and theologians to praise those who truly contributed to the common wellbeing. It was the duty of the government to honour good people by giving them praise and rewards.¹⁵³ Van Nooten finished his speech with the urge to his audience to spend their time to support the fatherland.¹⁵⁴

There are several surprising aspects to this second speech of Van Nooten. He did not make a single remark about foreign tastes or luxury as a sort of national disease. He ceased to consider civility as a disease, since he praised the efforts of great men of science like Isaac Newton and Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, who were able to do great things, thanks to the civil state. The same applied to Wolff, Leibnitz, Mosheim and Gellert.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷ Van Nooten, *Redevoering*, 46.

¹⁴⁸ *Idem*, 2, 4-5, 14.

¹⁴⁹ *Idem*, 7-11.

¹⁵⁰ *Idem*, 16-19.

¹⁵¹ This concept is derived from Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA, 2007), 168.

¹⁵² Van Nooten, *Redevoering*, 24, 28, 42.

¹⁵³ *Idem*, 23, 30-34, 37.

¹⁵⁴ *Idem*, 46.

¹⁵⁵ *Idem*, 5, 6.

His lamentations about the moral corruption of the Dutch would not return in his later translations and writings. However, he would elaborate on the role of the state, which was an important topic in the second speech. In this speech he stressed the fact that rulers should act virtuously, like the citizens. Second, he pointed to the role of the state by praising and rewarding those who acted in the interest of society. In his later writings he would continuously stress the important role of the state, but he would shift the focus from encouraging civil deeds to addressing the economics problems he had mentioned in the first speech, like problems with trade, manufacturing, and agriculture. At this stage of his career as a thinker and writer his concern was no longer the citizen but the state. He switched from the morality of the citizen to statecraft. This may be an exaggeration, since this shift was perhaps just a shift of the occasion of speaking. As noted earlier, learned societies were not allowed to discuss public matters. It could be the case that a speech, held at a meeting of such a society, was inevitably not about the state. And it could equally be the case that it was more proper to speak about citizenship than about the state, when one is speaking at a meeting where mainly citizens were attending.

These objections are maybe justified, but there still seems to be a choice for the 'occasion of speaking'. Van Nooten seemed to have chosen for the translation of a number of books which addressed statecraft. He referred to *De Oeconomische Tak* a number of times. But there is no evidence for his active involvement in *De Tak* after 1781. Van Nooten seemed to have changed his mind. Therefore we shall now turn now to the history of the translations he wrote.

--Commercial statecraft--

Van Nooten seemed to be in search for a manual for statecraft in his translation of works written by Condillac, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith. On March 15, 1782, he finished his translation of a work of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, a French cleric, philosopher, and economist, who became famous for his writings about epistemology. He published *Le Commerce et le Gouvernement* in 1776, the same year as Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was printed for the first time. In the introduction Condillac divided his work in three parts. The first offered basic notions about commerce and an interpretations of the principles of economic science. Condillac announced to write about the interaction between commerce and government in the second part. The third part would consider a number of events.¹⁵⁶ In the original French edition there was no third part. Van Nooten duly translated Condillac's

¹⁵⁶ Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Le Commerce et le Gouvernement* (Paris 1776), iii.

introduction and announced in the Dutch edition a third part which was not there.

Van Nooten made clear he considered Condillac's work on the relation between commerce and state as a book useful for statesmen. He wrote that every person involved in government affairs should have elementary knowledge about commercial affairs. He argued that teachers in public education should instruct their pupils about these topics as well, since it was essential knowledge. Moreover, it was difficult to learn about commerce at a later age.¹⁵⁷ Besides, Van Nooten made clear that knowledge about commercial statecraft was essential since the welfare of the Republic went into decline. The commercial success of trade and manufacturing was decreasing. According to Van Nooten, it was time to prevent the total collapse of Dutch commercial success. The restoration of the commercial success of the past he deemed impossible.¹⁵⁸

After completing the translation of Condillac Van Nooten turned to another great French writer, namely Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu. By the time Van Nooten began to read and translate his work, Montesquieu had already died a few decades ago. Montesquieu died on February 10, 1755 as a well-known political thinker and as the author of one of the bestsellers of eighteenth century, *De L'Esprit des Lois*. His work was read in Europe and in the New World as well, although the Catholic Church had placed his work on the *Index*.¹⁵⁹ Montesquieu's work was read in the Republic, first in its French original, but two Dutch translations followed as well. Six French editions were published in the Dutch Republic between 1748 and 1775. These were partly intended for foreign readers, but a part was intended for the domestic market, since a few periodicals reported about the *De L'Esprit des Lois*, like the *Boekzaal der Geleerde Waerelt*.¹⁶⁰ The first Dutch translation appeared in print between 1771 and 1773 and was written by an anonymous translator, although the publisher and writer of a number of footnotes in this edition was a well-known figure, namely the bookseller, lawyer, and prolific publicist Elie Luzac (1721-1796). He already had written a French commentary on a French edition of 1757.

The second Dutch translation of Montesquieu's *De L'Esprit des Lois* was published by Van Nooten in ten separate volumes, instead of one or a few volumes, especially for reasons of typography and the numerous remarks from the hand of Nooten and Luzac, whose comments from the first edition were included as contributions from an anonymous

¹⁵⁷ Van Nooten, 'Voorrede' in Condillac, *KS* (Utrecht 1782), iv, vii.

¹⁵⁸ *Idem*, v-vi.

¹⁵⁹ Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 828-830, 839.

¹⁶⁰ Velema, 'Republican Readings of Montesquieu: "The *Esprit des Lois*" in the Dutch Republic', in *Idem*, *Republicans*, 94-96.

annotator. The text of *De L'Esprit des Lois* with additional comments from Luzac and Van Nooten was published in eight volumes in 1783, 1784, and 1785, while a ninth volume included a number of texts, like a defence of the book written by Montesquieu, two texts from the hand of D'Alembert about *De L'Esprit des Lois*, and a speech presumably written by Voltaire. The register constituted the last and tenth volume, published in 1787.¹⁶¹

The reception of the work of Montesquieu in the Dutch Republic has received some attention from historians. For example, Fockema Andreae wrote in 1949 that Van Nooten's comments on Montesquieu were 'as faithful as insignificant'.¹⁶² Although Van Nooten indeed was not the radical or innovative thinker Fockema Andreae might be looking for, this designation is far from a fair attempt to understand why Van Nooten translated Montesquieu's *De L'Esprit des Lois* and why he made remarks about commerce. Wyger Velema described the interpretation of Montesquieu by Luzac and Hoola van Nooten, but he concentrated on Luzac's use of Montesquieu's typology of state forms and Van Nooten's critique on Montesquieu's ideas about commerce.¹⁶³ The latter are certainly interesting, since Van Nooten had a great interest in the influence of commerce on statecraft. Therefore this critique on Montesquieu should be considered in the context of Van Nooten's other ideas. A systematic inquiry into the relation of Van Nooten's assessment of the situation of the Republic, economic ideas, and the translation of Montesquieu is still missing.¹⁶⁴

In the footnotes included in his translation of *De L'Esprit des lois* Van Nooten took position, which he failed to do a few years earlier, in his translation of Condillac's work on

¹⁶¹ There is a small difference between Montesquieu's division of *De l'Esprit des lois* and Van Nooten's translation, because Van Nooten published his translation in eight parts, which forced him to change Montesquieu's division. Montesquieu divided his 31 books in a total of six parts, where Van Nooten used eight parts for the total of 31 books in eight parts. I will follow Montesquieu's subdivision when I refer to his ideas, so to part, book, chapter, and page, for example 1.1.1, [3], while I will follow Van Nooten's subdivision when I refer to his comments and ideas, for example I.II.1.1, 1. Here I.II refers to 'volume', while 1.1 refers to 'book' and 'chapter', while the number between brackets refers to page number.

Since the references to 'book' and 'chapter' are identical in the French original and the Dutch translation of Van Nooten, the reader who wants to compare the French and Dutch texts can simply ignore the reference to 'part' or 'volume' and use the reference to book, chapter, and page as a guide, while the reference to 'volume' will be helpful for those who want to read the Dutch text.

The subdivision of Hoola van Nooten's translation of *De L'Esprit des lois*, including the years in which every volume was published: part I.I (book 1-5, 1783), part I.II (book 6-9, 1784), part I.III (book 10-12, 1784), part II.I (book 13-18, 1784), part II.II (book 19-22, 1785), part III.I (book 23-27, 1785), part III.II (book 28-29, 1785), part IV.I (book 30-31, 1785), part IV.II (additional texts, 1786), part V (register, 1787). Montesquieu's original subdivision: part 1 (book 1-5), part 2 (book 9-13), part 3 (book 14-19), part 4 (book 20-23), book 5 (book 24-26), and book 6 (27-31).

¹⁶² S.J. Fockema Andreae, 'Montesquieu en Nederland', *De Gids* 112 (1949), 180.

¹⁶³ Velema, 'Republican Readings', 99-107.

¹⁶⁴ Haitsma Mulier, 'Between Humanism and Enlightenment', 184-6.

commerce and the state. He mainly criticised Montesquieu's ideas on commerce.¹⁶⁵ He remarked, for example, that Montesquieu had failed to grasp the relation between, on the one hand, welfare, trade, and luxury, and the conservation of the state on the other hand.¹⁶⁶ He also referred to his translation of Condillac at several occasions.¹⁶⁷ Besides, he wrote length comments about taxation. Moreover, he abandoned the theme of moral decline altogether by stating that trade with foreign countries was not harmful for the moral situation of the Republic. He argued that laws and monopolies caused great disadvantages for society, instead of an overdose of civilization. Monopolies and wrong laws resulted in a situation where some persons were very wealthy, but most of the people were very poor.¹⁶⁸ At the same time he defended the protection of domestic industries, because without such measures these factories could not compete with foreign competitors.¹⁶⁹

So, Van Nooten seemed to be in search for ideas about statecraft and solutions for the economic and political problems of the Republic. It seemed that Van Nooten was, like in his previous translation, in search for a guide for statecraft. He read Montesquieu's book as a guide of how states worked and how they should operate. Van Nooten showed no sense of the difficult circumstances in which Montesquieu wrote his works. Paul Rahe, for example, wrote how Montesquieu acted more sensible than Voltaire when he published his *Lettres persanes* in 1721, at a time censorship was moderate, while Voltaire came into trouble when he made his *Lettres philosophiques* known ten years later. Around that time, Montesquieu intended to publish three essays in one volume, namely *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence*, *Réflexions sur la monarchie universelle en Europe*, and an essay about politics in England. Voltaire came into trouble after the publication of his *Lettres philosophiques*, which worried Montesquieu. He abandoned his original plan. The first essay was published on its own, the second went to his personal archives, while the draft of the third essay was transformed and much later included as the sixth chapter of book 11 of *De l'Esprit des lois*. If published combined, these essays would have been interpreted as a critical examination of the roman political model, a critique of the French version of universal monarchy, and an appraisal of the English political system.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ For Montesquieu's thoughts about the Dutch fiscal policy, see Edouard Levillain, 'Glory without power? Montesquieu's trip to Holland in 1729 and his vision of the Dutch fiscal-military state', *History of European Ideas* 36 (2010), 181-191.

¹⁶⁶ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I. 3.3, [75-76].

¹⁶⁷ Idem, I.I. 4.7, [125], I.II., 7.2, [298], II.I, 13.7 [31], II.II, 20.1, [333], 20.4, [343].

¹⁶⁸ Idem, II.II, 10,1, [333].

¹⁶⁹ Nijenhuis, 'For the Sake of the Republic'. 14.

¹⁷⁰ Rahe, *Soft Despotism*, 4-5.

Such subtleties in Montesquieu's ideas were 'lost in translation'. Hoola van Nooten was a careful and reliable translator of the text written by Montesquieu, but he seemed to be unaware of any dissimulation in Montesquieu's work. In his opinion Montesquieu presented his thoughts on taxes, republics, and commerce straight away. He seemed to have seen Montesquieu's work as an elaboration of the themes discussed by Condillac in his work on the relation between commerce and government, although Montesquieu's focus in *De L'Esprit des lois* was not on commerce. Nevertheless, Hoola van Nooten used the footnotes of the pages of *De Geest der Wetten* to discuss the economic problems of the Republic. He attempted to conceptualise and clarify the economic problems the Republic faced during the 1770's and 1780's. Van Nooten especially elaborated on the problems connected with imports and exports. According to him the 'jealousy' of England was the problem. Van Nooten offered both a description of the situation and a plan to solve the problem with England in order to restore the wealth of the Dutch. He offered a blueprint for an economic model the Dutch should adopt. The government had a major role to fulfil in this blueprint. Van Nooten elaborated on the theme of commercial statecraft in his translation of Condillac's book on commerce and Montesquieu's work about the spirit of the laws. Van Nooten conceptualised the international relations as a commercial war between states, that had no obligations towards each other. There was a constant war between states. Therefore every state had to do all they could to compete in this market. He described his idea about commercial warfare between states extensively in his translation of Montesquieu's and Condillac's work.

