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Fortuyn, Van Gogh, Hirsi Ali

Driving out the Unholy Trinity from The Netherlands

Henri Beunders

beunders@fhk.eur.nl

The words ‘vulnerability’ and ‘tolerance’ are pretty vague in meaning. When these words are used, there is a lot of suggestion, image and good intentions hanging around, and very little science or hard facts.

The same is true for the Netherlands as well. Abroad it had the image of a tolerant, liberal and free society, where things could be said and done that were forbidden elsewhere. So, the question is: how on earth was it possible that this country overnight turned into a kind of killing field, or clash of civilizations?

I will try to explain to you why in the past decades the Netherlands became so vulnerable that in 2002 a sudden Revolt was able to break out that lasted for years and still is not over yet. The crises produced two political killings, the third fled the country. Because all these three were liberal individualists, who criticized two types of religion - the political-cultural left or ‘Red Church’ and the fundamentalist Islam - I call them the Unholy Trinity that had to be driven out to restore the peace.

Freedom of speech and freedom of religion are the key factors in the crises. Cultural wars and mimetic rivalry are other factors. Americanization and the advent of the multicultural society are the *forces profondes*.

I

Tolerance and the Dutch Constitution

Let us talk shortly about tolerance first. Everybody seems to be in favour of it. Except when we collectively decide we must *not* tolerate things, like drunken driving, smoking in public buildings et cetera.

In the present Dutch constitution, created in 1983, Article 1 starts with these sentences:

‘In cases alike in the Netherlands everyone will be treated in the same way. Discrimination because of religion, philosophy of life, political orientation, race, gender or on what ground thinkable, is forbidden’.

So, a black coloured Dutchman has by nature the right to be treated in the same way as a white one. This has, however, nothing to do with tolerance. Tolerance means that a dominant group permits to a non-dominant group to have opinions or ways of existence that seem to deviate from the usual order. If we ask the native people to be tolerant towards the immigrants with their exotic ways, this implies the existence of a hierarchy. There is a group that tolerates, and there is a group that *is* tolerated. In the strict sense of the word tolerance is discrimination and therefore hostile to the constitution.

As a Dutch historian once remarked, all philosophers who thought about these things, John Locke, Mirabau, Thomas Paine for instance, knew that religious tolerance can be of no use if you think all men by nature have inviolable rights, like that of freedom of thought, expression and religion.¹

Of course a nation state has to be intolerant sometimes, for instance when freedom of religion is used to undermine the state, or uses or promotes violence which in democratic societies is the monopoly of the state. This is a matter of principle. The rest is a matter of political debate.

Here we have to conclude that a word like tolerance is a very difficult and complicated word that has to be used very carefully. Words are important. The same is true for all those container words like racism, fascism, populism etcetera that were yelled so easily in recent decades to label and scapegoat people and things you fear or just do not like.

This lazy way of using words to describe reality or ‘the enemy’ is the other side of this so called liberal, ‘tolerant’ society of the Netherlands. It keeps you from researching the things going on in the real world. During the Nineties in Holland this ended in political correctness, the phenomenon that you know very clearly who the angels and devils are in society, and that there is no need to look into it anything any further. This is a comforting

¹ E.H. Kossmann (1987) *Politieke Theorie en Geschiedenis. Verspreide opstellen en voordrachten*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 49ev.

situation until someone, like the Unholy Trinity, comes on stage and pinpoints with the real meaning of the words the real problems and dilemmas in our newly multicultural society.

One of these dilemmas is the question of the priority between the fundamental rights in the Constitution, when rights touch each other.

Article 1 about the interdiction of discrimination we already have mentioned.

Article 6: 'Everybody has the right to profess freely his religion or philosophy of life, individual or together with others, subject to everyone's responsibility according to the law'.

Article 7: 'Nobody needs beforehand permission to express thoughts or feelings through the press, except everyone's responsibility according to the law'.

Another part of this article states this is true for any other medium.

One now probably thinks, well, this dilemma of conflicting articles is true for any constitution. How right they are. That's why in America the Supreme Court is so important, and there are political battles going on all the time when the president is about to appoint a new member.

