



Academic Integrity Seminar

A Student Development Resource

"Socrates, the founder of humanistic education, once observed: 'What we're engaged in here isn't a chance conversation but a dialogue about the way we ought to live our lives.'" -- Mark Edmundson

The Dutch Economic Miracle

(Why it isn't "naive" to equate trust and the rule of law with economic success)



Image from Wikimedia Commons

"In 1568 the Dutch, who were mainly Protestant, revolted against their Catholic Spanish overlord . . . [W]ithin eighty years the Dutch had not only secured their independence from Spain, but had managed to replace the Spaniards and their Portuguese allies as masters of the ocean highways, build a global Dutch empire, and become the richest state in Europe . . .

How exactly did the Dutch win the trust of the [world] financial system? First, they were sticklers about repaying their loans on time and in full, making the extension of credit less risky for lenders. Secondly, their country's judicial system enjoyed independence and protected private rights – in particular private property rights. Capital trickles away from dictatorial states that fail to defend private individuals and their property. Instead, it flows into states upholding the rule of law and private property . . ." --From *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari

Caveat: The Dutch also participated in the transatlantic slave trade. Trustworthiness is only one attribute of moral character. Likewise, Quakers were known for integrity in business dealings ("[People realised they could trust Quakers with their money](#)" and in the 18th century this led to the rapid growth of Quaker banks such as Barclays and Lloyds"), but Quakers sometimes exhibited an oppressive [religious paternalism](#). On the moral issue of slavery, Quakers evolved from slave traders to [slavery opponents](#).