Van Nooten returned to the themes of state and commerce in 1796, when he published the first part of his translation of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. He praised the 'economic model' described by Smith, while simultaneously abandoning his idea of commercial statecraft.¹⁷¹ He argued that all nations needed each other and could profit when they all took part in a world market. Previous theorists of statecraft failed to grasp this essential insight.¹⁷² He argued for very limited involvement of the state in commercial affairs. States had to show restraint since they often tried to regulate matters outside their control. They attempted to regulate the allocation of workers, to keep workers at a certain place or to determine prices. Such interventions could only be successful when states possessed knowledge which they could not possibly have.¹⁷³ Van Nooten argued for a real market in which real competition could take place, unimpeded by laws imposed by states.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Van Nooten in, Smith, *RV*, 42.

¹⁷² Van Nooten, 'Voorrede', in Smith, *RV*, xxxviii-xl.

¹⁷³ Idem, xlv, xlvi.

¹⁷⁴ Idem, xlvii.

Unfortunately Van Nooten and his publisher failed to publish a complete Dutch edition of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, because of a conflict between two publishers. They debated about who possessed the right to publish a translation of the *Wealth of Nations*.¹⁷⁵

--The civil state--

Hoola van Nooten elaborated on his idea of commercial statecraft in both the introductions and the comments he included in *De Koophandel en het Staatsbestuur* en *De Geest der Wetten*. He described how states should keep themselves far from any involvement in commercial matters in *De Rijkdom der Volkeren*. Somewhere between 1785 and 1796 Van Nooten changed his mind drastically about the relation between state and commerce. His idea of the civil state did not change during that period. Van Nooten's idea of the state with was based on natural law. He published several books on this topic in the 1790's. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the publication history of these books. The next chapter will deal with the structure of Van Nooten's ideas on the state, while the development of his ideas on commercial statecraft will be described in the fourth chapter.

In all of Van Nooten's writings from 1778 onwards the idea of the civil state was present. This concept became the central topic in his books on natural law. Before 1789 the idea of the civil state was only a point of departure for Van Nooten. He probably viewed it as an intellectually interesting, but common sense idea. During the French revolution, however, the idea of the civil state was challenged. Therefore, Van Nooten wrote a few extensive books about the concepts of natural law, natural state, and the civil state.

Hoola van Nooten published the first part of an introduction in jurisprudence in 1793. He wrote this book for ordinary citizens. The aim of his book was to explain the foundations of Dutch law to such extend that a citizen would obtain enough knowledge to fulfil all his duties in Dutch society.¹⁷⁶ He limited himself to civil law and did not discuss public law and criminal law. Van Nooten made a distinction between three aspects of civil law. First, he wanted to describe the rights of persons, second the obligations of persons, while the third dealt with legal actions in a state.¹⁷⁷ Van Nooten intended to use four separate books to elaborate on these topics. The first book should explain the rights of persons, the second and third had to discuss the obligations of citizens, while the fourth had to set out the juridical side of legal actions.¹⁷⁸ Van Nooten published the first of these four books, in three parts, in

¹⁷⁵ Karel Davids, 'Tussen Smith en Schoonhoven', 227.

¹⁷⁶ Dirk Hoola van Nooten, *VR*, I.I, 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Idem*, I.I, 118.

¹⁷⁸ Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I, 120.

1793. He failed to publish the other two books.

The topics of these books on civil law seem to be far from dealing with natural law, but Van Nooten was both a lawyer and a theorist of law, or, at least, someone genuinely interested in the intellectual foundations of law. His discussion of civil law presumed a strict distinction between the law of nature and law in a civil state. In other words, he discriminated between a natural state without laws and a situation in which mankind had entered a civil state. This central hypothesis formed the point of departure for Van Nooten's discussion of civil law. His general opinions about government, civil law, and natural law became central points of discussion in his books, despite the fact that he wanted to limit himself to civil law. Van Nooten discussed a number abstract topics, because he constantly defined and demarcated his topic. He elaborated on what law actually was, how law was created, what its sources were, and finally the legitimacy of law.

The main point Van Nooten wanted to make in these three books was that a civil state was legitimate and that there was actually no ground for resistance or civil disobedience. There was a fixed relation between ruler and ruled. There was no way to undermine this order. That this idea was at stake in the writings of Van Nooten became even more clear in another writing, published in 1793, namely *De Rechten van den Mensch, een Volksboek*. This work was, much like the series about Dutch law, a textbook which included an account of both civil and natural law, which was strongly connected with part one of book one of *Vaderlandsche rechten*. This book dealt even more explicitly with the legitimation of the civil state and was noticed by a contemporary author. An anonymous author, who considered himself as a disciple of Thomas Paine, argued that Van Nooten was mistaken in his views. He argued that the legitimacy of the state was based on the opinions of the majority of the population. This view had some deficiencies as well, but this author hit the mark by arguing that Van Nooten's defence of the legitimation of the state offered few options to correct wrongs within the state or government.

In order to understand more clearly what this anonymous author was referring to, we have to go to the foundations of Van Nooten's political ideas, which can be found in his speeches of 1778 and 1781, which were explained and described in his translations of Condillac and Montesquieu, and discussed in his writings about law. Van Nooten had a clear view about the origin of the state. He explained how states ought to function and how they functioned. Moreover, these views had implications for his view about the relations between states. To understand the relation between states, it will be necessary to examine these ideas carefully in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

-- From the state of nature to the battle between states --

--Introduction--

The 'civil state' is one of the central concepts of Van Nooten's work. It was already mentioned in the second speech he delivered at a meeting of the *Oekonomische Tak*. In the 'Aanspraak' from 1778, Van Nooten remarked that mankind had organised itself in 'societies' a long time ago.¹⁷⁹ He went no further than this obligatory and general remark in this speech, but in the speech from 1781 he used the concept of 'civil society'.¹⁸⁰ He made a distinction between a solitary life and life in the company of others (*gezelligheid*). The first form of living was not preferable, which was already described in the Bible, since God made a wife for Adam when he lived in alone in the Garden of Eden. Van Nooten argued that the interests and needs of persons lead them to live together in a community of mutual assistance. They could exchange goods and profit from the skills of other people in such a community.¹⁸¹ The legitimacy of the civil state was therefore to create a situation in which the true interests of individuals could be accomplished, while the common good was respected as well.¹⁸²

After briefly stating this idea, the rest of Van Nooten's speech is used as a further elaboration on this ideal situation in which private and shared interests went hand in hand.¹⁸³ Van Nooten elaborated on the necessity of virtue as a complement to the domestic laws.¹⁸⁴ Each citizen could contribute to the fatherland by doing a decent job. People from every class and every position could do something for the fatherland.¹⁸⁵ It was clear Van Nooten was in favour of the civil state, but he did not contrast this idea with an alternative situation. In his later writings and translations he introduced his idea of the state of nature, although he wrote nothing about the civil state in the introduction or notes included in

¹⁷⁹ Van Nooten, 'Aanspraak', 6.

¹⁸⁰ The Dutch expression is 'burgermaatschappij'.

¹⁸¹ Van Nooten, 'Redevoering', 3-4.

¹⁸² *Idem*, 4-5.

¹⁸³ *Idem*, 22.

¹⁸⁴ *Idem*, 29.

¹⁸⁵ *Idem*, 22.

Condillac's *De koophandel en het Staatsbestuur*. It was only in the notes of *De Geest der Wetten* when he elaborated on the distinction between state of nature and the civil state.

--The state of nature--

From the perspective of Van Nooten's remarks in *De Geest der Wetten* his two speeches delivered at the *Oekonomische Tak* and his remarks in the translation of Condillac's book on commerce and the state had a small focus and lacked a broader vision of state and society. Montesquieu's *De L'Esprit des lois* seemed to have been an example for Van Nooten, since it included philosophical reflections on law and remarks about 'practical' matters like taxation and everything in between. Nevertheless, Van Nooten disagreed with Montesquieu on many occasions. Although the introduction Van Nooten wrote in *De Geest der Wetten* had very little to offer, the third chapter of the first book already included a lengthy note from the translator in which he explained the fundamentals of statecraft.

For Van Nooten the first sentences of chapter three of the first book of *De L'Esprit des Lois* were crucial. This passage probably led him to develop his own ideas. Montesquieu wrote: 'As soon as men are in society, they lose their feeling of weakness; the equality that was among them ceases, and the state of war begins. Each particular society comes to feel its strength, producing a state of war among nations. The individuals within each society begin to feel their strength; they seek to turn their favour the principal advantages of this society, which brings about a state of war among them. These two sorts of states of war bring about the establishment of laws among them'.¹⁸⁶ This short passage deals both with war among individuals and war among states. In other words, it described war within states and between states. According to Luzac, this passage was all too similar to 'Hobbesianismus', despite the fact that Montesquieu wrote that the war between men began after forming societies, but before the establishment of the state. Van Nooten argued that Montesquieu had derived the establishment of society from human nature, while he wanted to derive the idea of society from the original intention of forming such societies.

Van Nooten described a situation which he called 'state of nature' to accomplish this goal. Van Nooten did not refer to Hobbes' description of the state of nature in *Leviathan* or to Montesquieu's discussion of Hobbes in the first two chapters of book one of *De L'Esprit des Lois*. Mankind lived very miserably and was in need of everything in the state of nature.¹⁸⁷ Before living in society, a man was indeed equal to every other man, since there were no ranks, governments, or servants. Everyone was on his or her own. No one had the power to

¹⁸⁶ Montesquieu, *SL*, 1.1.3, [7].

¹⁸⁷ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1.3, [19-20].

force other individuals to do anything. There were no rights, except the right of nature, which meant that everyone had a right to safety and a duty to protect the safety of others as well. Besides this right to safety there existed a right to have property by usurping certain goods and a right to abandon property. There was a corresponding duty since everyone had the duty to respect the property of others. Third, there was a duty to acknowledge God as the creator and benefactor of mankind.¹⁸⁸ The natural state of men was characterised by equality, independence and freedom, since everyone had equal rights to safety and property. Each person had the right to act freely, only limited by the rights of others.¹⁸⁹

Van Nooten did not make clear how these rights were protected or ensured. In a footnote in *De Geest der Wetten* he made the distinction between 'perfect' and 'moral' rights and duties. He argued 'perfect' rights could be enforced, while 'moral' rights were up to the conscience of the private citizen.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, he argued that the rights to safety and protection of property in the state of nature were 'perfect' rights. Van Nooten was not very clear, since he did not explain how the natural rights were enforced.¹⁹¹ A decade later, when he published *Rechten van den Mensch*, he admitted that these natural rights could not be enforced. He only stated that nobody had the right to take someone's property, but nothing prevented him from doing so, since there was no law or authority. For this reason Van Nooten added another right, namely the right to self-protection, which he did not mention in his previous writings.¹⁹²

The natural right to safety did not guarantee actual safety. Van Nooten's natural rights could be seen as general moral principles without any mandatory power in the state of nature. This finding formed the first motive for human beings to abandon the independence and equality of the state of nature. Most persons dealt constantly with other persons and also wanted to live with other people. However, life was unpleasant because the original freedom, independence, and equality in the state of nature were obscured by the constant uncertainty if their natural rights would be respected by others.¹⁹³ So, a combination of the fear for infringements of rights by others and the wish to live with others forced mankind to consider the state of nature as inept. In other words, fear and sociability led to the conclusion that a different order was necessary. A third reason was the fact that humans were not able

¹⁸⁸ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1.3, [24-25]. Van Nooten, *RMV*, 27, 31, 35-36.

¹⁸⁹ Van Nooten, *RMV*, 40-43, 64, 65.

¹⁹⁰ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1.3, [24-26].

¹⁹¹ *Idem*, I.I, 1.3, [26].

¹⁹² Van Nooten, *RVM*, 45-46, 48-49.

¹⁹³ *Idem*, 45-49.

to live independently. The natural dependence of a child was the proof for this statement.¹⁹⁴ A fourth reason was the aspiration to happiness.

These reasons explained why a life in a civil state would be better than life in a natural state. Mankind chose to live in societies to obtain happiness. Consequently, all members of societies had one goal, namely to contribute to the common good, while renouncing private interest when these conflicted with the common good.¹⁹⁵ Van Nooten demonstrated he was a poor reader of Montesquieu's work, because he claimed that Montesquieu had written that men automatically worked for the common good once they lived in society. He completely neglected Montesquieu's remarks about men's desire to live in society.¹⁹⁶

--The establishment of the state--

Fear, sociability, and the natural dependence of mankind formed the three motifs to establish a society and government. In Aristotelian terms (which were unused by Van Nooten) these motifs were the final cause of the establishment of societies and governments. The state of nature did not fit with human fear, sociability and natural dependence. The different aspects of the establishment of society can be described by the three remaining causes of Aristotle. First, there is the formal cause of an actual agreement between people founding a society. According to Van Nooten the people are the efficient cause, because they create a society. Third, the material cause can be described as the content of the agreement or contract.