Not so in Holland. Besides the Cultural Wars between the Sixties-elites and 'the masses' and the mimetic rivalry among several groups that were going on in the past decade, maybe the fundamental problem here was the total absence of any public discussion about the new Constitution of 1983, and the possible contradictions it might lead to in everyday life. The reason is simple: in a society dominated by *one* intellectual group everybody agrees about these priorities, even the judges. But as soon as someone stands up and says, hey wait a minute, I do not agree, then it appears that few people had even thought about those possible contradictions.

I would like to say one more thing about this Constitution of 1983, because it links the '68-generation that was in power in 2002 to it, and to the crises that followed.

A late Dutch historian in 1984 said about this Constitution: 'Dutch society of today asks extremely much of itself'. Not only because this Constitution is probably the only one in the whole world that starts with an interdiction – 'Thou shall not discriminate' - but because all the rest of the articles is one long catalogue of rights of the citizens, and duties the state should fulfil. From good housing, employment and health care to privacy and leisure time. There is not even one civic duty the citizens themselves should fulfil.

We might easily connect the consequences of this Constitution to the harsh criticism the British author and former psychiatrist Theodore Dalrymple has expressed in his books about the fatal consequences of the Welfare State and the anti-authoritarian attitudes the '68-revolution had for the generations raised in the British ghettos. He depicts these results as

follows: passivity and scapegoating others for their own failure.²

II

The Forces profondes

The words ‘Violence & Religion’, the theme of the Amsterdam Conference are exactly the key words to understand why Fortuyn and Van Gogh got killed, and Hirsi Ali was exorcized by what Fortuyn called ‘the Red Church’ of cultural and intellectual elites, but perhaps also by the majority of the people who maybe have regarded them as persons too dangerous for Holland.

The Netherlands cannot cope with these two facts of life, religion and violence, easily. The fact of this catalogue-of-rights-Constitution, and the total absence of discussion about it, was proof to this. The real cause for our problematic relation with violence is historical and partly lies in the smallness of our country. You have problems finding it on a globe. The two World Wars have left big scars on our national psyche. We did not take part in World War I for instance.

Staying aloof, and having the Peace Palace in The Hague seemed to be a better shield of protection. Being without military defence, we took the moral high ground to survive. Do not give offence to anyone! But it was not a lesson in pain, suffering and sacrifice.

What was striking even more during the Sixties was the dazzling speed at which secularization spread across this country. People ran out of churches quicker than in neighbouring countries. When Pope John Paul II visited Holland in 1985 demonstrators pelted his pope mobile with tomatoes and rotten eggs. The explanation for this fierce anti-church stance of the post-war generations seems to be that the corselet of pre-war morality had been tightened more strictly in Holland than elsewhere. Why this was so can be linked also to the fact that the Netherlands stayed neutral during World War I. The pre-1914 dominant bourgeois and Christian views on morality could survive without interruption. During World War II the Dutch only felt humiliation and the need to ‘adjustment’, or downright collaboration. The peculiar post-war history of the Dutch has a lot to do with these two world wars.

² Theodore Dalrymple, *Life at the Bottom: The Worldview That Makes the Underclass* (2001).

The post-war generations are burdened with feelings of shame and guilt about this wartime collaboration, and anger about the prolonged corselet of pre-war church doctrines. So, the cry 'Free at last, down with religion' was part of the cultural revolution of the Sixties. Theo van Gogh was its fierce defender.

However, traditionally the Dutch are Christian people. So, after the Sixties a lot of quasi-religious dump fell unto the political market, mostly out of feelings of guilt. About the Third World, the Environment, animal rights, etcetera. Non-religious vegetarian fanatics like the killer of Pim Fortuyn had the same traits as the born-again Muslim fundamentalist killer of Theo van Gogh.

III

The Genesis of the Dutch Crisis

In early 2002, the then prime-minister Wim Kok called Fortuyn 'a mediahype'. That is: much ado about nothing. The word mediahype is part of the cultural wars in Holland, a blunt instrument to denounce an event unworthy of too much attention. In some cases it says something about the way the media work, but in most cases it explains nothing. Years later Wim Kok still couldn't even start giving a beginning of an explanation of what happened in 2002 that cut his social-democratic party into halve, after eight years of government under his leadership that he and many people thought was very successful.³

That Fortuyn was not a 'mediahype' is clear from what happened after his death. Crisis after crisis followed, and one more killing too, Fortuyn's friend and adviser Theo Van Gogh, on November 2nd, 2004, and with the 'banishment' of Van Gogh's new soul mate Ayaan Hirsi Ali as the temporary final act in the summer of last year 2006.

