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Hidden morals, explicit scandals : public values and political corruption in the Netherlands (1748-1813)

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Cover Page



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5 Best-Opinion and Morality of the Time (1748 – 1813)

5.1 Introduction

In chapters one and three I discussed the idea that the period between 1750 and 1850 (a Dutch *Sattelzeit*) brought major political and administrative transitions that are likely to have affected changing social-political vocabulary. This change of vocabulary, I argue in this fifth chapter, included public values and perceptions of political corruption as many new institutions – being structures as well as values (cf. Hall & Taylor, 1996: 838) – replaced or altered older ones. In chapter three I also discussed the use of different sources of public values (following Hoetjes) to assess changing public values and why the source of best-opinion and morality of the time is presented in a separate chapter instead of being spread out over the case studies like the others. In the following I therefore assess changing public values and perceptions on political corruption between 1748 and 1813 by looking at a variety of best-opinion authors from three successive (moral, political, ideological) reform movements of *Doelists*, *Patriots* and *Batavians*. Best-opinion writings will be examined on the discussion, condemnation or advocacy of specific public values and their critique of political corruption. In this way I assess whether, and if so how, public values and perceptions of political corruption were actually a part of any discussion by a selection of best-opinion authors. What, in other words, did some of the eighteenth century ‘value producers’ (a term borrowed from Reszohazy, see chapter one) consider to be right or wrong public official behaviour? In doing so I assess whether this provides us with any sense of change and/or continuity of public values between 1748 and 1813 from a best-opinion perspective by explicitly focusing on the link between the three reform movements and some of their representatives and changing public values.

To temper expectations and counter potential critique, some cautionary notes have to be made. The first is that the following can only be an interpretation of a limited number of writings due to space and time constraints of this study. The best-opinion authors presented in the following only represent a part of the total amount. In the busy and varied intellectual world of the Dutch eighteenth-century other views existed, some of which were different from and conflicting with the views provided here. Although this inherently leads to some bias, some counter arguments can be made. First, it is not required here to provide a full account of best-opinion on public morality. Second, my emphasis on these particular authors stems from the idea that I wish to investigate progressive thinking and critique on existing practices and wish to focus on reform-minded opponents to established practices rather than on the orthodoxy of ‘conservative’ authors who protected vested interests. In addition, I argue how a focus on critique and negative public values (much like a focus on scandal and debate) allows for a better understanding of the fundamental elements in social and political discussion between opposing sides. A focus on the ‘negative’ (by critics opposing the status quo) provides a good view on the ‘positive’ (by supporters of the status quo). This approach allows for easier access to espoused public values. If one does not focus on scandal and critics, one is forced to

investigate an almost endless stream of regular sources (such as, for instance, sermons or all pamphlet literature).

A second cautionary note is that other reform-minded authors could have been discussed as well. Such a task would however have been impossible within the confines of this present study and the problem is alleviated by the fact that the selected authors were in many ways representatives of their time (though not of the entire population of the Dutch Republic). They were all part of and important spokesmen for the main administrative reform movements between 1748 and 1813 and provide us with an important cross-section of authors and ideas. They were all read, they had (sometimes temporary) political influence and a following. A third and final cautionary note is that much of the importance and/or relevance of the chosen authors obviously depended on the actual reception, perception and diffusion or dissemination of their work and ideas (see chapter three on public opinion). This too, however, has to fall outside the scope of this study. What concerns us here, and what therefore limits the following discussion, are the public values and perceptions of political corruption of a selection of authors between 1748 and 1813. Especially when linked to the other sources of values in Hoetjes' typology (see below) this has much to offer.

5.2 Best-opinion and Dutch (moral) reform movements

According to some, early modern Dutch writing on (moral) reform of public administration has been few and far apart (Van Eijnatten & Wagenaar, 2007: 272). This seems especially true when one compares the Dutch Republic to its neighbours such as the German lands or France where Cameralism was, for instance, a blossoming field of study. Rutgers has shown, however, how there have been at least a few early modern Dutch writers on administration and administrative (moral) reform. He has shown that although the actual amount of 'administrative science' work coming out of the Dutch Republic has been quite limited, it certainly received attention (2004: 75-78). From the following discussion on best-opinion authors and works a similar conclusion can be drawn. These authors and works featured in what have been three (ideological) reform movements in public administration between 1748 and 1813 (Van Sas, 2005: 9-12).

First, Doelists in the 1740s and 1750s argued for increased influence of citizens in administration and more opportunities for a larger group of people to acquire public office. They demanded an end to the oligarchic rule of the city regent elites and all the abuses that were inherent in the system (Israel, 1998: 1073-1076; Schama, 1977: 52-58; De Voogd, 1914). Second, Patriots from the 1780s onwards had similar demands, calling for an end to (princely) patronage, nepotism and abuse of office that, according to many, prevailed in the Dutch Republic at the time (Schama, 1977: 64-79). Third, Batavians between 1795 and 1813 demanded a new state as well as a new kind of public administration and politics. Influenced mainly by French revolutionary thought and political philosophy new public institutions (such as a parliament and a constitution) were designed (Van Sas, 2005: 275-292; Schama, 1977: 311-321). As a result, I argue, the position, functioning and proper moral behaviour of public officials therein had to be reassessed and redefined as well.

A more elaborate discussion of the three movements will follow below. For now, however, it is important to already realize that Doelists, Patriots and Batavians have been regarded as three consecutive movements and, more importantly, can be regarded as content-related.

Also, despite some apparent differences due to context and time, the three movements and subsequent ‘revolutions’ all proved to be watersheds in Dutch administrative history, providing important moments or periods of transition in thinking on public values and political corruption. All three movements increasingly rejected and condemned certain types of behaviour, such as the buying and selling of public offices, gaining privately from a public office or using patronage and nepotism to maintain power and wealth. Changing public morality, it seems, was at the heart of each of the movements. In questioning and changing (some of) the moral foundations of early modern Dutch public administration, each movement, furthermore, gained a little more ground than the previous (Israel, 1998: 1105-1106; Van Sas, 1992: 109-110).

5.3 Doelists

In chapter four I briefly discussed the rise of (popular) discontent in the years between 1748 and 1751. The advent of Stadholder William IV had raised expectations and hopes of administrative reform to a high level. Already from 1747 onwards, an ad-hoc coalition of populace, burghers and excluded regents wanted to get rid of the corrupt oligarchies who ruled the cities in the Republic (Israel, 1998: 1069). At least for a while these popular demands aligned with those of disenfranchised Orangist regents and noblemen who wanted to break the oligarchies that excluded them. All sides, for instance, made references to John Locke’s *Two Treatises on Government* (1689) (compare Rousset de Missy below) which seemed to provide an ideal ideological justification for enlisting the people on one’s side (Israel, 1998: 1074-5). Locke’s insistence on popular sovereignty made his book an important tool and symbol in exploits to gain support for both Orangist and Doelist cause. After all, as Schama (1987: 600-601) explains, to Orangists Locke’s ideas showed how a strong Stadholder with majority backing from the populace, instead of narrow cliques of oligarchic regents, was a more legitimate and preferable form of power. To others, popular sovereignty widened the scope of political participation. Political participation – or rather: exclusion from it – was among the main issues that caused discontent. Serious questions were raised regarding the delegation of sovereignty to an oligarchy and the obedience to patrician authority.

The reformers, often called Doelists (named after members of citizen committees in Amsterdam but consisting of people from various Holland towns), fuelled the discontent, criticizing the oligarchy and advocating an end to the abuses associated with the bestowal of office (Schutte, 1978: 297-298). Wealthy citizens excluded from participation in government by the oligarchy’s correspondences demanded political influence. Radical representatives of the movement even advocated the removal of the entire old clique of magistrates (De Jongste, 1980: 82-83). The periodical political press (cf. Broersma, 2005; Harline, 1987; Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001: 81-102; Pollmann & Spicer, 2007) created an image of continuous abuse within oligarchies and accused the magistrates of nepotism and venality, all detrimental to the ‘welfare and order’ of the country. The discharge of an office should be directed towards the interests of the people, not to self-interests such as increase of personal wealth, or power and advancement of family relations (Schama, 1977: 47-48).

