Erasmus of Rotterdam, who died in 1536, may very well be the most famous Dutch humanist. This chapter deals with the much less well-known development of modern Dutch humanism in the period after 1850. Erasmus, with his conciliatory and moderate attitude and his non-dogmatic, primarily ethical type of Christianity, remains a major influence on Dutch humanism, but, for that matter, Dutch humanism is stamped by the overall history of the Netherlands. In terms of geography, the Netherlands is a very small, densely populated country in Northwest Europe. Its culture has been very much determined by the struggle against the water. More than a quarter of the country is below sea level and a number of major rivers flow into the sea near Rotterdam. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Dutch started the revolt that made them independent of the Spanish empire. In the seventeenth century, the Netherlands, especially Holland with the city of Amsterdam, was a major power in every sense. Before the British did so, the Dutch ruled the world seas. The VOC (United East India Company) was the world's largest trading company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. International trade was and is very important for the Dutch. According to some historians, the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic should be regarded as the first successful modern economy (De Vries & Van der Woude 1997). The Dutch Golden Age manifested itself not only in an unprecedented increase in (very unequally distributed) wealth, but also in a politically, religiously and intellectually pluralistic and tolerant atmosphere, characterized by a large number of publishing houses, refugee philosophers such as Descartes and Spinoza, scientists and scholars such as Christiaan Huygens and Hugo Grotius, and painters such as Rembrandt, Vermeer and Jacob van Ruisdael (Israel 1995). Compared with the seventeenth-century growth, the static stability of most of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century was effectively a decline, and the country no longer was a major political power. However, this should not be allowed to hide the fact that the Netherlands continued to be one of the richest regions of Europe and the world. For the welfare of its citizens, a country obviously need not be a major player in geopolitics. Culturally, the Netherlands, with its many foreign exiles and its publishing industry has been re-evaluated as the center of an international network at the beginning of the Enlightenment, a radical Enlightenment (Jacob 1981; Israel 2001; Van Ruler 2001). At the same time, the Dutch Enlightenment itself—as distinct from the
ideas of the foreign refugees—was characterized by a strong influence from classical humanism and Calvinism. It remained pragmatic and non-theoretical, “moderate, Newtonian, and averse to all radicalism in religious and political matters” (Mijnhardt 1992: 205). The Enlightenment produced a dominance of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands. After 1780, the Netherlands waged wars with and was occupied by the French, and in 1830 Belgium declared its independence of the Netherlands. After 1865, the Netherlands industrialized on the basis of steel, coal and the steam engine, and after 1890 even more rapidly using oil, electricity and the internal combustion engine. From 1865 to the present day, the population grew from three and a half to sixteen million. Though income inequality declined sharply between 1916 and 1983, striking inequalities of wealth and income have continued to exist (Van Zanden 2001). With the introduction of social security laws in the twentieth century, absolute poverty practically disappeared. The names of Multatuli, Vincent van Gogh, Piet Mondriaan, the National Ballet and the Concertgebouw Orchestra suffice to show that Dutch art did not come to an end in the seventeenth century.

Politically speaking, one can see a remarkable continuity. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic had a loose and complicated federal structure in which “its many built-in checks and balances ensured that absolute power and arbitrariness were never tolerated in the long term” (Mijnhardt 1992: 201). About 1620, in the middle of the eighteenth century, and still in the nineteenth century, Dutch politics were characterized by opposition and compromise between three main segments of the Dutch population: a Roman Catholic, a rather strict Calvinist, and a more latitudinarian or liberal segment. At the end of the nineteenth century a socialistic part of the population put itself into the picture. An essential feature of this continuity is that each and every one of these component parts of the Dutch nation always was a minority. Centuries of compromise have created a strong culture of give-and-take and of accommodation (Ellemers 1998: 427). In the twentieth century, economic prosperity in the Netherlands has been combined with the social blessings of a pacifying parliamentary democracy with universal suffrage (for men since 1917, for women since 1919). After 1945, the rather open and international character of Dutch society was strengthened by economic globalization, by participation in NATO, by the immigration of hundreds of thousands of people from Indonesia, the Moluccas, Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, and by the process of European unification. In 1957-1958 a number of important legal barriers to the social equality of women were abolished, and after 1968 feminism visibly gained strength, but the idea that women are primarily mothers rather than wage-earners has proved to be very tenacious.