Though the media may sometimes in the heart of the matter, the media seldom is the heart of the matter. It is the changes in society and the world of ideas that matter. The two structural crises were international: Americanisation of life and the multicultural society. In Holland the emancipation of 'the masses' was an extra problem, that is for that part of the Sixties-generation that held the key positions in the public sphere of high brow culture and media.

³ Piet de Rooy en Henk te Velde, Nederland volgens Kok (2006) Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek.

In explaining the genesis of the revolt of 2002 besides these structural crises the Girardian themes of rivalry, violence and religion (or lack of it) are important components.

After the Fall of the Wall, the West had reached the End of History, Fukuyama said. Liberal, democratic capitalism had triumphed. In this atmosphere 75 years of Christian-democratic supremacy in Dutch politics ended in 1994. After 12 years in office the Rotterdam born roman-catholic prime-minister Ruud Lubbers had to leave office, after his party had almost been cut in halve at the elections because he called the Dutch Welfare State a 'sick' society that had to be changed into a working Holding Company.

His old Jezuit college schoolmate, Hans van Mierlo, saw his chance he was waiting for for years. Turned away from religion, this bohemian liberal journalist from down-town Amsterdam had raised a new Democratic Party in the Sixties, fixed on the political autonomy of the individual citizen, in public and private matters. After that, he stayed on the margins of power most of the time, complaining in 1989 about his old friend the prime-minister: 'Why did it happen to him and not to me?'⁴ In 1994 he would become the kingmaker of the Purple Cabinet – socialist red, liberal blue and democratic green. It succeeded out of mix of personal envy and political justified motives.

More important in Girardian terms, it was the first time the arch enemies socialists and capitalists joined forces in one and the same cabinet, a result of 'shaking off the ideological feathers' by the socialists after many years of frustrating opposition. After this fusion all politics became more of the same, as the new outsider politicians would say.

IV

'An Amsterdam Cabinet'

Since '68 many Christian media had turned left, so this Purple Cabinet was welcomed by the majority of the media, and the people. And certainly by the post-'68-generation elites that were centred in Amsterdam and still thought they were the masters of the universe of culture ever since. One of Van Mierlo's friends, the famous writer Harry Mulisch, acclaimed this new cabinet as follows:

⁴ Arendo Joustra en Erik van Venetië (1990) Ruud Lubbers, *Manager in de politiek*. Baarn: Anthos, 255.

‘Well, it had always been the provinces that were calling the shots, and I count The Hague among them too. This will become an Amsterdam cabinet, a big-city-cabinet. They know a totally different kind of people, move about in other circuits. That gives a cabinet like this a different aura, more worldly’.⁵

In other words: a quarter of a century after ‘1968’ The Netherlands, once again, would become a beacon, this time of progressive cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, postmodernism with the intellectual, artistic and autonomous citizen as the centre of all things.

However, as you may know, postmodernism means irony, the rose blossoming on the grave of lost illusions. Behind the mask of commercialized progressiveness most of the Purple enthusiasts felt freed from ideology, free to join the world of money and television. The big fusion between money and culture began. David Brooks has called these new elites that rose to power under President Clinton ‘the bourgeois bohemians’.

They had learned from both the radical sixties and the yuppie eighties, and tried to combine both to live in the best of both worlds, living like ‘Bobos in Paradise’. Battered early in the administration with a culture war skirmish over gays in the military, Brooks writes, the Clintonites settled on ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’. If ever there was a slogan that captures the Third Way efforts to find a peaceful middle ground, that was it’.⁶

In Holland, with its moralistic tradition and with the Sixties having been more extreme in its results, the commercialization of the media culture took place in a shorter period of time, and was more visible for the public. Suddenly writers, journalists, politicians, intellectuals were rushing to the tv-studios to tell about their unhappy childhood to sell their book, movie or party, or talk about anything to stay in the picture.

On the other hand, the nouveau riche (internet, real estate) envied the status of the old cultural elite, and tried to fight its way into the old but commercialised ‘high’ media culture. So, suddenly talk shows were everywhere, in a nice café setting as a substitute for the unsafe empty public sphere. And all the chattering people around those tables were very happy with themselves. This looked like paradise indeed. Never to be changed again. There were words of course that were taboo in these witty conversations on the topic of the day. The word elite – this was the elite that still said it was anti-elite – and the word income. At some nights, the collective annual income in million of euros of the people around the table was higher than

⁵ NRC Handelsblad, September 30th, 1994.