For a while the political alignment between Orangists and Doelists created a common front against the regent oligarchies. However, the new Stadholder and his aides were reluctant and/or too weak to instigate reform. It quickly became obvious to most contemporary

observers that the promised changes failed to materialize (Israel, 1998: 1076-1078; Rogier, 1980: 203-205; De Voogd, 1914: 79-80). William failed to use his powers of appointment to curb and punish regent corruption and he hardly purged the city governments. This led to increasing popular protest and friction between two camps and a ‘split’ among the Doelists. On the one hand there were moderate reformers who continued to adhere to the wishes of the Stadholder. They wanted a strong Stadholder with popular support but did not see the need for more popular engagement in politics and administration. The (radical) democratic reformers, on the other hand, were increasingly drawn into conflict with the Stadholder and their moderate Doelist colleagues. They wanted a Stadholder but only because they wanted him to deliver them from (corrupt) regent oligarchic rule. As the Stadholder persisted in his refusal to act the radical democrat Doelists started to organize agitation against both ineffective Stadholder and his followers and the regent oligarchies. Increasingly they called for administrative reforms and radical changes in local government. Adding to their grievances was the old and corrupted system of private tax farming in the Republic (see chapter six) and the obvious wealth of the regents which was thought to be intolerable, especially considering the steep decline in trade, industry and general economic prosperity (cf. De Voogd, 1914: 60).

A look at Doelist demands from an ensuing stream of pamphlets provides much information of best-opinion on public morality. A booklet entitled *Het ontroerd Holland* from 1750 described the unrest of the period and voices some of the Doelist demands. It contained a discussion of a request made by burghers to the mayors of Rotterdam and the subsequent Doelist riots in that city and other towns such as Leiden and Delft. In its preface we read a call for unity and just administration by the regents and love and subservience of the people[♦]. Its main target, typically, is the sale of public offices by the regents and the friction between the magistrates and their citizens. In Rotterdam, the booklet reads, the burghers had been angry about the many burdens put upon them by the Holland Estates and how they wanted to be relieved of taxes, imposts and excises (*Het ontroerd Holland*, 1750: 379). As a solution to ease their financial burdens, the request had called for the public sale (or auction) of offices whenever they became available (Ibid., 381).ⁱⁱⁱ The wealthy and powerful could, in this way, buy as many offices as they liked and get interest on them as they pleased. The only requirement – apart from the buyers having to be Protestant – was that the money to be made with this sale would benefit the nation’s treasury, i.e., that of the city.ⁱⁱⁱ

It is interesting to note how capability of public officials was not an issue for debate. The only thing that seemed to matter was the money ‘the community’ would get. When the Rotterdam town council proved tardy in its response, another request was submitted on 6 October 1750. This time, the magistrates were asked in a much more demanding tone to reach a favourable decision without any further delay. It also restated that the regents had to sell their offices for the common benefit, not just because of “resolve” and “generosity” but also because not doing so was in violation of their “character and decency, yes, to the greatest disrespect of honour, glory and esteem of our great city of Rotterdam” (Ibid., 385).^{iv} In essence, public authorities were told they were the representatives of their city and community. Any bad conduct reflected badly on them and their city. Personal interests should, in other words, not trump public ones.

[♦] As explained in chapter three, Roman numerals in the text refer to the endnotes in the appendix of this study in which the reader can find the Dutch originals of the quotes.

The Rotterdam town council initially conceded to popular demand (Ibid., 386) and agreed with the public auction of offices to the benefit of city and province.^v However, William IV was not pleased, arguably because of the insolent tone of request. He also had other reservations. Unlike the Doelist request, William in fact argued that merit and capability would be hard to find once offices were sold to the highest bidder. To him, this would lead to “extortions and objections of the citizens”.^{vi} Considering his later reluctance to meet the demands of the Doelists, we could say that he did not really believe this. He might just have wanted to persuade the Doelists to give up their demands. In the end, however, he would be largely right. As the case study in chapter six will show, the public auctioning of (tax) offices, for instance, did indeed lead to political corruption and more popular protest. For now William IV, for aforementioned reasons, decided to overrule the Rotterdam town council’s initial decision.

The populace, partly gathered in front of the town hall to hear the final proclamation, was shocked. According to the booklet *Het Ontroerd Holland* (1750: 393), they removed their orange ribbons and trampled their rosettes under their feet. In Rotterdam, the town council tried to appease the crowd. They promised that all the benefits from the Postal Offices (these were highly lucrative offices) would still go to the town (*Het ontroerd Holland*, 1750: 411).^{vii} However, the complete public auction of all offices apparently went too far. Interestingly, the town council used the Stadholder’s argument that this would only lead to corruption. It was not right, they said, that people should acquire offices by paying for them. This, they added, was also clear from their oath of office (or more specifically the oath of purification) in which people were meant to swear they had not received or promised anything in return for their office.^{viii} Another argument of the town council (Ibid., 413) against the public sale of offices was that they thought it was wrong for offices to be available only to those with money. Interestingly, then, the Rotterdam town council raised worries of corruption to counter worries of corruption. Also, their arguments are interesting in light of their later initial reluctance to change the system of private tax farming in which tax farmers did have to pay to acquire an office (see chapter six).

These were the main issues raised by the Doelists. In Amsterdam similar events occurred when the town hall was actually stormed by an angry mob when it became apparent that their demands were not met (*Het ontroerd Holland*, 1750: 402-403; De Voogd, 1914). Among the more radical members of the disillusioned Doelists were men like Jean Rousset de Missy and Hendrik van Gimnig. Their pamphlets denounced the city regents as corrupt, selfish and only interested in monopolizing lucrative offices and lining their own pockets. While the likes of Rousset de Missy and Van Gimnig have been labelled as “skilful coffee-house demagogues” (Israel, 1998: 1070), they were, I argue, much more than mere populists. Instead, their writings and ideas provide a unique best-opinion insight into the Doelist *communis opinio* on appropriate moral public behaviour.

Jean Rousset de Missy

When Amsterdam expressed reservations about making the Stadholderate hereditary in 1747 a wave of unrest swept through the province of Holland. Protest was orchestrated among others by the journalist Jean Rousset de Missy (1686 – 1762). De Missy, a French Huguenot exile in the Dutch Republic since 1719, was “a fierce critic of regents and regent corruption and became the foremost populariser of John Locke’s radical political ideas in the Republic”

(Israel, 1998: 1048-1049). He was also one of the foremost leaders of the Doelist revolt and submitted, together with others (most notably another Doelist leader, Daniel Raap) a petition to the Amsterdam town council in October 1747. The demands (similar to those made by Laurens van der Meer and other burghers in Rotterdam) ranged from auctioning offices for the civic treasury chest to the restoration of the privileges of the guilds. Although the entire Doelist cause (see chapter four) would soon die out, the movements and these petitions were important first steps in the advocacy of moral administrative reform in the Republic.

Apart from the petition to the Amsterdam town council, De Missy also published his account of the events that had led to the advent of William IV. In a work entitled *Relation historique de la grande révolution arrivée dans la République des Provinces-Unies* (1747), De Missy (1747: preface) describes how in 1747 “the dispositions and sentiments of the magistrates [...] came to change, as it were, from black to white, in an instant; for we behold how suddenly their aversion to a Stadholderate, chang’d into an eager desire of it, and a haste to complete it, to which no obstacles could put a stop”. De Missy is sceptical and clearly convinced of the hypocrisy of these magistrates. He writes how fear for the populace is more likely to be the cause for their change of heart than “any sincere regard to the publick good”. After all, he continues (1747: preface), “the individuals who compose the several bodies of the magistracy are men (and subsequently subject to passions) who from the authority and the Post occupied by the individual drew that force by which they have triumph’d over all; from hence sometimes arise irreparable mischief’s to the interests of particulars”.

De Missy’s hundred-and-four page long tract describes, among other things, the advent and installation of William IV. In a telling passage De Missy recounts the commission by the Estates General of William IV as Stadholder and Captain-General of the army, on 13 May 1747. De Missy (1747: 90) writes how the Prince had been elevated to Stadholder due to his “steadfastness”, courage and zeal for the prosperity of the Republic”. In a conversation between Prince and Princess (supposedly told to De Missy by an eye witness) upon hearing the news of the former’s election to Stadholder, William was supposedly to have said to his wife: “what unsuspected tidings! [...] God, who has called me to it, will support me in it. All that we possess, (continued he, embracing his royal spouse) is the gift of the people, who, by this signify the great confidence they have in us; I hope I shall be found to deserve it, by the uprightness of my intentions, as well as the honourable name I bear; my friends will assist me with their councils, and all good men with their prayers” (Rousset de Missy, 1747: 96-97). All this, of course, was meant by De Missy to show how much change and improvement he (and many other Doelists) had initially expected of the Stadholder and how little had actually happened. De Missy hammers the point home that the Stadholder had, in fact, not done anything. De Missy then denounces the corrupt and wasteful regents at the same time and tells us of a so-called conversation between a magistrate and a burger. When confronted with the news of William’s rise to power, the magistrate says this will be costly, about three million florins a year, to which the burger replies: “so much the better. We have been forty five years without a Stadholder, and of course must have sav’d 135 millions. This fund will well support a war of three years with France, which cannot at present abound very much in money [...] and [...] to draw off the most powerful of the neighbouring princes [...]”. The reader, De Missy (1747: 99) continues, “may easily suppose that no reply was made to this reflection”. As if, De Missy seems to say, the regents have been so careful in spending the nation’s money. No 135 million had, of course, been saved by the regents.