Van Nooten described the formal transformation from the state of nature into a civil state by using the legal concept of 'contract'. In *Rechten van den Mensch* he wrote that there existed no commitments in the state of nature. A mutual agreement between two persons could lead to a commitment. After such an agreement both have a duty to commit to the agreement and therefore a right with regard to the other person as well.¹⁹⁷ It was the nature of every agreement to reduce the freedom of a person. A commitment led to a duty and therefore to a further specification and restriction of the initial freedom.¹⁹⁸ This statement was necessary true. A commitment which did not limit freedom was a *contradiction in terminis*.¹⁹⁹ Every commitment was undeniably a restriction of natural freedom,

¹⁹⁴ Van Nooten, *RVM*, 50, 62-67.

¹⁹⁵ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1.3, [20].

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1.3, [21]; Montesquieu, *SL*, 1.1.2, [7].

¹⁹⁷ Van Nooten, *RVM*, 76-77.

¹⁹⁸ *Idem*, 79-80.

¹⁹⁹ *Idem*, 80.

independence, and equality.²⁰⁰ This is known as the paradox of (negative) freedom. One had the freedom to limit one's freedom. Van Nooten did not see this observation as a paradox. People living in the state of nature had an unlimited amount of freedom and independence. This independence implied one was free to make commitments.²⁰¹

Absolute freedom implied that everyone could subject himself to the authority of others by a voluntary commitment.²⁰² Van Nooten argued that the fact that someone could renounce his natural rights was the evidence of his freedom and independence.²⁰³ Society and state could therefore have every form. Consequently, it is understandable that Van Nooten does not elaborate on different state forms in *Rechten van den Mensch*. These were historical contingencies. For the same reason, it is unsurprising that he was critical about Montesquieu in this respect, which can be seen in Van Nooten's comments in book three of *De Geest der Wetten*. Van Nooten criticised the links Montesquieu established between certain forms of government and certain principles. According to Van Nooten, it was impossible to make general statements about 'honour' as the principle of monarchy or 'virtue' as the animating idea of a democratic government.²⁰⁴ He argued that the principles [grondbeginsels] of republics and monarchies, as presented by Montesquieu, were unimportant. Laws formed the true foundations of every state. Law and the obedience to law formed the key to understand the phenomenon of civil state in general. There was no need to discriminate between different state forms. For Van Nooten only the original foundation of a certain society was important. This foundation had as its aim to care for common safety and mutual happiness.²⁰⁵

There still existed different state forms. Van Nooten seemed to be aware of this problem and introduced therefore a principle that was leading in any state form. The citizens of a certain society chose certain governors and gave them political power. This power was based on the trust of the citizens. There were only gradual differences in the level of trust. In case of republics there was 'enlightened' trust, monarchies were founded on 'complicated' trust, while despotic government were based on 'blind' trust. When this trust waned there was the possibility of an uprising. To earn the trust of the population, the ruler announces (in case of a monarchy or despotic regime) or rulers declare (in case of republics) a will in the form of laws. This implies there is no mutual exchange of thoughts between rulers and

²⁰⁰ Van Nooten, *RVM*, 80-81.

²⁰¹ *Idem*, 83.

²⁰² *Idem*, 84.

²⁰³ *Idem*, 88.

²⁰⁴ See Montesquieu, *SL*, 1.3.1-9, [21-28].

²⁰⁵ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.3, 11, [99-100].

subjects. Since it was essential that laws were obeyed, Van Nooten remarked there was an essential relation between the trust of the population in the governor(s) and the understanding of citizens that obedience of the law led to mutual happiness.²⁰⁶ Although fear had a clear role in Van Nooten's ideas about the initial motivations to establish states, he argued against fear as a possible motif or leading principle of the civil state. Fear ruled out trust.²⁰⁷ Only trust could lead to a well-functioning state and to obedience. And obedience was essential, because obedience to the law showed insight on behalf of the citizens of the path to happiness.²⁰⁸

Still, there is little connection in Van Nooten's work between the state of nature and actual states, besides the concept of legal commitment. The situation of equality in the state of nature seemed only to have been an experiment of thought for Van Nooten. He did not describe the situation of independence and equality in the state of nature, besides mentioning that people actually *were* equal and also had a *right* to this equality and a duty to protect others. There is a lack of any historical reference or example to describe either the state of nature or the transformation of the state of nature into the civil state. There was no reference to any story from the Bible, while a reference about how the Dutch state had come into being from the state of nature was absent as well. This must have been of little interest to Van Nooten. It seemed that the state of nature only was a theoretical tool to explain the existence and legitimacy of the civil state. It was the starting point or 'method' for an elaboration on the structure of the state, the relation between rulers and subjects, and the laws of a certain state.²⁰⁹

Consequently, there is an analytical incoherence in the argument and narrative of Van Nooten's ideas about the origins of the state. He used the state of nature as a theoretical tool to explain the origins of the state, but did not explain the existence and legitimacy of particular states. It appears that Van Nooten thought that human beings started societies at a certain point in time and that these societies somehow were connected to contemporary societies and state forms. The actual link between these two is unexplained, or, hidden in the 'dark abyss of time'.²¹⁰ This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Van Nooten wrote a lengthy apology to defend the particular laws and public order of the Dutch Republic. This argument concentrated on the laws of the Dutch Republic.

²⁰⁶ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 3.11, [101-102].

²⁰⁷ *Idem*, I.I, 3.11, [105]

²⁰⁸ *Idem*, I.I, 3.11, [102].

²⁰⁹ Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I, 13.

²¹⁰ This term is derived from Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 322.

Van Nooten can be seen as a legal traditionalist, which is to say that he defended the legal traditions of the Dutch Republic as the benchmark for 'justice'. An alternative approach, which started with a different notion of justice, would lead to infatuation with feeling. Law was directly related to all the acts that took place in a particular society. The amount of proceedings in a society was proportional to the number of laws and instructions for citizens. The first object of the study of law was to identify the nature of all the actions of men in a society.²¹¹ The second object was to describe the rules for a particular society, of course fitting to the actions in that society. Every society was in need of uniform rules, which were applicable to everyone. Without such uniformity everyone would use their own legal intuition, causing confusion.²¹² For a society it was crucial to have laws which were applicable in all situations and valid under all circumstances. The study of law therefore was not about the eternal truth. Instead it was a part of certain society at a certain point in time. The number of laws and also its complexity could be seen as proportional to the complexity of a society.²¹³

The law and structure of a society had a double justification. First, there is the initial agreement between certain people who decided to put an end to the state of nature. This justification can be seen as hidden in the 'dark abyss of time'.²¹⁴ Although Van Nooten argued at several places that the civil order was as close to the freedom people enjoyed in the natural state as possible, he provided no explanation of the relation between the law and political structure of a certain state and the natural freedom people enjoyed in the state of nature. Second, there is the civil justification. In *De Geest der Wetten* he conceptualised freedom as 'staatkundige vrijheid', which came as close to natural freedom as possible. It allowed everyone to live as they pleased, as long as they did not violate the rights of other persons.²¹⁵ Van Nooten only states that civil freedom is the best possible freedom available. He pointed to the difference between the laws in the state of nature and the civil laws of a particular society.

The content of the laws depended on the form of government of a certain society, on climate, the level of freedom, religion, wealth, trade, and customs. All these factors contributed to the understanding of law in a specific society.²¹⁶ Every nation therefore had its own laws. Van Nooten wrote about the law of the fatherland, which is in his conception the

²¹¹ Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I., 7-9.

²¹² *Idem*, I.I., 9.

²¹³ *Idem*, I.I., 9-11.

²¹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 322.

²¹⁵ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.III, 11.3 [455-456].

²¹⁶ Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I., 21.

law of the province of Holland, instead of the law of the Dutch Republic as a whole. The particular laws of Holland are based on a tradition which went back to the people who once lived on the soil of the province of Holland, like the Batavians and the Franks.²¹⁷ More importantly, however, was the history of the counts of Holland. This amounted to an identifiable tradition of law, stretching from the thirteenth until the closing decades of the eighteenth century. Van Nooten identified an ongoing tradition of positive law, which was based on six sources. First were the States of Holland, or the 'hoge overheid', who were allowed to make new laws. The second source was the tradition of law created by the counts of Holland until the beginning of the Dutch Revolt at the end of the sixteenth century. Again, Van Nooten meant the laws made by the Staten van Holland in the period of the counts of Holland. Third, the customs and decisions of the counts of Holland until the Revolt formed a source of law as well. As far as the decisions of the counts were not overruled by laws made by the States, they were still valid. Roman law could be seen as the fourth form of law. It had been used as subsidiary law by the counts, states, and courts. Canon law was the fifth form of law. The sixth was jurisprudence by the different courts of justice. And there were also books and opinions of some legal experts which were seen as authoritative. These distinctions between several sources of law were, of course, highly artificial. Roman law was used to make new laws, for example by the States of Holland. Moreover, insights from positive law, roman and canon law had played a part in jurisprudence.²¹⁸

The laws of Hollands were the result of ages of lawmaking. Until the thirteenth century Dutch law could be seen as unwritten common law. Judges had made decisions based on principles derived from these unwritten laws.²¹⁹ From the thirteenth century onwards laws had been written down, which started an ongoing tradition of positive laws.²²⁰

--The necessity of authority--

This tradition had an authority of its own. The States of Holland formed the basis of this tradition, with the addition of other sources of law, but they had no legitimacy of their own. Roman law, for example, was only valid as far as it was approved by the States. The States formed the basis of the Dutch government as well, since they had an undeniable claim on the obedience of their will. Van Nooten argued that the authority of the States to create law was undeniable. The same applied to the authority of the courts to add to the understanding law

²¹⁷ Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I. 24-30.

²¹⁸ *Idem*, I.I, 31-39, 51-58.

²¹⁹ *Idem*, I.I, 37-45.

²²⁰ *Idem*, I.I, 46.

by jurisprudence.²²¹ There simply was a need for a set of rules in a society with many persons, interactions, and complex affiliations. Mankind needed laws and had to subject themselves to those laws. Only by making themselves subject to law they did distinguish themselves from animals. This resulted in an order of subjects and rulers, wherein the first simply obeyed the latter.

Obedience was a key concept for Van Nooten. He seemed to have had an aversion to ideas of formal or moral representation. Van Nooten never wrote about representation of the people as a whole or the better part of it by means of institutions or certain groups. First, he did not write an elaborate comment on the famous chapter 'De La Constitution d'Angleterre' in *De L'Esprit des Lois*. He only wrote a short comment on a remark of Montesquieu about Algernon Sidney (1623-1683), an English political thinker and politician of the Long Parliament during the English Civil war. According to Van Nooten Sidney had remarked that members of an assembly *represent [représentent]* the people. For this reason they should be accountable to them as well.²²² Although Montesquieu clearly wrote about representation, Van Nooten translated the French word *représentent* into the Dutch verb *verbeelden*, which had a rather different connotation. Van Nooten argued that the representatives of certain cities that were sent to the States of Holland were *persoonsverbeelders* of the *burgemeesters* and *vroedschappen* of the respective cities, who imagined the community. So, indirectly the representatives at the States of Holland 'imagined' the whole people.²²³ Instead of choosing for the logical translation of 'representeren', Van Nooten chose for 'verbeelden', which offered no connotation of a government which was accountable to citizens.

Citizens should obey their rulers, because there was no alternative for it. In chapter four of book ten of his 'magnus opus' Montesquieu outlined that the conquering of a state could have positive effects for the people, since 'states that are conquered do not have the force they had at their institution: corruption has entered them; their laws have ceased to be executed; the government has become an oppressor'. Montesquieu then suggests that a conqueror could relieve a society from tax collectors or other abuses: 'A conquest can destroy harmful prejudices'.²²⁴ This was not a plea for revolution, but Van Nooten took Montesquieu's argument quite seriously. He did not rule out that a conquest could have some positive consequences, but he deemed the medicine far worse than the malady. According to Van Nooten the people lost their freedom during a conquest. The reform of a

²²¹ Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I, 51-53.

²²² Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.11.6, [159-160].

²²³ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.III, 11.6 [470].