⁶ David Brooks (2000) Bobos in Paradise. The New Upper Class and How They Got There. New York: Simon & Schuster, 257.

the number joining the chattering. In America money is an accepted measure for success, shame and guilt are still abound in Holland in this respect. But envy seems universal.

The new cabinet was, in fact, pretty nervous about the bold action it had undertaken to drive out the Christians from power: this adventure could not fail! The instruments to achieve this were political-correct silence on unpleasant matters, and intensifying the ties with befriended journalists, like in the old days of the centre/left-wing cabinet-Den Uyl in the Seventies.⁷ Based on interviews among 750 journalists in the late nineties, 75% of the Dutch journalists called themselves leftist.⁸ The result was the so called political-publicitary complex, and political correctness.

To be sure, during the Nineties there were politicians who initiated a debate on the negative sides of the multicultural society, like the liberal politician Frits Bolkestein, introducing a genre of discourse we might call new realism.⁹ He was labelled a ‘proto-fascist’ as would Pim Fortuyn nearly ten years later. Or publicist Paul Scheffer who, in 2000, described the Dutch neglect of immigrants ‘The Multicultural Tragedy’.

The external luck for the Purple Cabinet was that the economy started to blossom again. But together with the emancipatory and mobilizing capacity of the interactive internet, this fostered the idea of the autonomy of the citizen indeed. The social law of the revolution of the rising expectations got into action along, of course, and ‘the mimetic rivalry on a planetary scale’, as Girard explained the 9/11 crisis.¹⁰

V

Nihilism-with-a-human-face

At the turn of millennium, however, the cultural pessimists were complaining that the only thing ‘the masses’ were interested in was: ‘fun, fun, fun’. So, what went wrong? What were the reasons for the sudden revolt that broke through the surface of ‘fun, fun, fun’ in late 2001?

⁷ Ilja van den Broek (2002) Heimwee naar de politiek. De herinnering aan het kabinet-Den Uyl. Amsterdam; Wereldbibliotheek.

⁸ Mark Deuze (2002) Journalists in the Netherlands: an analysis of the people, the issues and the (inter)national environment. Amsterdam: Aksant.

⁹ Baukje Prins (2003) Het lef om taboes te doorbreken. Nieuw realisme in het Nederlandse discours over multiculturalisme. www.migrantenstudies.nl/inhoud/2002-4/MS%202002-4%20PRINS.doc, 4

¹⁰ Le Monde, November 6, 2001.

Of course 9/11 opened everybody's eyes, shook everybody's beliefs, got on everybody's nerves. One month later Pim Fortuyn was chosen as the leader of a new national party, Leefbaar Nederland (Liveable Netherlands) that had gained big successes already locally for years.

The country had been - as is always the case in revolutionary situations - in a state of ferment for a much longer period. Under the surface of 'fun, fun, fun', frustration had been brewing for years. The main background was firstly the fading away of borders, literally and figuratively. And, secondly, it was the materialistic outlook of the Purple Cabinets, in the economic and philosophical sense of the word, full of the rational choice theories about the nature of human beings.

Prime-minister Kok, born in 1938 in a working-class family, was a former union-man. His outlook on life was formed during the years of post-war reconstruction in the fifties: by working hard you will get somewhere. It was a linear way of thinking, in which there was little room for God or philosophy. This traditional economic way of thinking dominated the Purple cabinet. Van Mierlo's junior Democratic party added the freedom of choice of the individual in all aspects of life. After abortion now the marriage of homosexuals and euthanasia were legalised. Pragmatism was his magic word.

This moral laissez-faire attitude created an ethical vacuum, and misunderstood completely the undercurrent of malaise that was growing since the eighties on this materialistic philosophy in which all centred around the ego and the individual, around money and success. Emile Durkheim maybe the first thinker who said that society and religion is the same thing. Prime-minister Ruud Lubbers was called a 'manager in politics'. However, he never did throw away his catholic organic philosophy of 'On the way together'. This Christian idea was traded for the individualistic maxim: 'Go your own way'.

The Purple view about the autonomy of the individual, the uselessness of a metaphysical morality, and the necessary self-restraint of the state in all things economic, artistic, moral and societal, led to a great impotence to cope with the greatest problems of the nineties: violence and the multicultural society. By some Islam was seen as a life style, like being single or gay or being fond of hiking.