Hendrik Van Gimnig

Hendrik van Gimnig, a mid eighteenth century Haarlem textile worker, was, like De Missy, one of the leaders of the radical Doelists. Like De Missy, he too was critical of the Stadholder and oligarchic regents and published a few short pamphlets in 1748 and 1749 advocating and outlining the Doelist cause. In September 1748 Van Gimnig published his *Address to His Highness Prince William* (1748a). At this point Van Gimnig still seems to be hopeful that the Stadholder is indeed going to change things (or he is already disillusioned with the Prince's efforts, which might explain the somewhat sarcastic tone of the pamphlet). Van Gimnig (1748a: 4) writes how the previous forty years without a Stadholder had only led to negligence, greed, incompetence, faction strife, domination and the general neglect of various administrators and rulers (Van Gimnig seemingly made no distinction between the two) to safeguard our freedom.^{ix} Of course, now that there was a "strong, loving and protective" Stadholder (1748a: 6), these things would surely be relegated to the past! William is called upon to introduce civil reforms and to curb the immoral behaviour of the regents.

Whether he was being sarcastic or still hopeful, Van Gimnig attributed achievements to the Stadholder that, as we have seen in chapter four, would never materialize. William – or the city regents in Amsterdam for that matter – did not do the things expected of him by the population or Doelists. Despite or because of the Stadholder's reluctance, Van Gimnig published a *Request on behalf of the Amsterdam Burgers* (1748b) that following October. Here Van Gimnig demanded the Stadholder to concede to all eleven demands submitted to the Amsterdam town council in July 1748 (Israel, 1998: 1075-1076). One of these demands was the sale (compare the demands of the Rotterdam burghers above) of the lucrative postal offices on behalf of the treasury instead of regents' wallets (Van Gimnig, 1748b: article [art.] 8; see also Knuttel, 1978: Pamphlet 18169, 1748, p. 29ff; De Voogd, 1914: 48-52). Another demand by the Doelists was the removal of the thirty-six members of the Amsterdam town council. There was, according to Van Gimnig, no need to prosecute them. Still they had to return the money they had unjustly taken.^x Also, the citizenry should elect the burgomasters from among the town council, instead of the common practice where members of the council elected the Burgomasters themselves. This, according to contemporary as well as later observers, often led to political corruption in the form of pre-arranged rotation of offices and contracts of correspondence (cf. Schimmelpenninck, 1785; Schama, 1977: 50-51; De Witte van Citters, 1873). Also, a wider range of citizens other than the small circle of powerful regents should elect militia officers and select the directors of the Amsterdam chamber of the Dutch East and West Indian Companies from amongst experienced merchants (Van Gimnig, 1748b, art. 4, 7; Israel, 1998: 1075).

The demands issued by Van Gimnig on behalf of the radical Amsterdam Doelists met a wall of resistance. The Amsterdam government, backed by the Prince, by and large refused to meet any of their demands (Israel, 1998: 1076) and issued a warning to the protesters (*Waarschouwinge*, 1748) that this kind of civil disobedience would not be tolerated. Indeed, to the regents and Burgomasters the demands and actions by the Doelists were tantamount to anarchy. Probably as a result of the continued refusal of Prince and local authorities to change things, Van Gimnig wrote a one page piece which was printed in the *Groninger Courant* of 3 September 1749 (Van Gimnig, 1749). The piece is an almost desperate call directed at regents and tells us more about the values Van Gimnig thinks are important for administrators. Once

again calling for civic reform and an end to oligarchic rule, Van Gimnig (1749: 1) writes: “burghers who are in power, if you want to rule our hearts, you must get rid of haughtiness and despotism. All your deliberations must be guided by justice and fairness, do not give in to self-interest, be kind-hearted and sign all your decisions with the seal of kindness and friendliness. If you do this, you will be honoured and esteemed by all citizens”.^{xi}

Concluding Remarks

On the surface (see also chapter four), most if not all changes resulting from the revolt of 1748 – 1751 were gains for the Stadholder and his moderate Orangist followers since it had succeeded in concentrating power at the centre in his hands. Some, like Bentinck (cf. Gabriëls, 1989: 137-145), expected in vain that the Prince would open up to serious reform after all (Israel, 1998: 1077-1078) but very little power was transferred to citizens, ‘the people’ or regents outside the oligarchies and their contracts of correspondence (compare case study two). The refusal of William IV to act as well as his untimely death, Bentinck’s inability to persuade William to do something (despite serious attempts, see Israel 1998: 1080) and strong opposition from a still powerful regent elite (cf. Rogier, 1980: 205) frustrated attempts of reformers like Missy de Rousset or Van Gimnig. Still, best-opinion authors such as De Missy and Van Gimnig explicitly articulated values and behaviour that were needed to improve public administration. Seeds of change and reform of administrative morality had, in short, been sown. De Missy indirectly had several things to say about proper moral behaviour and values of public administration. Amidst the rhetoric, he denounced the serving of personal interests and the hypocrisy of men claiming to serve the people (and then only out of fear instead of noble motives) while at the same time abusing their office for personal gain and wasting (public) money, either through mismanagement or fraud. Van Gimnig provides new moral guidelines or values for appropriate administrative behaviour as well, albeit more implicitly. The demands and arguments launched by Van Gimnig had a clear moral purpose. This leading opponent and member of the Doelists had clear ideas about correct and incorrect behaviour. He lists several values as detrimental or important to the welfare of the state such as participation, honesty, justice and taking care of the common good. Other values, such as pride or haughtiness, despotism and self-interest, should be avoided at all cost. Crucially, and finally, De Missy and Van Gimnig (exemplifying the larger Doelist movement) argued for including broader segments of the population in the social and/or political community. In that sense, political corruption meant not taking a wider view on the common good to be served by administrators.

5.4 Patriots

From the previous it has become apparent that the decades following 1748 were bleak times for anyone arguing for administrative or moral reform. The reforms promised by or expected from William IV did not materialize and there was in many ways a return to the pre-1748 situation. This, at least according to Israel (1998: 1084), led to the 1750s and 1760s being relatively calm, stable and ‘conservative’. On the whole, reformers seemed to withdraw from direct involvement in politics (in part of course also because they were forced) and demands for civic reform were no longer heard as often or as loud. Still, while the reforms of civic

government argued for by Doelists had not materialized, not everything was lost. In fact, the failure of 1748/1751 made it almost inevitable that old issues reappeared with more force in the 1770s and 1780s. Geyl already explained how this worked when he wrote how 1748 led to an extremely powerful regime of the Stadholder, a regime that to Geyl was in its own way “as corrupt as the previous had ever been” (1948-1959: 31-32). The decades following 1748 had, according to Geyl, witnessed the continued “crumbling of democratic institutions” where old practices of (city) regents and (provincial) aristocracy were in full force again or, as Schama wrote: “the notion that it would be harder for a regent to enter the kingdom of Godly democracy than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle found a ready response” (1977: 651). While the disappointment of 1748 had discredited reform-mindedness for the time being, in due time, wrote Geyl, “the annoyance over all of this had to be directed against the patron of the system, Orange”. This is exactly what happened from the 1770s onwards. While earlier movements and reform attempts (such as those of 1672 and 1702/1703, see chapter four) had failed on the surface, much dissatisfaction had always kept simmering. This made the Patriot revolt essentially a further development of old tendencies (Israel, 1998: 1105). Some of the circumstances leading to the Patriot Revolt of the 1770s and 1780s (military threat, economic misery, a widespread feeling of corruption of the body politic, see Klein 1995) were, in any case, similar to previous ones.