The changes outlined above imply that social and existential problems in the Netherlands nowadays appear in a very different context from what used to be. One example will be enough to demonstrate the impact. In 1890 the average life expectancy at birth of Dutch men and women was just below 45 years, in 1950 it was about 70, in 1995 is was 75 for men and 80 for women. In combination with other changes, this has had far-reaching consequences. Nowadays more than 10% of the Dutch population is above 65 and retired, a percentage expected to rise to more than 25%. While in 1850 it was rather common for children to be orphaned, today this is almost unheard of. One disregards the relatives of the deceased together as an elderly phase statistically did not exist. Though one disregards the relevance in time, but also of location, color, white or colored, even those encountered in countries like Germany. In the remainder of this section, I will use the Dutch word “humanisme” in the nineteenth-century sense of the term. Finally, I will mention some conclusions.

Humanisms in the Seventeenth Century

One way to find out more about the Dutch word "humanisme" in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries is to study De Gids as main source, the book by Abraham Bredius published in 1850. The Dutch word “humanisme” was used for a moral or ethical orientation that be morally human, that is, respectful and friendly. For Pierson this moral philosophy.2 For Pierson humanism can be found in the earliest instance of the word altogether: humanity as the end to

2 A moral or ethical orientation that be morally human, that is, respectful and friendly. For Pierson this moral philosophy.2 For Pierson humanism can be found in the earliest instance of the word altogether: humanity as the end to

3 The third meaning pedagogical current in European history that began about 1620. The Renaissance and the classical humanism can be found in the beginning of the book on the Italian language.3

4 A Renaissance mean...
orphanned, today this is an exception. The average Dutch husband and wife (if one disregards the real possibility of divorce) can now look forward to a period together as an elderly couple when the children (if any) have left home. This life-phase statistically did not exist before 1915 (Van der Woude 1985; Van Poppel & Van Solinge 2001: 47). Obviously, differences in context are not only a matter of time, but also of location. The problems with which humanists (man or woman, white or colored, etc.) in the Netherlands are confronted, are different from those encountered in Russia, India, Zambia and Mexico, or even in neighboring countries like Germany, Belgium and England.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will survey the meanings of the Dutch word humanisme in the nineteenth century, followed by a short description of the development of some important humanist organizations in the Netherlands. Finally, I will mention a number of recent developments and draw some conclusions.

Humanisms in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

One way to find out more about the character of Dutch humanism is to see what the Dutch word humanisme has meant. Using a large collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dictionaries and the 1837-1881 volumes of the magazine De Gids as main sources, one can say that humanisme can hardly be found before 1850. The Dutch words for all kinds of -isms appeared at about that time: liberalism, socialism, nationalism. In the second half of the nineteenth century humanisme was used fairly often, with four different meanings (Derkx 1998).

1 A moral or ethical meaning. Humanism in this sense means that one tries to be morally humane, which means loving all people, being considerate, respectful and friendly towards them. For the important humanist Allard Pierson this moral meaning has a sociopolitical edge and is more than philanthropy. For Pierson, humanism refers to the conviction that all human beings are fundamentally connected with each other as persons who wish to develop themselves. This, in turn, refers to the feeling that, morally speaking, humankind is the highest unity: higher than other collectives that might claim loyalty from people, e.g. the church, Christianity or the nation. I found the earliest instance of this moral meaning of humanisme, and the earliest use of the word altogether, in De Gids of 1847.