To be sure, the second Purple cabinet did try to slow down the growing tide of asylum seekers, in some years with the speed of a mid-size city. The law they got through parliament in 2000 to achieve this was surrounded by as much silence as possible, out of fear for the left-wing of Kok's own party, and part of the left-wing media. This is one reason why Fortuyn

could yell so loudly that the government was doing nothing, and that his standpoint on immigration and asylum was: ‘full is full’.

In an economic world of thinking in which the autonomy of the individual is the new God, or Idol, it is a small wonder that the Purple cabinets were even more helpless in respect to the other big and emotionalizing theme of the nineties: violence. First there was the Srebrenica-slaughter in former Yugoslavia in 1995, where the Dutch blue helmets did not prevent the killing of 7.000 Muslims.

Helplessness was the same impression in the cases of what during the Nineties got to be called ‘useless violence’ in Holland itself – cases of rape-murder, or cases of just beating one to death because ‘the other’ had given a wrong word or a wrong look. These incidents led to ever bigger national mourning events, lady Diana-style. At one of those memorials, in 1997, prime-minister Kok spoke. He said: ‘I stand here with empty hands’. He thought the growing loss of public morality had to do something with television. In 1999 his minister of Justice, after another shooting incident at a disco, declared: ‘It is for society and not for the state to guarantee the safety in the streets’.¹¹

These were the days in which people, not only those in the new multicultural ghettos, got the unpleasant idea to be deserted by the state. The ‘fun, fun, fun’-culture of collective outdoor amusement partly was the reaction to the growing loneliness of the individual citizens, alone with themselves, their autonomy and their television sets.

In 2000 the prestigious senior columnist J.L. Heldring described the dominant climate in The Netherlands as ‘nihilism-with-a-human-face’, to which an enlightened conservatism would be a good alternative.¹²

VI

Envy in the Media Culture

Nobody listened to this warning. Not ‘The Hague’, not ‘Amsterdam’, the self-proclaimed creator of the Purple ‘progressiveness’, and not the provincial town of ‘Hilversum’, where all national radio- and television stations are based. The reason: after so many grass-roots mini-revolts in local politics the real revolt broke out in Rotterdam, a

¹¹ Henri Beunders (2002) *Publieke Tranen. De drijfveren van de emotiecultuur*. Amsterdam: Contact.

¹² NRC Handelsblad, September 1st, 2000.

neglected city by The Hague, Amsterdam and Hilversum. There are several reasons why so many journalists missed the rise of discontent totally.

The first was their marriage to the Purple Cabinet, which raised their sense of power and didn't invite them to go out in the streets and search for news themselves. The second was the bitter rivalry with the upcoming commercial broadcasting stations, and the free newspapers. So journalism was fighting for its own survival. Some quality papers, commercial by nature, even hoped that the new cabinet Purple III would be willing to subsidize them. So, they would become in fact civil servants, with a life long job guarantee.

Commercialization and television in particular made a lot of people in the media world envious and frustrated. In the rest of the West, commercial television had been there for decades. Not so in the Netherlands. Until 1989 there were only two public funded TV-stations. A handful of national dailies were commercial or owned by foundations. In the self-image of the average journalist they were independent, serving democracy, the truth or whatever their ideology was at the time. After 1990 the first commercial tv- and radio stations started, thanks to Europe's internal market. They were ridiculed as 'pulp' for the 'simple minds'.

Towards the end of the century things started to go wrong. Internet lead to desperation, how to react? In 1998 the first free 'train papers' appeared. This phenomenon was ridiculed again. But what was worse, the subscription rate of the quality papers went into decline. And what was even worse for the serious journalists of the state financed Public Broadcast System; the commercial stations kept proliferating and had become market leader.

A late-night talk-show on a commercial station became the most popular show on television, also among newspapers journalists. They did not talk about anything else anymore the next morning. From this moment on, politicians did not bother to give interviews anymore to newspapers; they drove to the studio if they wanted to promote themselves or a new idea. In a way of imitation newspaper journalists tried to get their own seat at a café table to discuss things on radio and television as well.