Palmer has noted that “the Patriot movement was characterized by its lack of a developed ideology; it did not formulate its demands in terms of any universal ethical affirmations or any theory of world history” (1974, part I: 339 footnote 22). This, I argue, has to be nuanced. Once we follow our chosen concept of ideology from chapter three, the Patriots certainly had an explicit (although somewhat heterogeneous) ideology. They offered an account of the existing order, they advanced a model of a desired future (a vision of the ‘good society’), and they explained how political change can and should be achieved. What united the Patriots in an ideological or best-opinion sense was, in the first place, a strong sense of nationalism propagated and made possible by political periodicals (such as the *Post van den Neder-Rhijn*). Such national media transformed Patriots of all kinds into what Van Sas (1988b: 27) called a *Gefühlsgemeinschaft*. Secondly, they had a striking ideological and programmatic coherence in their shared desire to attack “social and moral decadence” (see also Van Berkel, et al., 2010: 25; Schama, 1977: 71) and to achieve “moral rearmament” (Van Sas, 1988b: 18) with the express purpose to secure the economic and administrative ‘regeneration’ of the Republic. These issues were closely related and, incidentally, made Patriot ideology “a mélange of old and new attitudes towards the Dutch constitution” as the Patriots wanted the old Republic “to be rescued from its infirmity and rejuvenated in the image of its heroic beginnings” (Schama, 1977: 68). Above all, writes Schama, the manners of the regent classes, and especially their “opulence in the midst of public squalor”, the loss of thrift and “excessive conspicuous consumption” were attacked (1977: 71-72).

Crucially, as Schama noted, the “attack on manners [or morals, TK] became linked with the authorization for government [...]. the Patriot burgher leaders were convinced that they were the true custodians of a national virtue which had been debased by those to whom office had been granted on trust and who had abused that mandate over the generations” (1977: 73). They, instead of the selfish regents should therefore be in power. The Patriot’s complete isolation and exclusion from political affairs had to be ended. To them political participation was a key element to achieve their goals (Van Sas, 1988b: 18). As such, they argued against the way in which the regent oligarchies governed the political institutions of the Republic. They wanted, in

the words of Palmer, “a reconstitution of the old constituted bodies, so that these bodies would become representative in a new kind of way, either by actual choice at the hands of voters outside their own ranks, or through a broadening of membership to reflect wider segments of the population” (1974, part I: 323). Such sentiments were expressed in the emerging political press of the period. Writers of Patriot periodicals such as Pieter ‘t Hoen and his *Post van den neder-Rhijn* (1781 – 1787) and J.C. Hespe and his *De Politieke Kruyer* and *De Constitutionele Vlieg* (see also chapter eight) made an important mark. Also, the reverend Ijsbrand van Hamelsveld (1743 – 1812) and Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck (1761 – 1825) were well known Patriot ideologists on these issues. Van Hamelsveld (cf. Van Sas, 2005: 255-264) published a characteristic blend of religion, politics and ethics, he perceived the totally rotten moral foundation of the Republic to be the root cause of the economic, military and political decay of the time (Van Sas, 2005: 259). A stable Republic should have high public morals which is, in turn, impossible without high personal morals and a high personal moral is, finally, dependent on firm religious beliefs (Israel, 1998: 1111). Schimmelpenninck’s *Verhandeling over eene wel ingerichte volksregeering* (1785) was a similar democratically inspired plea to serve citizens’ interests (cf. Van Sas, 2005: 293-302).

Joan Dirk van der Capellen tot den Pol

Joan Dirk van der Capellen tot den Pol (1741 – 1784), a provincial nobleman and member of the States of Overijssel since 1772, was arguably the foremost advocate of Patriot ideology. Since Van der Capellen was not originally from Overijssel he failed to meet the prerequisite for membership of the Provincial Estates. Still he got in, apparently due to William V who put in a good word for him (Zwitzer, 1987: 6). The fact that he got in because of William’s help is interesting because the patronage dispensed by William V was later so severely criticized by Van der Capellen and other Patriots. Perhaps, then, old and new were not so clearly demarcated even by the ‘leader’ of the Patriot movement. For the most part Van der Capellen did have unorthodox views on administration and foreign policy (in turn closely related to internal power struggles in the Republic, see chapter four). Foremost among them was his repudiation of near feudal services having to be rendered by farmers in Overijssel to their local lords, the so-called *Drostendiensten* (Van der Capellen tot den Pol & Van der Marck, 1782) and his disapproval of helping the English King George III fight the American rebels with the use of Dutch troops.

Van der Capellen’s views soon led to his suspension from the Provincial Estates between 1778 and 1782. It was during this time that he wrote his manifesto *Aan het volk van Nederland* of 1781. It became the ideological foundation of the Patriot revolution and was heavily influenced by ideas coming from the American Revolution, which in part explains his sympathy for the American rebels and his ideas on popular sovereignty (Van der Capellen tot den Pol, 1781: 24; Kossmann, 1987; Zwitzer, 1987: 6, 9-10, 13). Indeed, social movements criticizing royal policy in England and its North American colonies from the 1760s onwards closely resembled and influenced the Dutch Patriot complaints and action (Geyl, 1947: 430; Israel, 1998: 1095-1096). Van der Capellen was also attracted to the classic Republican idea (of course present in the American Revolution as well) that greater and freer involvement of the people – both in military and political matters – was the way to safeguard the Republican political community. It was, according to Van der Capellen (cf. Zwitzer, 1987: 10-13), every

citizen's duty to participate in political life. If citizens were barred from participation and if popular sovereignty was not granted, armed struggle by means of citizen militias and revolt became a justifiable option.

While in his manifesto Van der Capellen proclaimed the suppression of Dutch freedom to be the work of Stadholders who had usurped power, he was not against a Stadholder or even a monarch as such. Instead he was against any large concentration of power in the hands of a single person and the abuse of power that was often the result of it. Van der Capellen advocated more participation in civic government and called on people to start a 'bottom-up' revolutionary process of democratization. Government, to Van der Capellen and many of his fellow Patriots, was to be made answerable to the people, if need be by force. In the manifesto Van der Capellen (of course a former provincial official himself) introduces himself as someone who is "completely without interests and not out to gain personal wealth". To him these are, obviously, important values for a proper public office holder. For centuries, he writes, "the people of the Low Countries have been at the mercy of power-hungry rulers". No longer should they be led by people who only serve their own interests and fortune, who serve to feed themselves". In the past the people of the low countries were ruled by "the bravest, most wise and most virtuous people [...] they refused to be ruled by those who did not account for their actions to the people". In a direct attack on the system of patronage employed by the Stadholder and his clique, Van de Capellen sneers how "in the past, princes and rulers were not able to distribute profitable and unnecessary offices like our princes today. They were not able to so easily use so many hungry, proud and bald noblemen and other despicable high and mighty men for their cause, having them vote as they please even if it goes against the prosperity of the nation"^{xii} (Van der Capellen tot den Pol, 1781: 3-5). Thus, from the very beginning of the pamphlet, Van der Capellen gets to the heart of the matter. He condemns nepotism, patronage and serving one's own interests instead of those of the nation as a whole. The latter (compare De Missy and Van Gimnig) suggests he actively argued for the need to have a broader sense of community and common good and linked it directly to political corruption.

In his pamphlet, Van der Capellen continuously uses Dutch history to argue his case for civic reform. His discussion of the characteristics of previous Stadholders is a part of this and partly tells us what to him constituted a morally good administrator or ruler. William of Orange (1533 – 1583) had been "the most sensible, good, kind-hearted and good-natured prince" (Van der Capellen tot den Pol, 1781: 9). His son and successor, Maurice (1584 – 1625), "would have been a good ruler if only he had had as much virtue and patriotism as he had lust to rule" (Ibid., 13). Maurice, instead, had been "a man of the worst morals: a cruel, wicked and lewd man who was accustomed to seduce every woman he could, whether they were virgins, married or widows" (Ibid., 11-13).^{xiii} Van der Capellen was also critical of the regents. Interestingly, he denounced their dependence on the Stadholder and their breaking of oaths as he warned his fellow citizens "against the high and mighty [...] the Prince has got them all on his leash. To obtain offices or even a meal at court they will do everything. Oath and duty to the benefit of the fatherland are irrelevant to them" (Ibid., 17). These people, Van der Capellen continued, "treat you as their hereditary property, as their oxen and sheep, which they can slaughter or shear as they see fit" (Ibid., 21).^{xiv}

Van der Capellen, I already noted, was quick to point to ideas of popular sovereignty. The regents and other officials of the Republic were only, as he put it, the "directors-custodians of society, all their authority is derived from you. They [Prince, regents, and

magistrates, TK] should be obedient to the majority. They are only accountable to you and should submit themselves to your wishes” (Ibid., 21-22).^{xv} With a display of early-modern utilitarianism, Van der Capellen argues how “God, our common father, has created man to be happy. He has obligated us to make each other happy as much as we can”. For this reason, “we are all equal. No man should be governed by another” (Ibid., 22-23).^{xvi} Reality, according to Van der Capellen, sadly did not reflect these ideals. In order to obtain a public office, he wrote, it is not necessary to “be polite, friendly and obliging to one’s fellow citizens or to be an advocate of the nations’ freedom, privileges and prosperity, to be a true Patriot”. Such traits, in fact, only diminish the possibility of obtaining an office. For this “one only needs to win the favour of the Prince which, as we all know, requires no virtuous, polite or obliging behaviour at all” (Ibid., 36-37).^{xvii}