2 A Renaissance meaning. In this sense, humanism refers to a movement in European history that started in the fourteenth century with Petrarch and ended about 1620. The Renaissance was thought to be characterized by the study of ancient Greek and Roman literature, philosophy and art. This meaning of humanism can be found from 1858 (or earlier?). After 1860, Renaissance humanism has often been considered by Dutch authors, mostly incorrectly, as the beginning of atheism. An uncritical reception of Burckhardt’s famous book on the Italian Renaissance contributed to this.

3 The third meaning of humanism was pedagogical. This humanism refers to a pedagogical current which emphasizes Bildung towards "true", "higher" humanity as the end to strive for. The study of the language and culture of the
Empowering Humanity

ancient Greeks and Romans was regarded as the best means to this end. In the second half of the nineteenth century, this pedagogical meaning became linked to a certain type of secondary school: the gymnasium. In older dictionaries of the Dutch language, the pedagogical meaning of humanism is dominant.

Finally, the word humanisme was used to refer to a worldview or life stance, phrases which I use to translate the Dutch word levensbeschouwing. Humanism in this sense is a worldview that distinguishes itself from pre-modern Christianity as practiced in the churches. It is important to note that this humanist worldview had two different variants. Either it meant that one rejected as irrational and unreasonable any Christianity and religion whatsoever, or it meant that one continued the historical development of Christianity and adapted it to modern times as a human cultural product. In the latter case, humanism refers to an open and rational, universally human religion. Many different manifestations of religion can develop in this direction, and Christianity is one of them. Humanisme in the meaning of a non-Christian worldview occurs from 1857, in writings of opponents of humanism (among them the Calvinist leaders G. Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper) and in those of its champions, like the multifaceted scholar Allard Pierson, the militant atheist and Spinozist Johannes van Vloten, and the freethinker, teacher and social democrat A.H. Gerhard. This meaning of the word probably spread rapidly after 1860, and in the last quarter of the nineteenth century it occurred more frequently than humanisme as an open and rational, universally human religion. There are two reasons for this: in these years the lower and middle-class strict Protestants (de gereformeerden) started their struggle for emancipation against the more latitudinarian Protestant elite, and on the other hand the importance of atheism and the number of atheists in Dutch society started to grow. However, humanism in the sense of an open and rational, universally human religion did not disappear. The Lutheran theologian A.D. Loman was one of the people who continued to promote humanism in this way. As an offshoot of the enlightened liberal Protestantism that had become dominant in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, this type of humanism was too firmly rooted to be wiped out easily.

Surprisingly enough, hardly any traces were found in dictionaries and De Gids of an aesthetic meaning of humanisme in the tradition of Menander, Plautus, Terence, many Renaissance humanists, and Winckelmann (Snell 1980). The one instance is the rejection by the important literary critic Conrad Busken Huet in 1863 of an aesthetically interpreted, individualistic, and elitist Renaissance humanism. It is not yet clear whether this absence of aesthetic humanist points to a characteristic of Dutch humanism or indicates a limitation of the sources used. One can painstakingly try to take these senses of the word humanisme apart. Sometimes, however, this is almost impossible because authors mix meanings and use more than one of the denotations, connotations and associations that the concept has acquired in its complex development since Cicero used the words humanitas and humanisme (Giustiniani 1985).

Of course, history did not stop in the nineteenth century, and the history of the word humanisme is only one angle on the subject. As yet, little research has been carried out on the historical aspects that I am able to present in this chapter. Many humanist groups will deal with the vicissitudes of humanism in relation to them. This will give a result in cooperation with De Dageraad, which will be published at De Dageraad in 1856. At that time humanists as far as worldview is concerned were mainly the liberals. Their goal was:

1. to search for the truth
2. to advance the mutual understanding of humans
3. to contribute in practice to the well-being of society

After its foundation, De Dageraad first focused on the separation of church and state and the non-existence of God, and not at the same time less on the value of a non-religious education. After 1865, when Ernst Haeckel, but also other humanists and materialist A.H. Gerhard can be seen as humanists, the issue of a humanist worldview is discussed in the Journal. The question of the origins of society and science is investigated from the point of view of a humanist. The non-existence of God and the separation of church and state are still important, but in the history of the humanist movement, the question of the value of a non-religious society is the most important. This will be the subject of the next chapter. It is not yet clear whether this absence of aesthetic humanist points to a characteristic of Dutch humanism or indicates a limitation of the sources used. One can painstakingly try to take these senses of the word humanisme apart. Sometimes, however, this is almost impossible because authors mix meanings and use more than one of the denotations, connotations and associations that the concept has acquired in its complex development since Cicero used the words humanitas and humanisme (Giustiniani 1985).