So, growing frustration among the quality newspapers – the fusion of five of them into one company made this frustration even greater – was one feature. Unease about their own imitation of commercial television among the public television journalists was another. When Fortuyn entered the stage in this chattering media theatre and outwitted them all, all quality papers and public broadcasting stations already were nervous and frustrated for other reasons than their legitimate objections to the 'populist' approach of this newcomer.

This negative, defensive atmosphere remained after his death, and played its role also in the reactions to Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali. All three not only refused to adjust to the Purple consensus of ‘keeping up appearances’, two of them didn’t show any respect for ‘the powers that be’ in the media either. Van Gogh was ceaselessly and ruthlessly attacking and offending every dignitary he thought was ‘collaborating’ for the sake of peace, self-interest or what other reason with causes he saw in conflict with the liberal individualist society.

VII

Irony does not like Passion

Some famous persons from the cultural scene, who had ridiculed Fortuyn on television even on the night he was murdered, like the left-wing cabaret performer Freek de Jonge, later recognized he and his fellow avant-garde friends were accomplice to what had happened in the country:

‘Left intellectuals took part in creating the segregation in the country. With an unbelievable dédain of the left we tortured people who became rich from something we didn’t like. (..) The landslide at the elections was also an answer to the arrogance and the hubris of the left-wing establishment. As a kind of speed-freaks we loosened the chains, and the thing we brought into it – humour – has been overly present in the Netherlands. First came irony, then life itself. Serious conversations were choked at the start. Passion was suspicious. Great engagements were ridiculed. That we undermined all’.¹³

So, while the governing elites after 2002 kept complaining that ‘the voters’, or ‘the public’ in general were ‘spoiled brats’, ‘unstable’ and ‘not serious’, a case could be hold that it might be in fact the other way around. Many people were just asking for new borders, asking for clear answers from the government about the questions and problems that harassed them. Either it was about violence and crime, the health care system or the future of the country as a multicultural society, or as part of a widening Europe.

The media is not the heart of the matter, I said earlier. It is the lack of borders and directions in life and too much egocentrism that is fatal for the coherence in the life of a person and of a society as well. However, the media – newspapers and television – played a

¹³ Elsevier, August, 10th, 2002.

very important role in the killing fields of the Netherlands, in every mimetic sense one can imagine.

The key words are hypocrisy of the masters of the Citadel of Culture, the diminishing status of the old 'queen of the earth', the quality press, and the envy and frustration that resulted from that. In general, envy seems to be a very good entrance key to understand the whole period. The Bourgeois Bohemians could cope with a radical bohemian like the rock star and painter Herman Brood. He was a harmless junkie. The neurotic and alcoholic folk singer André Hazes, only popular with 'the masses', could be ridiculed. He was harmless too. But once political people, like Fortuyn and Hirsi Ali, with real passions and beliefs who said what they wanted to warn people for dangers, even change society as a whole, came up on stage, the progressive part of the Bourgeois Bohemians started go get very nervous indeed. It was not only the politicians in The Hague that were unmasked as the emperor without cloths; many serious journalist met the same fate. Some of them returned as quickly as possible to the old ideological stance they earlier had disbanded so happily, and started fighting all three of them. Because they had ruined the cosiness of the studio coffee tables, where all these discussions ended most of the time like the old joke of Yoga Berra, who replied when asked for a direction: 'If you come the T-crossing, just take it'.

VIII

The Revolt

So, while the government kept saying: you've never had it so good, and with these context explanations about mimetic rivalry within the media worlds, and the fear of the Sixties-elites that the native masses would emancipate themselves along their own lines of preferences, it would ultimately be the neglected Constitution that ignited the Fortuyn-Revolt against the political elites in The Hague and the media.

On the 4th of May 2001 a TV-program paid attention to the attitude of Dutch Muslims towards homosexuality. Youths of Moroccan origin openly despised homosexuals. An Imam of a Rotterdam mosque, Khalil el Moumni, declared homosexuality as a contagious disease, which had to be stopped because otherwise it would mean the end of the country.¹⁴ By the

¹⁴ Baukje Prins (2003), *opcit.*, 14.

way, in his preaching he had also named Europeans ‘lower than dogs or pigs’ as well by the way.

On the website of the magazine of the leading Dutch Gay community oriented magazine, 91% of the people who reacted agreed with the thesis: ‘New Dutchmen have to tolerate *our* tolerance or they don’t belong here’.¹⁵ Here the traditional symbol of the country, Dutch tolerance, was fighting the new intolerant minority.