To Van der Capellen, nothing had changed with the advent of William IV in 1747 or that of William V in 1766. While William IV had promised “mountains of gold”, i.e., the end of abuses and the restoration of privileges (Ibid., 40), no such things had in fact been achieved. Indeed, “what have you won other than simply another master on your back who is even more difficult [because of the now hereditary Stadholderate, TK] to unhorse than your previous rider?” (Ibid., 40). To Van der Capellen, William V (1751 – 1795) was exactly the same. He abused military power and indiscreetly bestowed positions and made recommendations (see chapters four and seven). Clearly, William V was as selfish as other Princes had been before him and equally incapable of serving general (public) interests. Van der Capellen’s symbolism gets the message across even better. What to think, he writes, of the deer that have been put out so the Prince (and only the Prince at that) could hunt for game? These animals now eat the crops of the poor farmers who, “instead of getting their well-deserved rest are now obligated to guard their fields at night as well as work them during the day”. William V also surrounded himself with the wrong people, “honouring those with his trust who we already know are or will be scoundrels [...]” (Ibid., 52-54). Once again Van der Capellen addresses William V directly: “are not most of your favourites the most evil and immoral creatures, fornicators, adulterers, dice-players, who wallow in luxury [...] These are the people you choose for high office, people who sell their votes or are too incompetent or too afraid to resist your will. No! You consider the honest, able, bold Patriot, the man who dares and is able to speak up, to be your enemy. You view him with loathing and fear” (Ibid., 52-55).^{xviii} Interestingly, surrounding yourself with bad people and ignoring those who are true and loyal would at least be linked to a lack of capability (see also chapter eight in which a similar notion of political corruption appears).

The Grondwettige Herstelling

Another crucial Patriot plea for moral and administrative reform was the two-volume *Grondwettige Herstelling van Nederlands Staatswezen* of 1785. It was, essentially, a summary of the main arguments that had until then been voiced in various Patriot pamphlets and periodicals. This “catechism of political purity” (Van Sas, 2005: 213) was compiled by various leading Patriots. Chief among the authors were the Patriot intellectual Johan Hendrik Swildens (1745 – 1809) (cf. Hake, 2004), Joan Van der Capellen (again) and the latter’s nephew Robert Jasper van der Capellen van de Marsch (1743 – 1814) (Israel, 1998: 1102; Van Sas, 2005: 106). The *Herstelling* addressed most of the standard Patriot causes such as the usurpation of power by the

Stadholder. Invoking Grotius (1583 – 1645), the document showed (1785: 82-86) where things had gone wrong: “for he [the Stadholder, TK] is not a sovereign, he is not a party to a contract, he is a servant”. Other noteworthy elements from the document were the decay of society (especially in comparison with the seventeenth century), the increasing wealth and luxury of the regents as the cause of the Republic’s problems, and returning ‘rights’ to the people (Van Sas, 2005: 212). Morality, therefore, was explicitly put at the heart of the document. In the *Herstelling* (1785: viii-ix) it was stated that “with this constitution we also have to improve our morals [...]. Then our great building of the union that is built on sand and is now sinking, will get a steady foundation [...]. From general virtue will arise courage, industry and patriotism, and with these also the old honour and power of the Republic”.^{xix}

The *Herstelling* lashed out against the contracts of correspondence as well as the distribution of offices by the Stadholder. These were, after all, the reasons for keeping all important offices among a small clique of regents and/or loyalists to the Stadholder who were, often, incompetent, ‘corrupt’ and self-serving. The election of regents depended not on “reason, ability or justice” but rather on “wealth, luck and finding a girl [i.e., with connections and money, TK] gullible enough to marry you”^{xx} (Swildens, et al., 1785: II, 238; cf. Van Sas, 2005: 213). The Stadholder was, according to the *Herstelling*, in no position to recommend anyone for public office. Pointing to an ideal of merit-based appointments, they wrote how “no matter how clever, virtuous, tireless, benevolent a Stadholder might be, it is impossible for him to know those persons eligible for election well enough to make an informed decision” (Swildens, et al., 1785: 98, 179).^{xxi} Of course, such characteristics did not apply to William V. The Stadholder should therefore “either not interfere or get to know those he wishes to instate well enough” (Ibid., 98).^{xxii} The *Herstelling* was aiming at Stadholder William V’s use of ‘Lieutenant-Stadholders’ (friends and confidants put in office by the Stadholder to protect and further the Stadholders’ interests on a local level (see chapter seven for a detailed explanation). It is impossible, “that these Lieutenant Stadholders are safe and loyal leaders [...]. In Friesland, this system has changed a people’s government into some kind of absolutism”. It is harmful that the “entire civil government and the distribution of offices depends on one single regent”^{xxiii} (Ibid., 98-99). The *Herstelling* reminds the reader of the brothers Pestors. These lieutenant Stadholders in the province of Utrecht became renowned for their abuse of office, selfishness and opportunistic behaviour (cf. Gabriëls, 1989: 202). Indeed, it says (1785: 99-100), “the more regents are dependent of the Stadholder, the less they depend on and serve their fellow citizens”.^{xxiv}

In order to show how administration should and should not be executed and what was or was not considered corrupt, three types of regents are described in the *Herstelling*: the Stadholder’s regent, the Aristocrat’s regent and the People’s regent. The first kind was appointed by the Stadholder. “Not seldom”, the *Herstelling* tells us, have offices been given to “little troublemakers, scallywags and deceitful men. The few competencies they might have are enough to acquire distinguished offices from the Princely court [...]. Masculine and Republican virtues are despised and suspect in the unwholesome [poisonous? TK] air of a Princely court. Independence of the soul and noble views are often enough to be excluded from all offices” (1785: 188). Instead, it is clear from the *Herstelling* that one can only get promoted “by means of cunning, cowardly flattery and a criminal eager to please or to compromise, which can only stem from depraved [corrupted? TK] hearts and narrow-minded spirits”.^{xxv} The second kind of regent was the Aristocratic kind. Although not as low as the Stadholder-kind, they are not less haughty and much more dangerous. According to the *Herstelling* (Ibid., 188-

189), “in the eyes of the Aristocrat, the people are nothing more than a group only fit to endure their haughtiness, to obey their demands and to be a tool to further their personal interests. These Aristocrats do not, however, live without fear. All the time, they are forced to fight each other for spoils. In order to balance the different parties/factions, their behaviour is governed by trifling and fainthearted caution. They are forced to live in constant jealousy of each other, they are always sizing each other up, secretly opposing each other and covering their actions in secrecy”.^{xxvi}

Needless to say, only the People’s regent (the third kind) was truly capable of the behaviour suitable for a public official. However, the *Herstelling* seems realistic about the opportunities for ‘true democracy’ and ‘proper representation’. The authors are also pragmatic and seem to be wrestling with ‘the problem of dirty hands’, “that painful process which forces a man to weigh the wrong he is willing to do in order to do right” (Walzer, 1973: 174). When circumstances call for it, and as long as one’s intentions are pure and good, it is alright to obtain an office by grovelling, i.e., by means of patronage and/or nepotism. “In a non perfect system of electing public officials”, the *Herstelling* says (Ibid., 189), “citizens wishing to hold office, will have to endure some sort of humiliation to achieve their purpose. These men will, however, let themselves be known as magnanimous, charitable and humane”.^{xxvii} In brief, it seems to say that the ends justify the means. We read that “even though their motives might not be fully free of self interest, this means is not degrading or humiliating because we can not take offence if a great man seeks the favour of the people”.^{xxviii} “In a government of the people, it is possible for a man of merit to expect to climb higher. One can see a lofty bearing which seems to show that he is indeed a representative of the people because of merit”. In such a great man, “pride [which can after all easily turn into haughtiness, TK] is, however, tempered by an affable appearance while he knows he is to take responsibility for even the least of citizens. He knows he bears the burden of the interests of the entire nation and he defends these with perseverance because he can show that these are not his own, personal, interests but the general interests of the people”.^{xxix} (Ibid., 189-190). Perhaps we hear Van der Capellen here? He was one of the authors and seems, as we have seen, to have gotten his place in the States of Overijssel due to a personal favour of William V. Perhaps this is his apology? It might well explain why Van der Capellen was so opposed to patronage and nepotism while this, at the same time, had gotten him (in part) where he needed to be. In any case it shows an important practical moral stance. In order to do good it is sometimes necessary to do bad. In addition, we again see the wider notion of common good and community that good (i.e., not corrupt) administrators were to have.