²²⁴ Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.10.4 [141-142].

society from within was a better option than hoping that a foreign conquest would bring a better future.²²⁵

Obedience to the law was central and necessary after the establishment of the state. The connection between the original decision to end the state of nature by agreeing to create societies and states and actual contemporary society was not clear. Nevertheless, Van Nooten did not fail to make clear that every citizen was obliged to obey the government because of the initial contract. This contract had ended the state of nature, although the contemporary citizen had no active role in agreeing with this contract. The civil contract led to a number of certainties, but to obligations as well. Citizens had the duty to obey rulers (the States) and to respect the authority of judges. Rulers had the right to rule, while citizens had the duty to obey. The content of the civil contract determined to which extent these obligations and duties differed from the original state of nature. In any case, the absolute freedom from the state of nature had been gone, since any civil order would end the situation of independence in which no one was allowed to dictate something to another person.²²⁶

The original freedom had been gone and replaced by certainty and protection of life and property.²²⁷ A contract or agreement could reduce freedom and equality. Both could even disappear. There was still a gap between the original contract made at a certain point in the past and the present-day societies. In other words, the initial contract had not been made up by contemporary citizens. Van Nooten used the analogy between parents and children to face this challenge. The former had the duty to take care of the latter and to act on their behalf. Consequently, parents made commitments on behalf of their children. Here Van Nooten's argument made an interesting turn, since he argued that children did not remain committed to these liabilities once they are adults. When children matured they have the full disposal over their *natural rights*.²²⁸ For the relation between government and citizen this remark had two contrary consequences. On the one hand Van Nooten stressed that people were born as citizens with certain civil rights and duties.²²⁹ On the other hand citizens were free, when they grew up, to decide either to conform to civil society or to withdraw their consent. Citizens would face a few difficulties to realize such an exit from society. People affirmed their membership of society not only by way of their parents or by their own

²²⁵ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.III, 10.4, [417-420].

²²⁶ Van Nooten, *RVM*, 151-153, 218-219.

²²⁷ *Idem*, 225-231, 272-273.

²²⁸ *Idem*, 88-89.

²²⁹ *Idem*, 90.

consent, but by their own acts as well. Van Nooten argued, in a Lockean fashion, that by using the benefits from civil society a person committed himself to society as well.²³⁰ Such an argument opened up the possibility for an individual of no longer participating in society by renouncing his rights and duties. A person who wanted to follow this course of action had to compensate the society for all the benefits he enjoyed. According to Van Nooten these benefits were so great it was practically impossible to withdraw from society.²³¹

Consequently, this made obedience by the citizens practically inevitable. Van Nooten made clear that a legal order was necessary and indispensable, although the form of the state and the freedom citizens enjoyed may differ in different states. He was highly critical of any attempt to undermine the legal order and therefore of the French Revolution as well. Given the great amount of violence and chaos which followed after 1789 it was not surprising Van Nooten was critical about accountability of the governments, although the Terror, which began in 1793, probably came too early for Van Nooten, since he published his books on law in 1794. Still, Van Nooten defended the legitimacy of existing states and was therefore a defender of the status quo. *Vaderlandsche Rechten* and *Rechten van den Mensch* were above all apologies for the existing order. The natural state was a situation in which living together was impossible. Equality and independence were worthless and should be exchanged for the civil state, but Van Nooten offered no concept of how citizens could obtain more natural rights in this civil order. In other words, natural rights were no benchmark for the quality of a certain civil state. For Van Nooten the discussion about natural rights was only a theoretical tool to defend the legitimacy of governments. Therefore Van Nooten did not present an idea about how the citizen could have a critical attitude towards the civil state.

Van Nooten was keen to defend the spirit of the community. According to him, pamphlets and satire were harmful, unwanted, and indefensible when they caused harm to the 'honour' of people. Writings which instigated a spirit of freedom and were written with respect for the government were allowed, but it was not allowed to cause damage to the honour and good name of certain people.²³² Citizens were allowed to criticise governors. Van Nooten was a self-proclaimed proponent of a 'repraesentatief democratisch republikijsche regeeringsvorm', but offered no view about the relation between state and citizens, beside that the citizens had to obey the government.²³³

This particular aspect of his writings was not lost on contemporaries, since one year

²³⁰ Van Nooten, *RVM*, 91.

²³¹ *Idem*, 92.

²³² Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 6.15, [277].

²³³ Van Nooten, *RVM*, 145.

after the publication of *Rechten van den Mensch*, an anonymous author wrote a critical pamphlet in which he criticised Van Nooten's defence of the status quo. He presented himself as a follower of Thomas Paine (1737-1809), who was born in England, but went to America to become one of the *Founding Fathers*, although he was a philosopher, political thinker, and activist as well. This anonymous writer accused Van Nooten of transforming natural rights into 'hersenschimmen', because citizens simply had to obey the existing laws and government. 'The people' had to accept the political contract made by their ancestors. In this situation every right of consent was gone, which was the most important political right according to the author.²³⁴ The anonymous connected this standpoint to the fact Van Nooten was a regent and had an interest in defending the existing political order.²³⁵

The author proposed an alternative political idea in which the people consented with the political order. He failed to notice that Van Nooten also had written that citizens had the theoretical option to consent with the order of society and to withdraw from it as well. According to the anonymous freedom meant that every person was free from every constraint, as far as he had not approved with it. After his consent, he was subject to the will of the majority. The minority had to conform to the will of the majority.²³⁶ Besides this right of consent, every citizen had the right and duty to express critique on the government when they had concerns about its actions, although the author made a distinction between 'lecturing' and 'offending' the government. The aim of every form of critique should be to solve a problem or to assist the fatherland. According to the anonymous author, *ad hominem* arguments and rude critique should be forbidden.²³⁷

--Moral foundations of the state--

The structure and form of the state depended on the original contract entered by a number of individuals, but Van Nooten had a few ideas about the moral foundations of society. Some of them were up to the conscience of individuals, but others were fundamental to the order of society as a whole.

Van Nooten was a lifelong member of the reformed public church, but reformed Christianity was neither central to his conception of the moral foundation of society nor to his idea of toleration. Instead, a few important Christian beliefs formed the foundation of both. These Christian beliefs were only described in brief fragments in Van Nooten's work.

²³⁴ Anoniem, 'Waarde landgenoten' in Thomas Paine, *Redevoering aan het volk*, (Amsterdam 1794), 3-4.

²³⁵ Idem, 4

²³⁶ Idem, 6-7.

²³⁷ Idem, 9, 11-12, 15-16.

In his 1771 translation of Bonnet's *Recherches philosophiques sur les preuves du Christianisme* he attacked the beliefs of deists, but offered no ideas of his own about the role of Christianity in society. Only in his later work argued that the basic notions of Christianity formed societies' basis. Van Nooten explicitly commented on Bayle's ideas, with whom he disagreed. Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) argued in his *Pensées diverses sur la comète*, anonymously published in 1683, that atheism was not a greater evil than idolatry. This led him to state his unconventional opinion that a well-functioning society consisting of atheists was imaginable. Consequently, atheism did not imply immorality. A few years later he published the *Commentaire Philosophique*, in which he elaborated on toleration. Bayle did not use the reformed theology as his starting, but stressed the autonomy of conscience. Those people who persisted in their 'heretic' views could be more faithful than the orthodox faithful. Bayle implicated that atheists, deists or those who were indifferent to religious matters should be tolerated. Consequently, Christian beliefs were not necessary as a foundation of public morality. Instead, only reason was benchmark for toleration and morality. Bayle was, however, silent about the characteristics of 'reason'. As a result the criteria for toleration remained unclear.²³⁸

Contrary to Bayle, Van Nooten made clear he thought Christianity essential for society when he explicitly commented on Bayle. He used the occasion to comment on Bayle in the sixth chapter of book 24 of *De Geest der Wetten*, where Montesquieu wrote about Bayle. In this chapter Montesquieu argued that Bayle had written that a state formed by 'true Christians' could not last. He opposed this statement and wrote Christians were actually good citizens, because the principles of Christianity would lead both to commitment to religion and the 'homeland'. These principles were even stronger than the principles of monarchies, republics and despotic states.²³⁹ Van Nooten agreed with Montesquieu and wrote that Bayle's malicious intent was very clear. Bayle argument could easily be summarized by the statement that a society formed by religious fanatics could not last. Van Nooten thought that Bayle was right in this respect, but that he had not taken into account those Christians who obeyed true Christian ethics. Both the wealth and well-being of the state were served by the presence of faithful Christians.²⁴⁰

Van Nooten probably had not read *Pensées diverses sur la comète* or *Commentaire Philosophique*, since the auction catalogue of Van Nooten's library only lists one work of Bayle, namely the *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*.²⁴¹ This is probably the reason he only

²³⁸ Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the making of modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford 2001), 335-337.

²³⁹ Montesquieu, *SL*, 5.24.6 [463-464].

²⁴⁰ Montesquieu, *GW*, III.I.24.6 [93-94].

²⁴¹ *Catalogus*, 9.

commented on Bayle's negative argument about Christianity, while he wrote nothing about Bayle's notion of a virtuous state formed by atheists. Only in his writings on law he wrote about toleration with regard to atheists. His notions did not resemble Bayle, since he argued that deists and atheists undermined the most important Christian beliefs. Christianity was the moral foundation of Europe, which implicated that Catholics could be good citizens. Van Nooten presented no thought about the prosecution of atheists or deists, but highlighted that society was based on Christianity.²⁴²

He clarified this view when he argued in *Vaderlandsche Rechten* that every individual had a duty as a citizen and a person. Van Nooten made a strict distinction between 'civil justice' and 'moral justice'. Civil justice simply meant obeying positive law. The meaning of moral justice was not limited to respecting duties and claiming rights, but also meant acting according to 'conscience' and 'moral feelings'.²⁴³ These two forms of justice were connected with two other concepts, namely 'person' and 'burgher'. Everyone was a person and a citizen at the same time and had to obey both forms of justice.²⁴⁴ These two categories were strictly separated. A person could conform to civil justice by acting rightfully, which it to say to conform to the law. Laws dealt with legal rights and duties. It was only concerned with visible actions. Therefore any individual could be forced to obey the law. In contrast, moral justice had not been included in positive law and did not necessarily involve visible and controllable actions. Nobody could therefore be forced to act in accordance with moral justice. Moral justice was the domain of reason and feelings. Only reason and feeling could lead someone to act morally.²⁴⁵ Acting morally meant to live in an honest way, not causing harm to other persons, and to give everyone their due. The most important rule of moral justice was the rule given by Jesus 'to love thy neighbour as thyself'.²⁴⁶ Although moral justice could not be enforced, it was necessarily a part of society, since it complemented civil law, which was always imperfect and incomplete in its provision of laws.²⁴⁷ The reward of moral behaviour was calmness, while unmoral behaviour caused a bad conscience, contempt by others, and a lack of true pleasures.²⁴⁸

In this way Van Nooten created a moral foundation for the civil state. Every person had a moral duty that went beyond the prerequisites of law. This duty was based on the

²⁴² Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I, 107-108.

²⁴³ *Idem*, I.I, 105-109.

²⁴⁴ *Idem*, I.I, 102.

²⁴⁵ *Idem*, I.I, 105-109.

²⁴⁶ *Idem*, I.I, 112.

²⁴⁷ *Idem*, I.I, 114.

²⁴⁸ *Idem*, I.I, 105-110.

foundations of Christian ethics, which was shared by all European societies, both catholic and protestant ones. Although this foundation was supported by societies as a whole, every individual had to respect these foundations as well. For this reason persons who publicly declared to be an atheist or deist could not be tolerated. Atheists and deists undermined the Christian foundations of 'all civil law in Europe'.²⁴⁹

Christianity was essential to the civil state. The opposite argument was true as well, since the civil state was a necessary condition for the flourishing of Christianity. The message and morality of Christianity could only prosper in a civil state. Van Nooten argued that Christ's message was brought only to people who lived in a civil state. It was impossible to be a Christian in the state of nature, because the gospel offered an incentive to found Christian communities, which was impossible in a state of nature, where everybody took care of their own. Moreover, the civil state offered peace and tranquillity necessary to reflect on the 'origin and destiny' of mankind.²⁵⁰

-- International aspects--

Van Nooten considered the situation of individuals inside and outside the civil state. His also offered a perspective on the relation between states. What were their duties towards each other? Van Nooten had a very short answer: none. The relation between states was determined by the state of nature as long as there was no general association between them. They had only 'perfect' rights and duties towards each other. This implied states had to take care for the common safety. Van Nooten failed to answer why these rights were 'perfect' in the state of nature. In his definition, 'perfect' means 'can be enforced'. This definition implicated that the rights of states could be enforced. It was unclear how exactly.²⁵¹ Nonetheless, Van Nooten argued that states had to protect the common safety. This ambiguous formulation offered the opportunity to broaden or narrow down the duties of states. Van Nooten argued that states should respect treaties and alliances. He did not notice that these treaties would effectively end the state of nature.²⁵² In this way, Van Nooten could still argue there existed something like the law of nations. He disagreed with Montesquieu who argued that 'nations should do to one another in times of peace the most good possible, and in times of war the least ill possible, without harming their true

²⁴⁹ Van Nooten, *VR*, I.I, 107-108.

²⁵⁰ Van Nooten, *RVM*, 139-141.

²⁵¹ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1. 3, [25].