The imam defended his points of view with the constitutional freedom of speech *and* with the constitutional freedom of religion. In April 2002 a court pleaded not guilty because this imam only had expressed his religious believes. All grievances about discrimination were declared groundless.¹⁶

Former professor and publicist Pim Fortuyn had lived amidst the Rotterdam ghettos, and was, as the flamboyant homosexual he was, called a dirty pig all the time. He had debated with Muslim leaders like el Moumni, and had published one of these discussions in a book. In another book, 1997, he warned *Against Islamization of our Culture*. He became a fierce defender of the Western values, although the heart of his success would be a strange mix of reactionary-modernism. Back to the solidarity, safety and Christianity of the Fifties, and simultaneously forward to the hedonistic, individualist, internet world of private enterprise and a small scale public sector, without state bureaucracy: all work had to be taken away from the managers and given back to the professionals like the teachers, doctors and policemen. His message was, back and forth, but out of this present.

Besides his slogan about the multicultural society – full is full, integration of the present immigrants first – the key clash with his first party was his remark that, if he had to choose among all these articles in the Constitution, he would prefer the freedom of speech above the injunction of discrimination. He said: If the Muslims call our society decadent, I call the Islam a backward culture.

Van Gogh and Hirsi Ali would repeat the same thing. And they also claimed the right to offend, as a fundamental part of the freedom of speech and criticism of religion as heart of the Enlightenment.¹⁷ This would become fatal for Van Gogh after producing Hirsi Ali’s 11 minute *J’Accuse* TV-film *Submission* in 2004 against the suppression of women in Islam.¹⁸

¹⁵ Trouw, May 10th, 2001; Prins, opcit.

¹⁶ Baukje Prins (2003), opcit, 17.

¹⁷ Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *My Freedom* (2006). New York: Free Press.

¹⁸ Theodor Holman, *Theo is dood*. Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt.

Conclusion

The fusion of liberalism and socialism in the Purple Cabinet (1994-2002) created a world view that was based on individualism and material success. Culturally and intellectually the Netherlands were dominated by 'Amsterdam', that is the bourgeois bohemians that combined the best of both worlds, the radical Sixties and the materialistic Eighties.

A lot of Dutch people like to share this feeling of being cosmopolitan, tolerant, adventurous and harmonious at the same time. Compared to a lot of countries maybe they are. However, in at least two aspects the Dutch, because of their history and smallness, have a blind spot for some realities in life: religion and violence. They cannot cope with those phenomena easily, except by pretending it is not there, or, if that is no longer possible, an attitude of negotiating or, worse, an attitude that comes close to 'the Stockholm Syndrome', adjusting to the situation because you are too powerless to fight it anyway, and then consequently attaining an attitude of certain empathy or apology for the aggressor.

Because of the fact that Holland is a small country with a great past, nostalgic dreamings of being a bohemian are always present. During the last week of each year a Dutch radio station broadcasts the 'Top 2000' pop songs of all times, chosen by the listeners. Almost every year the number 1 song has been the same: *Bohemian Rhapsody*, written by Freddy Mercury and originally recorded by the band Queen for the 1975 album *A Night at the Opera*.

Maybe this is the secret dream of the sober, level-headed, dike building Dutch; to live as a Bohemian. Maybe, but as the late romantic writer Gerard Reve once said: the Dutch want to live adventurous, but with a good pension in their back pockets. This is why ordinary people in an egalitarian society, full of boredom and unfulfilled aspirations, create real and fictional heroes. They give the people sense of meaning, direction and just make them feel good because those heroes live the life they themselves know they do not dare to perform. In a world without Gods there is a big need for idols.

The Sixties-elites, however, thought they were the sole political and intellectual idols justified to run a country, and play the tune in the media democracy. Acting in a mimetic rivalry of self-righteousness, toothpaste 'authenticity' and wittiness, they felt they were driven off stage by the masses knocking at their door. That is why they started to get nervous and angry, and started fighting with each other, and started scapegoating the Unholy Trinity for rocking the boat and driving them off stage completely.

This is what happened at the bloody and prolonged Night at the Opera in Holland after 2001. However, the issues that were raised were real, issues from the real world outside the TV-studios.

The negative consequences of the actions of the Unholy Trinity were there for all to see. Many members of ethnic and religious minorities felt hurt, insulted, and stereotyped. The negative consequences for society as a whole of the acts of murder and threats of terrorism are clear. There is more security state, and there is more social disciplinary conformism and more self-censorship.