From the *Herstelling* (Ibid., 191) certain ‘democratic’ values furthermore become apparent. The authors feel, for instance, that ‘the people’ should get to decide who are to get public offices and what characteristics are important to do a good job. It is written, for instance, that “the root of all discontent, schism and the evil that results from it will [by letting the people decide, TK] be eradicated. The people will be satisfied once the election of officials is no longer dependent on scheming or machinations. From that moment on the trust between regent and people will be restored forever [...]”.^{xxx} Indeed (Ibid., 192), “there are many who obtain offices through relatives or friends, who use common spoils and profitable offices to enrich themselves. It is in the interest of all citizens to make sure all matters of state are properly governed. It is therefore necessary to elect able men for this task”.^{xxxi} Quoting from Montesquieu and referring to ancient Athens and Rome (Ibid., 192), the authors of the *Herstelling* argue their case for popular sovereignty and the need for the population to take

matters in their own hand. This is exactly the same kind of Republican ideology, mixed with democratic elements such as electing officials that we saw earlier.^{xxxii}

In the *Herstelling*, talk of lofty ideals as popular sovereignty or representation was often mixed with how to practically organize proper government by means of bureaucratization and what administrators should or should not do to ensure ‘good government’. Should public offices, for instance, be “perpetual or temporary” (Ibid., 193)? How long should officials be allowed to remain in power? When and why should officials be removed or be permitted to stay in office? The authors are, again, pragmatic as they list all kinds of pros and cons of various characteristics of bureaucratization (see chapter two). Offices in colleges of State should, for instance, be temporary as every man should have the possibility to obtain one (Ibid., 192). Still, when an official is doing his job well, why remove him? Giving people time to settle in and get to know their work is important as well. Why “rob the state of able men before they get a chance to properly know their jobs and give offices to incompetent people” (Ibid., 194)?^{xxxiii} Most legal offices (mayors, judges, aldermen) should, according to the document (Ibid., 193-194), still be temporary to provide equal opportunity. Failure to occasionally remove such officials undermines diligent behaviour, Patriotism and only causes sluggishness and haughtiness that are detrimental to the public wellbeing and general freedom.^{xxxiv} Indeed, the *Herstelling* (Ibid., 193-194) says, “those government officials who are never forced to return to the status of citizens are likely to believe they are the masters instead of the servants of the law. Bribery, impunity, arbitrariness and bad management of public affairs stem from protracted authority”.^{xxxv} High legal offices, on the other hand, should be more permanent as it would be “a disadvantage to citizens when courts are subject to dismissals and continuous change. In these important offices “proper consideration” is necessary. There, even the practice of a lifetime would not be enough to properly serve the state”^{xxxvi} (Ibid., 195).

The *Herstelling* constantly hovers between general principles, lofty ideals and practical prescriptions. Its thirteenth chapter actually discusses the requirements for being a public official. First and foremost is a law degree (denoting attention for merit). Before, “when times were not as complicated/tricky administrators could rely on common sense and sincerity [however], different times and virtues require different capabilities”^{xxxvii} (Ibid., 207). “No one should be allowed to become alderman without having proof of his abilities in law and at least having won some cases”.^{xxxviii} Regents should all have knowledge of international law, public law, politics, negotiations, business, agriculture etc. by means of an academic education (Ibid., 207).^{xxxix} Regents also had to be wealthy to some extent. This requirement for public officials was not new. Having money of your own seemed a good ‘natural’ way to avoid abuse of office for personal financial gain. However, the argument in the *Herstelling* is more intricate than that since the commitment one has to the nation was directly linked to the possessions one had in that nation. Therefore, “all those with possessions in foreign lands must be excluded from national colleges or assemblies, since one’s heart is always where one’s possessions are” (Ibid., 208).^{xl} Still – and this can be considered quite an innovative thought – ability and merit were just as important. Not having money should not prevent able men to become public officials. In that case, the people should grant these men a yearly income to properly execute their duties. “Instead of a salary”, the authors add, “he could also obtain an extra office which could yield some profit” (Ibid., 208).^{xli} Again the authors display their pragmatism since holding more than one office was, even at the time, often considered to lead to conflicts of interests. Other requirements were being a citizen of the Republic for a certain number of years and being able to speak the language (Ibid., 208-209). Those with a tarnished reputation or who had debts and

no credit left should be excluded until paying off their creditors (Ibid., 209). Service in a militia or the army was also a prerequisite for a good public official, “as it was already customary among the ancients to excel in art of war and politics” (Ibid., 209).^{xlii} Good public officials should also either be married or living with their parents and should not be related to anyone already having an office in the same town (Ibid., 209).^{xliii}

Concluding remarks

Much like the Doelists and ‘democratic’ Orangists of 1747 – 1751 the basic purpose of the Patriots had been to wrest control of civic and provincial life from the hands of the Stadholder and his favourites and the regent oligarchies, and transfer power to ‘the people’. The basic continuity between the movements was, as we have seen, not lost on writers like Van der Capellen or Swildens when we take into account their use of history (cf. Leeb, 1973) but there was change as well. While earlier movements had by and large failed, the Patriots were not so easily thwarted. The Patriot Revolution in the Dutch Republic in the 1780s had been a social movement of substantial proportions that had been unimaginable until then. It was, as Israel (1998: 1103) has put it, “a product of the Enlightenment [...]. Its assumptions and outlook show many affinities with the thought-world of men throughout the Western world eager for fundamental reform, and the sovereignty of the people”. The revolution, spurred on by ideologists like Van der Capellen and Swildens, surpassed the Doelist movement of 1748 – 1751 in many ways. Not only did the revolutionaries manage, this time, to gain ground in both the east and west of the Republic, they actually succeeded, however briefly it would turn out to be, in purging local authorities and restoring rights of the citizenry (see chapters four and seven).

Clearly, the Patriot ideologists discussed in this chapter, condemned some of the main existing administrative practices of their time and put new ideas forward. Closer inspection of the writings of Van der Capellen and the *Herstelling* reveals explicit public values. There was apparently interest in discussing practical morality for public officials next to discussing the general principles of ‘maladministration’ of the Stadholder, provincial elite and city regents. Van der Capellen, for instance, discussed various public values and aired clear ideas of proper moral behaviour. To him (and to the Patriots in general) proper administration was based on popular sovereignty, serving common interests and not abusing one’s power. His vision of proper public official conduct (at least) entailed being selfless, not having without lust for power and being accountable for one’s actions. Apart from that, one had to be a kind and benevolent patriot and be a custodian of interests staying clear of patronage, nepotism or luxury. Most crucially, perhaps, was Van der Capellen’s idea of administrators (and even the Stadholder) as servants and custodians of the people, responsible for but most of all accountable to the people. The *Herstelling* was even more explicit than Van der Capellen in prescribing new or reemphasized public values. The document argued for replacing regents with a new elite whose appointment would be more often based on ability and conscientiousness (cf. Leeb, 1973: 189-192). A good administrator had to serve the people’s interests instead of his own, should be bound by popular sovereignty and had to meet various kinds of explicitly stated bureaucratic requirements. Sometimes a more pragmatic stance was needed. The aforementioned Patriot authors were practically inclined moralists who seized the moment to (morally) improve administration and government. This becomes apparent from the *Herstelling*

(1785: 11) in which Swildens, Van der Capellen and Capellen tot den Marsch wrote how “certain times sometimes provide moments which, more than any other times, enable us to rebuild the nation on steady ground, to improve a people. When these moments, so brief, so delicate, are over, they do not come again. They either serve to confirm slavery or to revive freedom [...] This is the deciding moment, to determine and fix the rights of the people or to say our goodbyes to them forever”.

5.5 Batavians

As described in chapter four, the Patriot revolution of the early 1780s was followed by an Orangist counter revolution between 1787 and 1795 brought about by Prussian intervention. However, the spirit of Patriot opposition and revolutionary agitation over oligarchic rule and corrupt regents, the Stadholder’s abuse of power, and a lack of opportunities for civic engagement in (local) government remained alive despite (or perhaps because of) the Orangist crackdown of 1787. The Patriots merely went into exile or hid in the Republic awaiting more opportune times. These came with the arrival of the French troops in 1795. The degree of ideological continuity between the Patriot revolutionary movement of the 1780s and the Batavian Revolution in 1795 is, as a result, striking (Israel, 1998: 1120-1121). As has been well documented elsewhere (cf. Boels, 2011; Leeb, 1973; Schama, 1977) the drafting and adopting of a new constitution and the formation of new institutions led to continuous ideological strife over the content of the constitution and the shape and (unitary or federal) structure of the new Dutch state. Since the general reforms proposed by the Batavians have been discussed in detail before (Grijzenhout, et al., 1987; Rosendaal, 2005a; Van Sas & Te Velde, 1998; Schama, 1977), there is little need to thoroughly restate them here. What follows, however, is a brief overview of views on specific Batavian best-opinion morality of public administration.