²⁵² Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1.3, [26-27].

interest.²⁵³ For Van Nooten such duties were indefensible. He thought that states had the license to do what they wanted, besides the provision that states were not allowed to disturb the safety of other nations.²⁵⁴

Van Nooten viewed warfare as a way to defend this safety. Belligerent countries disturbed the common safety and therefore disobeyed the laws of nature. A state only was allowed to start a war when its safety was threatened by another state. It was therefore not allowed to start a war without a good reason. He disagreed with Montesquieu when he wrote that 'the object of war is victory; of victory, conquest; of conquest, preservation. All the laws that form the right of nations should derive from this principle and the preceding one'.²⁵⁵

Nevertheless, Van Nooten implicated that warfare not only had a moral aim. Van Nooten implicitly described warfare as an instrument of commercial policy. Commercial warfare was an inevitable result of the relations between states, since these were often determined by commercial interests. These interests were often pursued, defended, and expanded by states with the help of arms. This essential relation between states, warfare, and commerce is the topic of the next chapter.

²⁵³ Montesquieu, *SL*, 1.1.3, [7].

²⁵⁴ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, I.I, 1.3, [27].

²⁵⁵ Montesquieu, *SL*, 1.1.2, [8].

Chapter 4

-- State and commerce -

--Introduction--

Istvan Hont wrote very little about the role of the Dutch Republic or Dutch thinkers in the *Jealousy of Trade*, although he discussed the ideas of Grotius about natural law, sociability, and property.²⁵⁶ Hont also mentioned William Temple, who was an English ambassador in the Dutch Republic, and Bernard Mandeville, who was born in Rotterdam, a number of times.²⁵⁷ Dirk Hoola van Nooten was concerned with many topics discussed by Hont's *Jealousy of Trade*. Indeed, Hoola van Nooten wrote extensively about the right order of society, the relation between state and commercial success and the moral and economic prerequisites of trade. One would expect that there would have been agreement about the importance of trade for Dutch prosperity after the commercial success of the Dutch 'Golden Age'. Indeed, only a few have doubted this relation, but the political and economic decline, which was discussed to some extent in the first chapter, made it necessary to reassess the Dutch role in the European scramble for economic success. Especially during the second part of the eighteenth century discussions took place about the jealousy of countries like England and France and its consequences for the Dutch economy.²⁵⁸ For this reason, Van Nooten developed ideas about the role of the government in commercial affairs. In his translations of books, written by Condillac, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith, he elaborated on the relation between state and commerce. In his introduction and footnotes in *De Koophandel en het staatsbestuur* he described how state and commerce were interrelated. He also provided an explanation of the commercial problems of the Dutch. In *De Geest der Wetten*, Van Nooten further elaborated on the way the government could increase the wealth of society by trade policies and taxation. In *De Rijkdom der Volkeren*, Van Nooten completely reversed his argument and argued against most state interventions in commerce and trade.

--The history of commerce--

Le commerce et le Gouvernement, written by Abbé de Condillac, dealt explicitly with the relation

²⁵⁶ Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 13-15, 164-176, 424.

²⁵⁷ Idem, 51, 185-186, 194-201, 394, 401.

²⁵⁸ Stapelbroek, 'The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay', 257-284.

between government and commercial success. Despite the fact that Van Nooten had translated and annotated this book, he did not use the occasion to comment explicitly on this relation. The second part of the Dutch translation of Condillac's book barely contains footnotes written by Van Nooten, although this part dealt with the relation between commerce and state. He wrote about this relation in a long introduction. Although Van Nooten left the judgement to the reader,²⁵⁹ he presented a short history of commerce in this introduction, which contains a few clues about his own views.

According to Van Nooten, the needs and requirements of humans suggested that trade [koophandel] was as old as mankind itself. He referred briefly to three figures from the first book of the Bible. Cain had been a farmer, his brother Abel a shepherd, while Tubal-Cain had become the father of all those who had worked with copper and iron. Van Nooten did not elaborate on these Biblical references, but he seemed to imply that even during the first days of mankind there had been a 'division of labour'. The fact that everyone had his own occupation, suggested that trade was practised.²⁶⁰ Van Nooten thought the origins of maritime trade were more important than the exchange of goods and services in Biblical history. The supposed luxury and decadence of the Babylonians and the Assyrians, 'nations' which are both mentioned in the Bible, were not important for the same reason: they did not practice sea trade.²⁶¹ According to Van Nooten, the Syrians and the Phoenicians were the first nations to practice sea trade. The Phoenicians had founded major cities that became the most important trading places of the world. Tyre and Sidon traded, almost exclusively, goods from other places. They produced hardly anything which they sold on their markets.²⁶² Van Nooten contributed the commercial success of the Phoenician trade to the settlements they had founded, for example in Spain and Greece. This provided them with the opportunity to trade among themselves with the use of their own ships.²⁶³

Three recurring themes become apparent in Van Nooten's discussion of the 'history of commerce'. First, the relation between domestic production and trade is a central issue. The Phoenicians produced hardly anything, but due to a lack of competition, they were able to obtain a trading monopoly. Second, Van Nooten hinted at the role of government policy. This point is not mentioned with regard to the Phoenicians, but the fact that the Phoenicians combined their trade with active settlements implies political policy, in which central

²⁵⁹ Van Nooten, 'Voorreden' in Condillac, *KS*, lxi.

²⁶⁰ *Idem*, viii.

²⁶¹ *Idem*, viii-ix.

²⁶² *Idem*, ix.

²⁶³ *Idem*, x-xi.

discussion is needed. This role becomes more and more central when Van Nooten's discussion proceeds. The role of warfare to defend and extend trade can be seen as the third central issue.

These three themes become apparent in Van Nooten's discussion when he mentions Carthage, a colony of the Phoenicians. Carthage became a leading city in trade and built colonies. Moreover, Carthage used warfare to defend their commercial interests.²⁶⁴ Other leading powers in history had only little interest in trade. Apart from Corinth, the Greek city states had no interest in trade. After them, Alexander the Great forced Egypt's cities to open their ports for foreign traders, which is an example of political power intervening in commerce.²⁶⁵ Rome can be seen as another important example of the relation between politics and commerce. According to Van Nooten, the Romans were not traders, but they used their military power to become the rescue of small trading republics, that were unable to compete in warfare with Carthage. Eventually, the romans destroyed Carthage during the Punic Wars. Although the romans were not directly involved in trade, their military power was essential to the commercial warfare of their day. Consequently, their political power was connected to the commerce of smaller republics, which they protected in exchange for political subjection.²⁶⁶

The western part of the Roman Empire fell in 476, followed by a period of 'stupidity and ignorance' in which only Genoa, Florence, Pisa, and Venice provided Europe with trading goods from the rest of the world.²⁶⁷ Their success did not last long, since they lost a part of their trade due to a lack of 'courage' and a wrong policy. The government of these cities did not supported trade in the right way, but Van Nooten failed to explain what exactly was wrong with their policy.²⁶⁸ Another example of the increasing influence of states on commerce was the Hanseatic League. According to Van Nooten, this association had been very successful in its attempts to protect its trade from the consequences of the wars between Denmark and Sweden. The Hanseatic League was initially a small organisation, but more than eighty cities were a member of the league during the thirteenth century. Since it had been able to bombard Copenhagen in 1428, this league of merchants had been very powerful. Chances turned when England prohibited the Hanseatic cities to trade with England, which

²⁶⁴ Van Nooten, 'Voorreden' in Condillac, *KS*, xi-xii.

²⁶⁵ *Idem*, xii, xiv.

²⁶⁶ *Idem*, xv- xvii.

²⁶⁷ *Idem*, xvii-xviii.

²⁶⁸ *Idem*, xix.

led to disunity among the Hanseatic league.²⁶⁹

To obtain commercial success, the role of government was essential. Traders among the Phoenicians and the merchants of Carthage were supported by the armies of their government, while the Romans protected the trade of other powers, which made these smaller states dependent on the romans. Vice versa, the Romans were dependent on the trade of the small republics they protected. Consequently, there existed a relation of mutual benefit, although this relation was not balanced, because the Romans possessed supreme military power. A similar relation was applicable to Flanders, which Van Nooten described to some extent. The success of Flanders originated from the fact that its ports were chosen by Italian traders as a stacking location. The Flemish proved to be industrious people, because they set up all kind of factories that produced fabrics made from wool, flax, and hemp. This processing was more profitable than simply reselling the products brought to Flanders. The commercial success of the Flemings was supported by their political leaders, most notably Baldwin II (c.865-918), who established laws to protect domestic factories from imports of products made in Italy.²⁷⁰

Government was central to the commercial success of the Flemings, although it was also central to its decline. At a later stage, Flanders flourished due to their cloth halls. Political leaders tried to profit from the wealth of the merchants by imposing heavy taxes on their profits. These taxes were too heavy a burden. The merchants lost their freedom and the factories became less profitable. The administrators thought merchants to be frauds and set up more rules, which led to discontent among the traders and subsequently to the departure of many of them.²⁷¹ Van Nooten demonstrated with this example that government support was essential to commercial success. However, the reverse was true as well. The failure to create wealth could be the effect of the wrong policy.

Van Nooten applied these two principles to another part of 'commercial history', namely the discovery of the 'Indies' by Portuguese merchants and the expedition of Columbus. Although Van Nooten's narrative constantly implied the crucial relation between 'state' and 'economy', he held that from these two 'discoveries' onwards trade had influence on state government.²⁷²

The discovery of the Indies and the Americas provided respectively Portugal and Spain with great trading opportunities, but these two nations failed to profit from these

²⁶⁹ Idem, xxii-xxiv, xliii-xlv.

²⁷⁰ Van Nooten, 'Voorreden' in Condillac, KS, xx, xxi.

²⁷¹ Idem, xv.

²⁷² Idem, xxix.

discoveries. Both countries searched for gold and silver, but failed to appreciate agriculture, crafts, and industries at home. They supposed that once they had the control over gold and silver, they would be masters of the world as well. They directly connected these noble metals to wealth and prosperity. Van Nooten thought that the products of labour had a real value, like the products of farmers and craftsmen.²⁷³ The governments of Spain and Portugal failed to appreciate the contribution of crafts, agriculture, and industries to national wealth. According to Van Nooten, trade was only profitable when it was combined with those practices.²⁷⁴

Van Nooten also shortly described early trading practices among the Dutch. There had been a flourishing trade already around the year 1000.²⁷⁵ More importantly, Van Nooten argued that the counts of Holland had done much to encourage trade and domestic production in their lands. They had seen that trade was most profitable when it was combined with production.²⁷⁶ During the Revolt, they benefitted from the Spanish misconception of wealth, since the Spanish failed to appreciate the commercial value of Antwerp. The Spanish conquered the city and closed the harbour. Consequently, many merchants and craftsmen left the city of Antwerp and went to Amsterdam and England.²⁷⁷

The war with Spain led to even more Dutch commercial success. Spain closed their ports for Dutch ships during the war, which led to Dutch expedition to the Indies. The trade with the East continued with the founding of the VOC in 1602. A counterpart was founded in the form of the WIC and other traders went to the north, for example to Nova Zembla. Again, support of the 'state' was central to the commercial success of the Dutch. Van Nooten wrote that all the initiatives were supported by the government with 'privileges and encouragements'.²⁷⁸ Besides, he hints at the essential role of warfare to protect commercial interests. The English took the Dutch as an example and imitated their combination of trade and warfare.²⁷⁹ The combination of commercial initiatives and government support had led to the survival of the Dutch Republic during the Eighty Years' War. Consequently, the United Provinces became the wealthiest state of the world.²⁸⁰

Besides the role of the government in encouraging commercial initiatives and in

²⁷³ Van Nooten, 'Voorreden' in Condillac, *KS*, xxx-xxxi.

²⁷⁴ *Idem*, xxxi.

²⁷⁵ *Idem*, xxxvi.

²⁷⁶ *Idem*, xxxvii.

²⁷⁷ *Idem*, xliii.

²⁷⁸ *Idem*, xlv-li; li.

²⁷⁹ *Idem*, liii.