After the killing of Fortuyn some of the driven off stage elite writers, like column writer Jan Blokker, openly said: 'I couldn't care less'.¹⁹ Ian Buruma, in his book *Murder in Amsterdam*, in a more elegant style in fact does the same thing: excusing all three members of the Unholy Trinity of extremism, that is blaming the victims, excusing the killers.²⁰

Maybe a majority of the Dutch thought the same way. If so, it was similar to the reaction of the West after the Cartoon Crisis in 2006. The British weekly *The Economist* then summarized the lukewarm response of some Western governments, accompanied by apologies to Voltaire, as follows: 'I disagree with what you say, and even if you are threatened with death, I will not defend very strongly your right to say it'.²¹

However, there is a very strong positive part of the past crisis as well. The word revolt is a much nicer word than crisis. A key sentence of the 1951-book of Albert Camus, *L'homme révolté* is this one: 'The consciousness comes to the surface together with the revolt'. A revolt is more than resentment, which is self-poisoning, continuous and useless impotency in isolation, strongly coloured by envy of what one does not have, not is. The rebel 'aspires that the others recognize what he owns – and that he in almost all circumstances has seen as more important than all things he could be envious about (..) He fights for the integrity of a part of his human existence'.²²

The revolt may seem negative, because it does not create anything, but according to Camus the revolt is utterly positive 'because it reveals that what is to be defended in human beings at all times'.

¹⁹ Vrij Nederland, July 20th, 2002.

²⁰ Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam* (2006) New York: The Penguin Press.

²¹ *The Economist*, February 9th, 2006.

²² Albert Camus, *L'Homme Révolté* (1951). Paris: Gallimard.

Of course, Camus linked the revolt with the acclaimed post-war freedom. He saw the back-side of this too. 'In our society the theory of political freedom intensifies the understanding of people, and through that the state of dissatisfaction'. That's why he, in 'the desecrated history' of modern times, saw the revolt as the only position. 'In our daily experience the revolt has the same function as the cogito in the field of thinking: it is the first self-explanatory thing. But this obviousness snatches the individual away from his loneliness (..) I am angry, that's why we are'.

This consciousness, or awakening of 'the masses', is a structural phenomenon that hasn't disappeared since the death of Fortuyn, and the disappearance of his messy party out of government in the same year 2002. The sigh of relief in so many retrospective commentaries towards the end of 2002 – 'A serious case of carnival', 'Now back to normalcy', 'Now decency please' - was a serious miscalculation of this structural change in the power relations between the governing political and cultural elites and the ordinary citizens.

'The people' now knew what power they really had, and they were not intended to give it back. Their consumer power, and their internet mobilizing capacity have made them into an unpredictable but powerful force. The fluctuations in the voting behaviour have become greater than ever.

One can defend the case that after 2002, and again after 2004 and 2006, the emancipation of 'the lower classes' and the ethnic minorities in particular has accelerated at a speed, not seen in the preceding decades since the arrival of the first generation foreign workers in the Sixties.

Fortuyn emancipated the lower classes and gave voice to other neglected citizens who wanted to raise their voice. Hirs Ali lifted the debate about the multicultural society out of the predictable lines of class and ethnic groups. Since Ayaan Hirs Ali the debate is waged where it should be, between arguments, regardless of gender, ethnicity or class.

Maybe, because of the present caution and down-right self-censorship, the only one that really lost its case was Theo van Gogh. But even that's not totally true. Some of the youngsters of Moroccan and Turkish origin he worked with in his films and TV-drama's owe their present career to his taking them seriously.

If consciousness is the heart of the revolt, it has been the heart of the revolt of the ethnic minorities after 2002 as well. And this is exactly what the Unholy Trinity wanted them to do, enlighten, integrate and behave like real immigrants, participants in this society, not as permanent subsidized but neglected guest workers or asylum seekers. Now they are, at last,

seen as real persons, at least in the media. And communication and visibility is where acceptance does start.

The Unholy Trinity has been driven out of the Netherlands. The country has partly returned to the old-fashioned position of 'don't give offence'. But at the same time The Unholy Trinity has left the country behind as a more grown-up multicultural society than it was before.

Henri Beunders holds the Chair of History, Media and Culture at Erasmus University Rotterdam

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