The basic foundation of Batavian morality is to be can be found in the pages of the new constitution (De Gou, 1983; Rosendaal, 2005b; Van Sas & Te Velde, 1998) and in the writings of some of its ‘value producers’, such as Isaac Gogel and Willem Anthonie Ockerse (to be discussed below). Generally speaking, the suggested reforms of the Batavians were (at least in theory) based on the basic revolutionary sentiments of the era: ideas of freedom, equality, a separation of powers and popular sovereignty. In line with the general sense of decay and doom still hanging over the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, the Batavians were also deeply concerned with the supposed deterioration of morals. As in other European countries (Kossmann, 1995, 119-120), and as had been the case for many Patriots, moral decay was often considered the root cause of decay in other areas as well, such as politics, economy and culture. The Batavians believed that if the Dutch were ever able to return to their ‘golden’ seventeenth century, the first step was to revitalize the nation through moral moral rejuvenation, by means of ‘new’ politics and new administration. To the Batavians, popular elections rather than political appointments were, for instance, meant to end a system of extensive patronage with which the Stadholder and/or an oligarchy of officials had wielded enormous influence for decades (see chapter seven). This meant that hereditary offices and mechanisms of office rotation within the oligarchic town and provincial councils should also be abolished. Public offices should instead be opened up to a wider group of people. Indeed, as Palmer (1954: 25) put it, “neither family, nor church, nor estate, nor town council, nor provincial assembly possessed [any longer] any public power in its own right”.

An important attempt at ‘national’ moral and political rejuvenation and reform – in part by means of education – was provided by the political journal *De Democraten* (Jourdan, 2009: 9; De Lange, 1971: 506; Van Sas, 2005: 289). It was edited by Gogel and Ockerse, two influential Batavian ideologists and politicians. The journal was a prime example of using the press to further both men’s Batavian ideology, spelled out for a wider audience. Among its main topics, listed by De Lange (1971: 507), we find popular sovereignty, the equality of all burghers and decisive – because unitary – administration. The journal, for instance, insisted that free elections were to guarantee honest representation, responsibility and accountability by administrators. To men like Gogel the bond between people and its representatives in political institutions had long since been broken and needed to be restored by means of centralization, unity and ‘true’ representation. They were not, as De Lange (1971: 509) tells us, arguing for an aristocracy eligible for election. Rather, they were arguing for a participatory democracy in which the people actually had a say. In true Batavian fashion Gogel and Ockerse furthermore combined calls for a moral ‘revolution’ with nation-building, centralization and state formation (Van Sas, 2005: 289-290). Constitutional revolution (see chapters four and eight) was only believed to be able to succeed if it went together with a moral revolution. It is because of the importance of the journal and both men as ideologists of the Batavian period that I briefly elaborate on Gogel and Ockerse and provide some further insight into their best-opinion concerning public morality. As we will see, both exemplify many of the core Batavian ideas on morality and reform that have been discussed in the above and will reappear in case study three.

Isaac J.A. Gogel

Isaac Jan Alexander Gogel (1765 – 1821) played an important role in establishing the Batavian Republic’s main institutions, most notably as first minister of finance of the Batavian Republic, a function he continued to hold under King Louis Bonaparte between 1806 and 1809 and after 1810 as part of the imperial government that was devoted to the Dutch departments of the French Empire (Schama, 1977: 617, 619-620). When, after the defeat of Napoleon, the Kingdom of the Netherlands was proclaimed at the Congress of Vienna in 1814, Gogel however refused to take office under the new regime. To him, according to Schama (1977: 630-645), this was only a restoration of the pre-1795 Orangist clique he so despised. Gogel’s aversion to the Orangist camp (despite his pragmatic calls for reconciliation, see Van Sas, 2005: 289) was deeply influenced by that same republican tradition which, as we have seen, had inspired several Patriot best-opinion ideologists before him. Gogel addressed similar issues. In a public lecture delivered in 1796 at a meeting of like-minded Patriots in Amsterdam,³ Gogel discussed the idea that the Republic was in moral decay. To him this was not necessarily a bad thing. Instead, it offered a way forward as he stressed how good morals and good laws all stem from striving towards the happiness of the entire society instead of individual happiness. Similar to the later Batavian constitution (cf. Roosendaal, 2005: General Principles, art. vi), Gogel said a virtuous public official was to live according to the golden rule “do unto others as you would have others do unto you [...]”. The desire to make profit and ever increasing wealth has brought immorality, disloyalty and extortion”. “Civil servants”, according to Gogel, “no

³ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag [NL-HaNA], *Collectie 039 Gogel, 1752-1820*, accessnumber 2.21.005.39, inventory number [inv.nr.] 2, page [p.] 10-13.

longer saw the need to behave better than the people or their so-called masters. Stealing from the nation was no longer condemned in a harsh manner and ceased to be wrong – each pillaged and looted at will and the nations’ finances were ruined”.^{xliv} A similar message was conveyed by Gogel in *De Democraten* in which he stated how “only virtue and capability could be reasons to occupy a public office”. National unity, based on national loyalty and *l’esprit publique* would lead to thrift in (public) administration and finances”.⁴ As one might suspect, the opposite of this was the ‘Aristocratic system’, based on self interest and the lust to rule, the cherished system of those wishing to promote provincial interests and their own wellbeing over that of the nation”.^{xlv,5}

While Gogel had largely similar arguments as many Patriot ‘moral’ reformers before him, he also – in typical Batavian style – added something relatively new to the mix in a lecture to his (unitarian) fraternity – of which men like Wybo Fijnje (see chapter eight) and Ockerse were also members – on 18 January 1798 and in several issues of *De Democraten*. There, he made the (unitary Batavian) argument that a strong central state was the solution to overcome many of the problems that had paralyzed the pre-1795 Dutch Republic and would paralyze any federal state in the future. Among them were moral decay and corruption. From Colenbrander’s reproduction of the lecture (1905-1922, part II: cxxvni), this much at least becomes clear. Gogel, in his lecture, blames the faction strife among various groups in the Republic, the political inconsistency and the continuing changing of governments on the “dependence on internal quarrels, the mercy of external commonwealths, trifles and chimera’s”.^{xlvi} Lack of central authority and regulation had meant that the Dutch people were unable to curb vice and passions. The downfall of the Dutch people, according to Gogel, would be a sure thing unless they reached unanimity and unity to overcome strife. In order to do this there was a need for powerful administration that would earn the trust of the people and could thereby force all to do their duty for the well-being of the common good. If this does not happen, says Gogel, “then self interest, lust to rule and violent passions would suppress and smother the soft voice of reason [...], then ability, honesty and good virtues will be passed over.”^{xlvii}

Willem Anthonie Ockerse

Willem Anthonie Ockerse (1760 – 1826) – a former theology student and preacher – also argued for a new republican, democratic and national political system and in doing so presents us with clear views on moral rejuvenation and the ending of the political corruption of the old ‘Aristocratic system’. Van Sas’ essay (2005: 303-313) and Stouten’s biography (1982) have already provided much information of this important but largely forgotten Batavian and his political writings. His specific best-opinion thoughts on public values and political corruption have, however, remained relatively underexplored. In a work entitled *Batavians! Eischt eene nationale conventie* from 1795, Ockerse argued for a popularly elected National Assembly that was to provide a new constitution. Interestingly enough, as Van Sas (2005: 305-306) explains, Ockerse was critical of the events of 1787 and what he called the ‘Aristocratic system’ built by the once victorious Patriots. The patriots of the 1770s and 1780s (see before) had argued for moral reforms and the end of Patronage and oligarchy. According to Ockerse, many were now in power and had turned into a new Aristocracy. They no longer had any interest in true

⁴ NL-HaNA, *Collectie 039 Gogel, 1752-1820*, 2.21.005.39, inv.nr. 173, issue 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, issue 20.

reform. To Ockerse, a truly representative National Assembly of a unitary state would reduce the number of public offices. Centralization and a national convention would guarantee simplicity and retrenchment and end the distribution and multiplication of offices so common in the old Republic. It would also end the eternal and harmful bickering among the various autonomous bodies in the Republic. In his quest for centralization and strong central administration as the cure for the Republic's illnesses, Ockerse was much like Gogel. The latter had, after all, argued for the same in the mentioned lecture to their fraternity. True popular sovereignty, according to Ockerse, entailed that the people (i.e., the elected representatives) would have to make the laws. It was Ockerse's ideal that every delegate would represent the nation as a whole instead of particularistic provincial or local city interests.