²⁸⁰ *Idem*, li.

providing military assistance in commercial wars, Van Nooten also pointed to another relation between commerce and government. He pointed to the importance of knowledge about trade. He connected this issue with the commercial success of France and England. The government of England had supported both manufactories and trade since the reign of Queen Elisabeth. According to Van Nooten this made it unsurprising that they were able to compete with the Dutch Republic.²⁸¹ France, on the other hand, had done far less when it came to supporting commerce. Due to internal discord, trade had not flourished until Richelieu (1585-1642), who ordered the founding of commercial companies, similar to the VOC. But even then, lack of state support led to dominance of England and the Dutch Republic over France.²⁸² Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) founded successful companies which were able to compete with foreign rivals.²⁸³

According to Van Nooten France, England and the Dutch Republic were competing for glory in the matters of trade, although he expected a lot from the American Republic.²⁸⁴ Spain and Portugal no longer competed with these countries, since they lost their share in international trade to the English and the Dutch, due to wrong state policy.²⁸⁵ There was a form of commercial warfare between these countries, Van Nooten argued. In this context he mentions the first league of armed neutrality. This league highlighted the importance of trade and could help to guarantee free trade in the future.²⁸⁶

Van Nooten argued that the Dutch Republic was not doing well in this commercial battle, because it had some limitations in comparison with France and England. France had plenty of useful soil, while England always acted in their own interest, which posed problems for the Dutch Republic. They attempted to have a surplus on the balance of payments. In other words, England tried to export more goods than they imported from other countries. With regard to the Dutch Republic they had been very successful in this aim, because the English had a trade deficit of 400.000 pounds sterling in 1663, but a surplus of seven million pound sterling in the period between 1699 until 1704. According to Van Nooten, this was a shame for the Dutch people.²⁸⁷ The first problem of the Dutch was their consumption of English products. The second problem concerned the fact that the Dutch had limited soil, compared to France. Dutch prosperity was founded on a combination of trade

²⁸¹ Van Nooten, 'Voorreden' in Condillac, KS, liv.

²⁸² Idem, liv.

²⁸³ Idem, liv-lvi.

²⁸⁴ Idem, lvii.

²⁸⁵ Idem, lvi-lvii.

²⁸⁶ Idem, lvii.

²⁸⁷ Idem, lviii-lix.

and domestic production. Dutch traders always had attempted to import cheap raw materials from other countries and transformed them into final products which had far more value than the sum of the original raw materials.²⁸⁸ The 'jealousy' of other countries had led to the imitation of this practice and subsequently to competition and decreasing profits.²⁸⁹

Van Nooten argued, both explicitly and implicitly, that the state was central to commercial success. The Dutch trading model was under threat due to the 'jealousy' of other countries who imitated their practices. According to Van Nooten, the Dutch commercial system was already into decline. A total recovery of the commercial splendour and glory of the past he deemed impossible. Consequently, he wanted to rescue Dutch manufacturing and trade from total collapse.²⁹⁰ This was the task of the government. This task required a profound understanding of affairs of state and commercial interest in order to implement the right policy and to make the right decisions.²⁹¹

--State policy--

This 'history of commerce' made clear that the state had an essential role in commercial affairs. Van Nooten specified this role in his annotations. As in his translations of Montesquieu's *De L'Esprit des lois* and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Van Nooten heavily annotated his translation of Condillac's *Le commerce et le Gouvernement*. He provided plenty of short remarks and clarifications in which he elaborated on commercial issues.²⁹²

According to Condillac, restrictions on both exports and imports were problematic for they led to a monopoly. Abbé de Condillac, who wrote from the perspective of France, argued that the prohibition of English products limited the amount of producers which produced those products. Only the French producers of that product offered this product for sale, which made them monopolists. The same could be said of the exports to England. When France forbade these exports, the English could only buy the product in question from their domestic producers, which made them monopolists. So, Condillac argued that when a government ruled out the import or export of certain products, they had no clear view of their real interests. Prohibition of import led to higher domestic prices, while ruling out exports led to lower revenues on domestic products.²⁹³

This specific observation from Condillac prompted Van Nooten to write a lengthy

²⁸⁸ Van Nooten, 'Voorreden' in Condillac, *KS*, lix.

²⁸⁹ *Idem*, lix-lx.

²⁹⁰ *Idem*, v-vi, lix-lx.

²⁹¹ *Idem*, vi.

²⁹² See for example, Van Nooten in, Condillac, *KS*, I, 34, 39, 40, 121, 146, 151, 199; II, 12.

²⁹³ Condillac, *KS*, I, 186-190.

note to argue that the Dutch were right to suppress products made in foreign factories. According to Van Nooten, there was a crucial connection between 'soil' and factories. It was far more profitable to process raw materials into final products than to export raw materials, because this practice provided work and income to factory workers, merchants, and the population as a whole, even to those inhabitants who lived far from the sea. According to him, the prosperity of both France and England was founded on the products from their own 'soil', which they could transform into final products by manufacturing. Dutch soil, however, was limited and yielded a limited amount of products. Consequently, Dutch factories were dependent on the raw materials from other countries. Of course, other countries had factories as well. For this reason Dutch factories should be protected from foreign industry by the Dutch government. This policy should therefore guarantee the Dutch wealth, since factories were the key to the Dutch economic system. They were essential to the Dutch trade and the key to its prosperity. In fact, they were the 'cardiac vein' of Dutch prosperity. Foreign factories could process domestic raw materials, but their Dutch counterparts could only use foreign raw materials. The Dutch economic system would collapse without government policy that protected Dutch industry from foreign imports. Factories were the only source of wealth, and therefore Dutch factories would not obtain a monopoly as soon as the government protected them from foreign imports. Taxes on foreign products would enable Dutch factories to be competitive, since they compensated Dutch manufacturers for the transport costs foreign producers did not have to pay.²⁹⁴

Van Nooten's argument implied that Condillac's premise was false. States did not have equal opportunities. The government should protect domestic industry from the import of foreign products and encourage the import of raw materials.²⁹⁵ In practice, this went not well at all. Van Nooten lamented the fact that a part of the scarce amount of Dutch raw materials was exported to foreign countries. Moreover, the Dutch consumed too many imported products.²⁹⁶

Van Nooten lamented the call from Condillac for free trade. Condillac thought that state interventions caused harm to the interest of the state. Condillac argued that free trade provided the best prices. Restrictions on imports and exports led to higher prices. Van Nooten argued, however, that Condillac's ideal situation supposed mutual free trade. England had prohibited the import of products which were not made or created in the same country as the country whose ships brought the products to England. Since the Dutch

²⁹⁴ Van Nooten in, Condillac, *KS*, I, 186-189.

²⁹⁵ *Idem*, II, 43.

²⁹⁶ *Idem*, I, 264-5.

factories produced only a small amount of products made from non-imported raw materials, this led to a great disadvantage. The Dutch would lose much money to the English if the English were allowed to import their goods freely to the Dutch Republic, while the reverse was largely prohibited by the English. Allowing English trade would not lead to fair competition, but would instead favour the English factories above Dutch factories.²⁹⁷

Van Nooten disagreed with Condillac about the restriction on foreign imports. He argued that Condillac may have been right in a situation where every country allowed foreign products to enter their country. If that was not the case, this resulted in an unequal situation. He further elaborated on exports and imports in *De Geest der Wetten*. With regard to imports he argued that there should be a distinction between three different types of products. The first category involved imported products that could not be produced by domestic farmers or factories and which were necessary for all people. This category also included raw materials that were necessary for factories, like wool in order to make cloths. The import tariff imposed on these products should be determined by calculating how many taxes the government could have raised if these products would have been produced by domestic farmers or producers. This amount should be reduced by the transport costs. The second category consisted of products which were not bought by the poorest people, but which were nearly a necessity for those who were not very poor. One could think about products like coffee, normal wine, and sugar. The taxes on these products should be as high as the sum of the tax revenue that the state would have collected if these products were made and processed domestically, minus transport costs. The products of the third category were connected with lust and luxury, like expensive wines and lace of the highest quality. The tariff on the products in this category should be the same as amount of taxes charged on second-category products, with the only difference that the transport costs should not be subtracted from this amount.²⁹⁸ Van Nooten's remarks were in line with his argument that Dutch wealth was based on the import of raw materials. Taxation on first category products would make raw materials very expensive when they were subject to taxes in their country of origin.²⁹⁹

--Taxation as state policy--

Van Nooten expressed his thoughts about taxation in general as well. In the first chapter of book 13, Montesquieu commented on state revenues. Montesquieu wrote that the revenue of

²⁹⁷ Van Nooten in, Condillac, *KS*, I, 269-271.

²⁹⁸ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.7, [25-28].

²⁹⁹ Idem, II.I, 13.7, [25-28].

the state consisted of the portion that each citizen gave to the state in order to enable the state providing them security. This portion should be determined by the necessity of both the state and citizens, instead of taking from the real needs of the citizen for the sake of imaginary needs of the state. It should be measured by the portion the citizen should give, instead of what he was able to give. So, Montesquieu concludes that wisdom and prudence should regulate the portion taken from the citizens.³⁰⁰

Van Nooten appears to be very critical about Montesquieu's statement about tax revenues. He agrees that taxes are the most important part of the state revenue, although the property of the state also generated money.³⁰¹ Besides this small comment, he accuses Montesquieu of sloppiness, since his elaboration on the relation between state and taxes could have been more precise.³⁰² Van Nooten considered taxation as one of the foremost problems of the eighteenth century. High taxes dispirited people and made them desperate. It should not happen that a citizen, after paying taxes, had only enough money to pay for the goods necessary for survival.³⁰³ Van Nooten agreed with Montesquieu that there was nothing which should be done with more prudence and wisdom than raising taxes, although he thought Montesquieu should have elaborated on the rules connected with this wisdom and prudence.³⁰⁴

According to Van Nooten, the infinite needs of the state were an important problem. He quotes Melon as posing the ultimate question; 'what should a government do when the needs of the state are at a level which made it impossible for the citizen to pay enough taxes to provide for these needs'. This question was posed by Melon, but he failed to provide an adequate answer. Van Nooten saw several aspects as essential with regard to taxes. First, the grounds on which governments were allowed to raise taxes should be explicated as clear as possible. Since all members had implicitly or explicitly approved of civil society, every member had the duty to contribute to its wellbeing, for example by state service. This resulted in a difficulty, because every member had his own interests as well. There were two options. Either everyone should rule or a minority should rule. This minority should be compensated for the fact that they were not able to pursue their own interests.³⁰⁵ The civil service of the rulers and the soldiers could be measured in money. The sum of all these services should be collected by taxation. The fact that a minority chose to pursue the

³⁰⁰ Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.13.1, [213].

³⁰¹ Van Nooten in Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.1, [1].

³⁰² *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [2].

³⁰³ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1-2, [12-13].

³⁰⁴ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [7].

³⁰⁵ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [4-6].

common interest, instead of being absorbed by their private concerns and activities, was the first justification for taxation.³⁰⁶ The needs of society were the second justification, since Van Nooten made an implicit distinction between society and government. A society had a number of common objectives, like security and happiness. The society allowed the government to collect an amount of taxes for the pursuit of these goals. This observation was essential both in order to protect freedom and to prevent the government from abusing their power.³⁰⁷

Consequently, the needs of state and society were the basis for taxation. A prudent government should strictly obey rules with regard to the amount of taxes they took away from its citizens.³⁰⁸ As demonstrated in the third chapter, the foundation and justification of the existence of the state was based on the advancement of security and the increase of mutual happiness.³⁰⁹ Van Nooten derived from this foundation that a society needed to be governed. A small part of the population should govern, namely by the most skilled part of it. The question 'who should govern' should not be determined by birth. The rulers had the legal right to order commands, while another part of the population had to execute these orders. A third part had to take care of the security of the society and should protect it from domestic and foreign threats. A government should provide opportunities for their subjects to increase their knowledge. Consequently, its citizens could spend time at schools and universities. The presence of enough churches, preachers, and convents was essential as well. The government had to assist merchants as well by providing enough canals, roads, and ports.³¹⁰

First, the government should make an inventory of the population's needs which required an expense of the government, while it should also estimate the amount of money needed for foreign and domestic relations. They should consider all these needs and make a prudent assessment on which needs were essential.³¹¹ The next step was to take into account which parts of society were able to pay taxes, although Van Nooten did not elaborate how these considerations influenced taxation. He did remark that the government should make taxation as easy as possible. Citizens who had to pay taxes should be allowed to pay these taxes at a moment, which was convenient for them. Tax laws should not be random and contain no loopholes, but instead being straightforward. Besides, the government should be

³⁰⁶ Van Nooten in Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.1, [6].

³⁰⁷ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [8].

³⁰⁸ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [3].

³⁰⁹ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [3-4].

³¹⁰ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [4-5].

³¹¹ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [8].

decent in the way they spent the taxpayer's money.³¹² The state also had a few other duties in order to keep taxes as low as possible. First, the state should administer its property in the best possible way. For this reason, the government had the duty to increase their own knowledge about how to administer its possessions. Van Nooten assumed that an increase of such knowledge would reduce the state budget.³¹³

According to Van Nooten, the state also had to increase the welfare of society in several ways. To begin with, the government had a duty to make its subjects ware of commercial possibilities. Second, it should help their subjects wherever possible.³¹⁴ Third, the government should stimulate the wealth of its citizens, in order to raise enough future taxes.³¹⁵ Van Nooten did not specify how the state was able to stimulate wealth. But he made clear that it was not an objection to him that stimulating wealth forced the government to spend more money. Although Van Nooten warned for the infinite needs of the state, he stated that the government should borrow the money it needed. According to Van Nooten, the interest costs would not cause problems in the long-term.

Van Nooten provided a few examples to illustrate this statement. He disagreed with Montesquieu's statement in chapter 18 of book 13 that the state should not spend the same amount of money as it received in the form of taxes. Montesquieu argued a government had to keep some cash in reserve, in case it needed money for fortuitous cases. Van Nooten argued that this statement was derived from the concept of the state treasury. He thought that the state should not keep money in reserve, because this practice would slow down the circulation of money. Van Nooten made a distinction between the householder and the state. The first could spend its money only once, while the latter would receive its money back via the circle of circulation. Therefore, the state should use its needs as a benchmark, instead of its tax revenues. When a state had an opportunity to stimulate trade, but had no money, it should borrow money. The needs of society were essential, instead of the level of tax revenues. A state was allowed to increase the public debt. An increase of the public spending could stimulate trade and industry and enable citizens to earn more money, which was in the interest of the state. Van Nooten observed that countries with a huge public debt, like France, England and the Dutch Republic profited from the relation between public debt and economic success.³¹⁶

³¹² Van Nooten in Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.1, [9-11].

³¹³ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [10].

³¹⁴ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [9].

³¹⁵ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1-2, [12-14].

³¹⁶ Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.13.18 ; Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.18, [54-56].

Van Nooten also disagreed with Montesquieu about the tax policy of the state with regard to poor parts of the country. Montesquieu observed that provinces within a kingdom, which were exempted from taxes, were not less poor than those parts which had to pay high taxes. Montesquieu disagreed with the idea that those provinces needed taxes to make them industrious. Instead, he argued that these countries suffered from the competition of factories in other provinces and that more taxation would make them even more desperate.³¹⁷ Van Nooten, however, argued that poor regions needed money from the state. In the long run, the state would benefit from this policy. He referred to the policy of Colbert, who sent money to the Provence. This money was used for the construction of several buildings in that region. This activity led to the circulation of money, which enabled the people earn an income and to pay their taxes.³¹⁸

Good government meant the collection of taxes and a prudent way to spend these taxes. Government spending could only take place as long the people trusted their governors.³¹⁹ This often meant that the government spent money when they thought this would benefit its subjects. The government had to improve the speed of the circulation of money. Therefore, Van Nooten disagreed with the question posed by Montesquieu: 'will the state begin by impoverishing its subjects in order to enrich itself? Or will it wait for its subjects to enrich it at its own pace. Will it have the first advantage or the second? Will it begin by being rich or will it ends by being so?'³²⁰ Van Nooten thought these as strange questions. According to Van Nooten, a state should neither be rich nor be poor. The state simply had a number of needs, which should be paid by the citizens because of their explicit or implicit participation in society. So, the government does not pay for its own needs, but for the needs of society's members. Therefore, a state does not need to be rich, nor should it attempt to collect money to keep it in its treasury. The state should determine its needs and according to this determination collect its taxes. Collecting money had not to be a goal in itself, since this practice could be seen as contrary to the role of the state and against its mandate.³²¹ Moreover, accumulating money was a bad idea, since accumulated money was unproductive. Money had at least an interest rate of three percent, so a million guilders in the state treasury costed the population 30.000 guilders.³²² Moreover, money was not save in the hands of the state, because a 'thousand coincidences' could hit the state, while the capital

³¹⁷ Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.13.2. [214].

³¹⁸ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.2, [15-16].

³¹⁹ *Idem*, II.I, 13.1, [6-7].

³²⁰ Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.13.7, [217].

³²¹ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.7, [28-31].

³²² *Idem*, II.I, 13.7, [32].

and property of the citizens was inexhaustible, as long as the state assisted in their role of 'letting wealth come to the citizens'.³²³ This very statement shows a paradox in Van Nooten ideas. On the one hand, he stressed the role of the state in accumulating riches, but at the same time Van Nooten seems to have no clear view of how government spending affected the economic performance of a society. He simply thought that the circulation of money would continue.

Van Nooten thought that the amount of tax revenues was less important than the circulation of money. In chapter seven of book 13 of *De l'Esprit des lois* Montesquieu wrote that the state should act very cautiously with regard to the tax level it imposed on its subjects. A state should not be worried if certain individuals paid enough taxes or not, because the success of a society was not dependent on the taxes paid by individuals. First, the number of individuals would make it relatively unimportant if a citizen paid a small amount of taxes. Second, the prosperity of an individual would benefit society anyway, while their financial ruin would turn against the public. Van Nooten completely agreed with this statement. The wealth of individuals would contribute to the circulation of money. Therefore, it was relatively unimportant if an individual paid an appropriate amount of taxes.³²⁴

Van Nooten argued there were only two classes in society, namely a class of landowners and the workers. Only the class of landowners paid taxes, because the taxes imposed on the workers would simply lead to higher wages, which increased the expenses of the landowners. Van Nooten wrote nothing about the difference between taxes on labour and taxes on consumption. He may have thought that the wages of workers were equal to strict necessities, so that an increase of the taxes on consumption would lead to an increase in wages, since this increase of taxes would bring them under the subsistence level.³²⁵ Montesquieu had similar ideas and suggested that taxes should be imposed on the producer instead of the consumer. Van Nooten was in favour of the same policy, but only because taxation of producers would be easy for the government.³²⁶

--Adam Smith and the Jealousy of Trade--

To summarize, Van Nooten had a number of ideas about the relation between the state and commerce. The government had to impose import tariffs on foreign products, but at the

³²³ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.7, [32].

³²⁴ Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.13.7, [217]; Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.7, [28].

³²⁵ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.7, [23-24].

³²⁶ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.8, [32-33]; Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.13.8, [218].

same time enable merchants to import raw materials at a low price. The state should assist merchants in commercial warfare and to help poor regions of the country by low taxes. Although Van Nooten argued that the infinite needs of the state were a major problem, he seemed to argue the state was often the key to solve problems that were connected with the decline of the Dutch Republic. For example, it is interesting to see that Van Nooten had no clear view of the relation between armies and taxes, a fatal combination described by Montesquieu in chapter 17 of book 13 of *De l'Esprit des lois* and a central topic in the ideas of Sieyès.³²⁷

Before *De Rijkdom der Volkeren*, Van Nooten saw the government as key to most of society's problems. Surprisingly, in the introduction and footnotes of *De Rijkdom der Volkeren* Van Nooten argued the government should only protect domestic security and provide infrastructure, because it was not able to effectively address economic problems. Van Nooten praised the efforts of Adam Smith to describe the foundations of 'political economy' in *The Wealth of Nations*, although he lamented the fact that Smith did not make clear which books he had used as his sources. He thought that *The Inquiry into the Political Oeconomy*, written by James Steuart (1713-1780) and originally published in 1767, was used by Smith in his writings about money.³²⁸ Nevertheless, he praised Smith's plea for freedom of trade and his critique on the intervention of states in trade and commerce. Van Nooten agreed with Smith that the market provides the 'right price' for products. Nothing could be more harmful for the common welfare than all sorts of tariffs and prohibitions imposed by the government. The absence of such policy would lead to a full competition and provide society with the 'right price'. The state should not be indifferent towards the welfare of society, but should not disturb the natural phenomena of supply and demand.³²⁹

It is tempting to see the change of Van Nooten's ideas in terms of free trade versus regulation. This would be misleading since both 'free trade' and 'regulation' are concepts central to twentieth-century economic discourse. Using these concepts to explain the discussions in which Smith and Van Nooten were involved would not illuminate the arguments of these discussions. They were involved in a discussion about the nature of trade. It was the question if trade could benefit most or all countries simultaneously, or to the contrary, that the benefit of one country was the loss of another. In other words, it was up to discussion whether international trade was a zero-sum game or not.

In the previous chapter it was argued that Van Nooten thought that several factors

³²⁷ Van Nooten in, Montesquieu, *GW*, II.I, 13.17, [51-52]; Montesquieu, *SL*, 2.13.17, [224-225].

³²⁸ Van Nooten in, Smith, *RV*, I.5, [200].

³²⁹ Van Nooten, 'Voorrede', in Smith, *RV*, xxv. Van Nooten in, Smith, *RV*, I.7, [242], I.8, [365].

had contributed to the emergence of 'societies' and 'civil states'. He combined a notion of fear, which could be derived from Hobbes or Pufendorf, with considerations of sociability. Van Nooten only commented very briefly on the latter concept. For this reason it is unclear whether Van Nooten derived this idea from Pufendorf or Hutcheson or just from a remark in a spectatorial magazine. Smith's *A Theory of moral sentiments* could have been Van Nooten's source, since this work was first published in 1759. In this work Adam Smith developed a notion of commercial society based on mutual benefits. Istvan Hont described how Adam Smith based this notion to a large degree on the ideas of Samuel Pufendorf.³³⁰ It was not based on sociability as understood by Hutcheson, who thought that true sociability was an urge to cooperate with other people with a 'regard to the happiness of others'.³³¹ Instead, Smith's sociability resembled Pufendorf's ideas, since it was based on men's 'need for material self-preservation and on utilitarian reciprocity'.³³²

Van Nooten's ideas about sociability were too fragmented to determine whether they were derived from Pufendorf, Hutcheson, or Smith. More important is the fact that both Smith and Van Nooten argue in some form that society was based on the exchange of goods and services. The crucial difference between these two thinkers was their conception of the relation between different commercial societies. As we have seen in this chapter, Van Nooten conceptualised the world as a 'global market of competing commercial states' in his translations of Condillac and Montesquieu.³³³ The concept of 'emulation' seems fitting to describe Van Nooten's ideas about commercial states, although he never used this word himself. Emulation expressed a 'quest for national pre-eminence' or even an 'endeavour to equal or surpass others in any achievement or quality'.³³⁴ Van Nooten seemed to have thought that the Dutch Republic was involved in such a quest, although he did not claim that it was successful in surpassing all other states in their economic performance. Nevertheless, he implicitly made clear that the European states were engaged in commercial warfare, where one could only win at the expense of others.

This idea was rejected by David Hume and also by Adam Smith, who applied his idea of mutual benefits in the relation between individuals on the relation between states. This resulted in his idea of commercial reciprocity. Smith argued that commercial states

³³⁰ Hont, *Jealousy*, 39

³³¹ Hutcheson, quoted by Hont, *Jealousy*, 39.

³³² Hont *Jealousy*, 39

³³³ *Idem*, 4.

³³⁴ Hont, *Jealousy*, 120, Erik Reinert, *Emulating Success: Contemporary Views of the Dutch Economy before 1800* in, Oscar Gelderblom, *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic* (Farnham and Burlington 2009), 21.

profited from the economic performances of their neighbours in peacetime. Trade could make a state rich, but this was more likely to happen if neighbouring countries were successful commercial states.³³⁵ This argument was only valid in peacetime, since times of war had a rather different dynamic. Smith had no utopian expectation that wars would be a part of the past due to the mutual benefits of trade. The rulers of states would always find a reason to engage in warfare. Moreover, commerce increased warfare, since it provided the resources to hire more soldiers.³³⁶ The reality of war caused a different dynamic between commerce and trade. While a commercial neighbour was a source of wealth for a state during peacetime, it became a treat during wars, since there was a positive correlation between commerce and the military power of states. Consequently, the policy of states towards commercial neighbours changed during times of war. Whereas Smith thought the intention to destroy a commercial neighbour was rather misjudged in the absence of war, a state had to consider its security in times of war. Hont writes that Smith defended the English Navigation Acts as policies to protect national security instead of as an act to promote national wealth.³³⁷ Although war forced a state to consider the riches of other states as a threat, Smith thought that commercial states were dependent on each other. From a commercial point of view every state could be seen as a part of worldwide market, based on mutual benefits. This was not a matter of humanity, but of mutual utility.³³⁸

This analysis was largely shared by Van Nooten by the time he wrote a Dutch translation of *The Wealth of Nations*, although he never explained why he changed his mind about the relation between commercial states. His turn was probably connected with the wars of the Dutch Republic against armies of the French Republic from 1793 until 1795. Van Nooten argued that a commercial battle between states was unnecessary and unhelpful. States needed each other and could profit from the products and expertise of other countries.³³⁹ He argued that a commercial era had started from the closing decades of the fifteenth century onwards. He argued that the emergence of this era was caused by the protestant Reformation, developments in science during the seventeenth century, and the discovery of the Americas and the east-indies. Besides, the invention of gunpowder and the compass had played a part as well. He stated that these discoveries and developments had

³³⁵ Hont, *Jealousy*, 7, 53, 54.

³³⁶ Hont, *Jealousy*, 52-54. Istvan Hont claimed this view was shared both by Rousseau and Adam Smith. See Hont, *Politics in Commercial Society. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith. Edited by Béla Kapossy and Michael Sonenscher* (Cambridge MA 2015), 111-113.

³³⁷ Hont, *Jealousy*, 52-54.

³³⁸ *Idem*, 55-56.