Van Sas (2005: 307-309) describes how Ockerse continuously returns to the themes of unity, democracy, popular sovereignty and anti-aristocracy in various public lectures held before the Amsterdam Patriot society *Doctrina et Amicitia* in 1796 and 1797. His 'Aristocrat bashing' is interesting to us as it shows a continuing line of argument between the Batavian Ockerse and Patriots such as Van der Capellen. Contemplating the current situation, Ockerse complains that he sees nobles instead of burghers and wealthy gentlemen instead of true representatives occupying the seats of government. Instead of gatherings of the people he sees sovereign meetings (Tydeman, 1831, part 2: 174) and denounces the aristocracy which is, to him, only a representative of itself instead of the people. To Ockerse, the 'aristocracy' had already usurped power after the revolt against the Spanish. To him, as I noticed before, the Patriots of 1787 had been more of the same and it was precisely for this reason that the new political system of 1795 should be fundamentally different. A new, unitary and democratic, constitution would, according to Ockerse, "end all abuses and will fit our nature, our virtues, our interests, our needs". It would also ensure that "the administrator is only a short-lived representative, that administration is responsible to the nation and that the voter is not a selfish intermediate regent but a popular body through consultation". Such a constitution would prevent anarchistic chaos as well as aristocratic subversion and despotic abuse (Tydeman, 1831, part 2: 185-186).

Clearly Ockerse saw institutional unity, representation and popular sovereignty as being directly related to ending the general corruption of the body politic by ensuring 'new' public values of public responsibility, accountability, representation and consultation. A similar message was conveyed in another main work of Ockerse devoted to describing the 'national character of the Dutch' (Ockerse, 1788-1797). It provides an interesting view on Ockerse's best-opinion regarding public morality and political corruption. Van Sas (2005: 309-312), again, explains how Ockerse uses his description of 'the Dutch character' as a political instrument to argue for institutional unity. According to Van Sas, Ockerse purposefully uses the discourse of decay to argue his case. Dutch society had to return to the morals and virtues of the past that had once made the Dutch Republic into a great nation. Politics and the message of unity, representation and popular sovereignty were to bring about the re-civilization and moral rejuvenation of a corrupted political society. Aristocracy, federalism and the hunt for offices (also among the Patriots of 1787) would all impede this cause.

Ockerse belonged to the small circle of radicals who staged the coup of 22 January 1798 (see chapters four and eight). His desire for a unitary constitution that would end all problems prompted him to take such forceful measures. To Ockerse, the coup of 22 January was simply necessary to break the political deadlock and in this he clearly resembled other radicals, like Van Langen, Vreede and Fijnje (see chapter eight for more on these individuals). Ockerse did not, however, become a member of the Interim Executive. Instead, he chose to keep working on the new constitution as he became chairman of the third (and final) drafting committee (cf. Van Sas, 2005: 312; Schama, 1977: 303-307). His involvement in the radical coup had, however, alienated him from some of his former, more moderate, friends who were worried about the radical turn of events and the ‘lust for offices’, combined with political purging, displayed by some of the radicals. In a letter to Gogel on 3 February 1798 (see Colenbrander, 1905-1922, II: 715), he addresses this problem and justified his actions from which his views on correct (and incorrect) public behaviour become clear. He describes himself as “an honest and selfless advocate for the good cause of the fatherland and wishes not to be equated with hot-headed and immoral fortune hunters who are only out for personal gain and are motivated by lowly urges”.^{xlviii} Ockerse then goes on to defend the coup of 22 January. He writes how he “despises those who hunt for offices, the hot-headed ultra-revolutionaries, but in order to restrain them one should stop the destruction of the fatherland and the trampling of the people by evil despots who would have brought disaster on all of us”. Ockerse in fact blamed the current divisions, indecisiveness and long-windedness on the personal political corruption of people in government who only wanted to acquire offices and serve their own interests. The ‘despots’ he spoke of were the ‘federalist-minded’ politicians in the first and second National Assembly as well as ‘Aristocrats’ and the city oligarchies. The current state of affairs, Ockerse writes to Gogel, is one of “phlegm, weakness, lack of energy, a deviation from principles and an inclination towards aristocracy and urban federalism. This poison has infected near all bodies, even our own fraternity. We need purification to provide health to this phlegmatic and languishing body”.^{xlix}

In what Jonhston might call a ‘classical’ sense, Ockerse thus quite literally speaks of corruption as the general degeneration or indeed sickness of the body politic. A healthy, united political body is being invaded by the poison of corruption (i.e., division, federalism, indecisiveness, hunting for offices and serving personal interests). Ockerse (like Gogel) seems to have been a typical example of the unitary Batavian who, at the same time, did not shun from using strong measures to get what he wanted. In this he also closely resembled ‘radicals’ like Vreede, Fijnje and Van Langen (see chapter eight). To Ockerse, the coup of 22 January had been a choice between two evils; necessary to speed up the process of constitution building and to steer the Republic in the right direction. The end justified the means. This is exemplified by the reasons given by the radicals to stage their 22 January coup. A proclamation by the new Constituent Assembly on that very day, in which we can clearly recognize Ockerse’s views, stated how: “it is time to close the gap between an orderly state of affairs and the deformed administration and its ruinous consequences which have so often befallen our nation [...] to end the confusion and uncertainty which has paralyzed our prosperity and has brought us [this] cesspit [...], “to end the lust to rule and the lack of administration”. It is time, the Assembly continued, to “end the plans of those suffering from megalomania”.¹ The proclamation continued by stating that “state funds have been abused to force a constitution on the people who had already rejected it in favour of people’s own personal goals”. It was time to end the use of public money, “the fruits of such hard work”, for foul personal interest. The

coup was necessary as a means to achieve popular elections rather than political appointments that were, in turn, to end a system of extensive patronage by Stadholder and oligarchic town councils alike. Privileged interests, hereditary offices and mechanisms of office rotation within the oligarchic town and provincial councils should be abolished (Staatsregeling, GP, Art. xv, xxv; Palmer, 1954, 25). In order to achieve this, a coup and a certain degree of self interest and acquiring of offices could be condoned. This line of reasoning will reoccur in chapter eight, particularly when people speak of ‘Italian Statecraft’.

Concluding remarks

From the previous it has become apparent that the French-Batavian period had a great impact on Dutch political and administrative history despite its relatively short life span. The various institutional breakthroughs and developments brought, among other things, institutional centralization and the beginnings of the ‘modern’ Dutch nation state. In the midst of these fundamental changes we are also able to discover the beginnings of a new kind of public morality. A substantial portion of Batavian best-opinion (exemplified by Gogel and Ockerse) was about moral reform and/or rejuvenation. A part of the new foundations of the state was made up of (new) morality of public administration. Attempts to end an old and corrupted administrative system were at the top of the Batavians’ list of priorities as they vehemently argued for a new kind of public administration. These Batavian best-opinion authors took the earlier Patriot line of argument a decisive step further. With their aim to end federalism (and with it particularism, patronage, oligarchy and privilege) through unity and centralization, they provided a new moral foundation based on ‘new’ or at least re-emphasized public values, which were in turn based on a different view of the common good. With their ideas of nation (in the more modern sense of the word), men like Gogel and Ockerse clearly had a much more inclusive notion of the public or common good and the public values they espoused – most notably representation, accountability, responsibility, participation and consultation – were tied to it. Good (i.e., not corrupt) administrators and/or politicians had to be accountable to the people; had to be responsible because they acted for an entire nation and (ideally) had to represent more interests in that nation than only those of a small and powerful elite. With a wider and more inclusive notion of common good, a whole new way of looking at public morality and political corruption seemed to have started. In chapter eight I will discuss just how much of this ‘new’ best-opinion can be found in relation to actual cases.

Towards part three

In the previous chapters of part two I discussed the general historical background and context for the scandals discussed in this book and provided a view on best-opinion thinking on public values and political corruption. In the following third part I turn to the case studies as I offer a detailed and in-depth empirical view on explicit scandals to reveal the open otherwise hidden morals. The cases are spread out over the entire period coinciding with the three reform movements in Dutch political-administrative history as described earlier. The cases combine a Johnstonian approach with Hoetjes’ heuristics and theoretical insights taken from Weber and historical institutionalism. Chapter six offers a case study on political corruption, bureaucratization and moral reform in the context of Holland’s changing system of taxation around 1750.

Chapter seven offers a case study of political corruption in the years of Patriot agitation and revolt during the 1770s and 1780s. Chapter eight offers a case study on political corruption in the context of major transformations of the Dutch state following the Batavian revolution of 1795.