³³⁹ Van Nooten in, Smith, *RV*, xxxviii.

caused a new dynamic between states, since they had increased their commercial possibilities. They had created unlimited possibilities to create wealth. The battling commercial states of Europe only had to understand their 'true interests'.³⁴⁰

Van Nooten thought that there was a compatibility between expanding international trade and national commercial interests. He concentrated on the changed role of the Dutch in international commerce. According to Van Nooten, the Dutch Republic had been the 'warehouse of Europe' two centuries ago. Many countries had been ignorant of commercial matters and their interests with regards to trade. Due to this ignorance the Dutch were able to transport the products from other European countries and bring imports to these countries as well. 200 years later most countries took care of these practices themselves.³⁴¹ This had not necessary a negative effect on the wealth of the Dutch, since the increasing involvement of European states in international trade would decrease its share in trade, but could boost the total amount and value of trade. The fact that more states were aware of their commercial interests and participated in international trade had not necessary a negative effect on countries that had a share in international trade disproportional to their capital and inhabitants. This remark clearly pointed to the Dutch role in trade. The increased participation of states in commerce simply had the effect that a country was no longer able to handle all the imports or exports of other countries. Monopolies in trade were no longer attainable.³⁴²

Van Nooten emphasised that the share of the Dutch Republic in international trade had decreased, but he denied that Dutch prosperity was into decline. He argued that the war with France made a fair assessment of Dutch trade impossible. Consequently, war had to be taken out of the equation.³⁴³ Van Nooten argued that prior to the war Dutch trade had not been into decline. Although the Dutch harbours were no longer the 'staple ports' of Europe, others aspects of trade had flourished. Domestic trade in cheese, wool, and butter had increased, while the trade in colonial goods had expanded as well. Second, the Dutch had still transported many trading goods before the outbreak of the war. Third, since Holland provided the capital to many merchants, it was able to require these merchants to send their goods to Holland first.³⁴⁴ The war with France obscured the fact that Dutch commerce was still flourishing. It was necessary to remember the situation before the outbreak of the war,

³⁴⁰ Van Nooten in, Smith, *RV*, I.9, [389-391].

³⁴¹ *Idem*, 408-409.

³⁴² *Idem*, 409-412.

³⁴³ *Idem*, 407.

³⁴⁴ *Idem*, 408-410.

since only this situation enabled a fair judgement on Dutch commerce.³⁴⁵ Van Nooten argued that the trade of Europe and the Republic would flourish once the period of war would end. The trade of the Dutch had always progressed and this time it would be no different.³⁴⁶

Dutch commercial success was compatible with the benefits of other countries. Consequently, there was no need for sophisticated commercial policy practiced by the state. Van Nooten presented several arguments for this statement. First, wealth was created by the efforts of the people and not by the policy of the government.³⁴⁷ The second argument involved the limitations of the government, since every government lacked the knowledge to allocate capital and labour properly.³⁴⁸ Further arguments about the policy towards international commerce cannot be found in Hoola van Nooten's translation of *The Wealth of Nations*, since Van Nooten failed to write and publish more than the first ten chapters of the first book. This book mainly discussed labour, profit, and wages and was not suited to comment on the 'jealousy of trade'. 'Of systems of political economy', which was the fifth book of the *Wealth of Nations* would have provided Van Nooten an opportunity to comment on international commercial relations. And indeed, he announced to comment on these matters on several occasions. He wrote in the tenth chapter that he would present his thoughts on mercantile statecraft in the fourth part of his translation.³⁴⁹ In the same chapter he announced to comment on question whether high taxes on foreign products were desirable or not.³⁵⁰

Unfortunately Van Nooten failed to publish a complete Dutch edition of *The Wealth of Nations*, although the manuscript of his translation was almost finished. Van Nooten had finished a draft version of his translation, which was probably sent to the publisher. This draft was divided in five books, which was the way Smith originally had organised *The Wealth of Nations*. The first part of the manuscript contained many notes on the left part of the pages of the manuscript. These notes were eventually published together with Van Nooten's translation of the texts of *The Wealth of Nations*. The other four parts of the manuscript contain a lot of short remarks about passages Van Nooten did not understand. These remarks demonstrate that Van Nooten's translation was not ready for print. He had some doubts about how to translate 'pipe, hogshead, and barrelstaves' and 'spruce beer'.³⁵¹

³⁴⁵ Van Nooten in, Smith, 407, 410.

³⁴⁶ Idem, 410-412.

³⁴⁷ Idem, 285.

³⁴⁸ Van Nooten, 'Voorrede' in Smith, *RV*, xlvi.

³⁴⁹ Van Nooten in, Smith, *RV*, I.10, [445-446].

³⁵⁰ Idem, 540.

³⁵¹ Van Nooten, in Adam Smith, *RV*, IV.8 [641], V.3 [1004].

Proverbs and uncommon words presented a problem as well.³⁵² Other remarks seem to be insignificant. Van Nooten made a remark about a few odd English manners in third chapter of book four, while this chapter discussed import tariffs.³⁵³

Lengthy remarks as found in the first part of *The Wealth of Nations* were not included in the manuscript. Van Nooten probably wanted to write comments on the topics discussed by Smith, but failed to finish this task. Consequently there is a lack of information about his opinions about the international aspect of 'political economy'. The first ten chapters do, however, present his views about the role of government in domestic affairs. Van Nooten proposed a limited role of the government. The government had a few duties. First, it had to raise an amount of taxes in order to provide for safety and infrastructure, like roads and bridges.³⁵⁴ Second, the government had to promote freedom and the protection of property. These government duties had to shape the condition in which the exchange of goods and services, based on mutual utility, good take place. The protection of freedom and property would enable all the different classes of society to flourish.³⁵⁵ For this reason, the state had also to prevent the establishment of monopolies, since these disturbed the economic competition between merchants and producers.³⁵⁶

Van Nooten was not principally opposed to government intervention in economic matters. His policy recommendation towards 'subsidies' for new enterprises is an excellent case in point. Van Nooten argued that a sovereign should not intervene in the natural course of events. Despite this general rule Van Nooten thought that there was a reasonable argument for and against a reduction of taxes for a new company. A case could be made to argue that if a company could not be successful without government support, it was not likely that this enterprise could be undertaken without causing harm to older enterprises. This could happen since a new company was able to use capital and labour at a lower price than other enterprises. The opposite argument implied that tax levels prevented the establishment of new companies. Van Nooten was ambiguous about this form of government intervention in commercial affairs. In any case, a tax reduction for new companies should be limited to period of 15 years.³⁵⁷

Guilds are another case in point. Adam Smith lamented the restrictions set up by

³⁵² Van Nooten, in Adam Smith, *RV*, IV.9 [663], V.2.part 2 [725], V.2 art.2 [862].

³⁵³ *Idem*, IV.3, [449].

³⁵⁴ Van Nooten, 'Voorrede' in Smith, *RV*, xlvi. Van Nooten in, Smith, *RV*, I.8, [332].

³⁵⁵ Van Nooten, in Smith, *RV*, I.10, [503, 508].

³⁵⁶ *Idem*, 255.

³⁵⁷ *Idem*, 490-491.

guilds, which made it difficult for newcomers to enter a profession.³⁵⁸ Van Nooten stressed the fact that rules of the guilds in Holland were less strict compared to those in England. Nevertheless, he thought it was important that the government prevented deceit and fraud by enforcing a few fundamental regulations.³⁵⁹ This regulation was not meant to protect guilds in general. Van Nooten argued against the existence of guilds. These associations obstructed full competitions between producers.³⁶⁰

Van Nooten was, like Adam Smith, a proponent of free practice of profession, despite this plea for limited regulation. He argued that many governments were too afraid for the free pursuit of professions. Every person had to follow his own insights and decide where they could earn an income. This choice was based on one's own advantages.³⁶¹ If the government would not intervene in these choices and did not interrupt the natural proceeding, this would promote the common welfare.³⁶²

Van Nooten's argument resembled a standard 'liberal' argument about the state: citizens had to have as much freedom as possible, while the state provided for safety and infrastructure. For two reasons, this would make a caricature of Van Nooten. First, he was not in favour of unrestricted economic liberalism, since he argued the state had to provide some regulation, for example with regard to monopolies. The second reason involves the way Van Nooten's thought developed during his life. Van Nooten searched for a trade model that would be beneficial for the welfare of the Dutch Republic. Wars with England and France weakened the Dutch Republic and formed a threat to the interests of its merchants. The Dutch were no longer able to compete with the military and commercial power of some of its neighbours. The trade model of Adam Smith offered a solution, since this model was based on the mutual nature of international trade. Smith's model offered a solution for the Dutch Republic. Its trade could flourish, although the Dutch government was not very powerful compared with its neighbours.

³⁵⁸ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, I.10.

³⁵⁹ Van Nooten, in Smith, *RV*, I.10, [519-521].

³⁶⁰ *Idem*, 261-262.

³⁶¹ *Idem*, 503-523.

³⁶² *Idem*, 520.

-- Concluding remarks --

Who was Dirk Hoola van Nooten? At the end of this thesis we can answer that Van Nooten was a moderate orangist and regent. Van Nooten offered a sophisticated account of the emergence of the 'civil state'. He argued that a combination of fear, sociability, and the natural helplessness of human-beings led the cooperation between individuals and the founding of societies. These societies created institutions to take care of the common wellbeing. In the process a certain government was formed. A sovereign or sovereign body wrote laws to organise the life of the community. Judges contributed to this process by interpreting these laws. According to Van Nooten, the number of laws in a particular society depended on its complexity. Every society was based on the subjection of citizens to the political authorities. He was a proponent of the 'civil state' and had a preference for 'law and order'. This preference was probably connected with the fact that Van Nooten was a government official. The anonymous disciple of Thomas Paine was probably right: Van Nooten defended the existing political order in his writings on law and left citizens no other option than to obey the government.

But his preference for law and order does not explain why he wrote translations of works written by Bonnet, Condillac, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith. His translation of Bonnet's book about apologetics demonstrates that Van Nooten was worried about the heterodox ideas about religion. This theme was largely abandoned in his later writings. Van Nooten's other translations, comments, and works demonstrate that he was interested in the causes of the economic problems faced by the Dutch Republic. His speeches delivered at gatherings of *De Oekonomische Tak* demonstrate Van Nooten's observations about Dutch decline, although these speeches offer not a sophisticated analysis of the Dutch mercantile system. Van Nooten's translation of Condillac's *Le Commerce et le Gouvernement* and his translation of Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois* demonstrate a preoccupation with commercial decline as well, but went much further than that. He conceptualised the problems of Dutch trade and manufacturing. He tried to describe which phenomena made the Dutch trade policy ineffective. Van Nooten explained the structure of the Dutch mercantile system and elaborated on its weaknesses, which were exploited by countries like France and England. His most important argument was quite similar to an idea expressed by Van den Heuvel in his treatise written for essay-competition of *De Hollandsche Maatschappij*. Both Van Nooten and Van den Heuvel thought that Dutch industry was essential for the

Dutch mercantile system. Manufacturing offered an opportunity to transform raw materials into more valuable products, which could be exported to other countries. The government had to support this practice by enabling manufacturers to import raw materials as cheap as possible. This meant the government should not impose high taxes on these products. This government support was necessary, since the Dutch Republic had very limited soil and lacked the opportunity to provide enough raw materials for its domestic factories. For Van den Heuvel and Van Nooten trade and manufacturing were both essential elements of the Dutch mercantile system. This strategy was threatened by England, which limited Dutch imports by its Navigation Acts. Van Nooten discussed other options of commercial policy. Governments could promote the common welfare by increasing the state budget. His translation of Condillac's book on commerce even hinted on the use of warfare to protect commercial interests.

Van Nooten's translation of *The Wealth of Nations* should be seen in the context of his other proposals to reform the Dutch mercantile system. His earlier proposals highlighted the role of the government in promoting commerce, but his introduction in *De Rijkdom der Volkeren* was very critical about commercial policy of the state. He adopted Smith's vision of the mutual benefits of international commerce, which implied that the Dutch Republic was not involved in a commercial war with France and England. Instead, the Republic could profit from the commercial success of its neighbours. Consequently, Van Nooten changed his mind about the nature of international commerce. This development should not be seen as an adoption of the idea of 'free trade', but as the adoption of an alternative 'trade model'. Smith's model had an important advantage. It did not require sophisticated commercial policy. The merchants of any nations simply could pursue their interest, which would lead to a 'worldwide market'. The Dutch merchants would be able to make profit, despite the fact that the political power of the Dutch had waned during the closing decades of the eighteenth century. The political decline of the Dutch had forced Van Nooten to reconsider his earlier opinions about commerce. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War and the war with France during the 1790's had made it clear to him that the Dutch were not able to compete with their neighbours. This failure would also imply that the Dutch government would no longer be able to support domestic commerce. Smith's model offered a remedy to this problem, since his model did not require such support. It rejected such support as harmful. The state should only protect property, build infrastructure, and prevent the emergence of monopolies. The state only had to enforce the rules in order to facilitate economic competition.

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