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carried out on the history of Dutch humanism after 1900. I will focus on some aspects that I am able to comment on. It is important to realize that there are many humanist groups and people that do not carry the label "humanist", but I will deal with the vicissitudes of some important organizations explicitly calling themselves humanistisch, and with the way humanism was and is expressed by them. This will give an opportunity to further clarify Dutch humanism. I start with De Dageraad, whose history goes back to the nineteenth century.

De Dageraad

The first humanist organization to be founded in the Netherlands was De Dageraad, which means dawn or sunrise. It was founded in Amsterdam on October 12, 1856. At that time most of the founders were scientifically minded deists as far as worldview is concerned. They felt that God will reveal Himself when nature is investigated scientifically. In matters of politics, they were conservative liberals. Their goal was:
1. to search for the truth, led by nature and reason, and to distribute the results;
2. to advance the mutual understanding and brotherhood of kindred spirits;
3. to contribute in practice to the happiness of society.

After its foundation, De Dageraad developed quickly. Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species (1859) turned out to be a catalyst for the debate on science and religion, and after 1865 the industrialization of the Netherlands brought the rise of a socialist labor movement. By 1880, most members of De Dageraad were not only atheists and materialists, admiring Jakob Moleschott, Ludwig Büchner and Ernst Haeckel, but also socialists with Marxist or anarchist leanings. Often they would think science proved that God did not exist, and often they saw a connection between atheism and socialism. The views of the teacher and social democrat A.H. Gerhard can serve as an example. His thinking ran as follows: free-thinkers try to destroy the belief of the mass of the common people in a good God and in a heaven after this life. The freethinkers' striving to raise the consciousness of the majority of humanity about its real situation is cruel, if we do not at the same time work hard toward a society in which a good life here and now is possible for everybody, not just for the happy capitalist few (Gerhard 1885: 30).

De Dageraad was a small and brave, strongly atheist, anti-religious and anti-church organization fighting the Christian majority of the Netherlands. Some of the issues it focused on were the importance of science and free inquiry, the non-existence of God, the dangers of religion and mind-policing churches, the separation of church and state, the value of morals without God and the equal value of a non-religious and a religious oath in court or office. De Dageraad produced a large number of cheap pamphlets. One of them was Dominoe, pastoor of rabbi? Populaire kritiek (Minister, priest or rabbi? Popular criticism), probably written by the Multatuli enthusiast J.G. ten Bokkel, and published anonymously in 1889. Within two years, more than 33,000 copies had been sold. The following passage from the preface to this pamphlet provides a good impression of the ideas of many Dutch freethinkers between 1880 and 1940:
"The Association "De Dageraad", which for many years has published a periodical for the advancement of free thinking, has been trying of late through the distribution of pamphlets to open the eyes of the many to the light, which has reached the scholars some considerable time ago. [...] We are of the opinion that religion, as it is taught in our small country by ministers, priests, rabbis, etc., etc., in the end makes the people unhappy. Unhappy as a result of stupidity and ignorance. We, however, would like to see the people happy on this earth, happy through reason and science. For that reason, and for that reason only, we fight religion. [...] And therefore, reader, think and judge for yourself what looks like the truth to you, and do not be convinced by anything but arguments." (Ten Bokkel 1890: 3; translation by P.D.)

In the 1920s and 1930s De Dageraad, led by the cabinet-maker Jan Hoving, organized meetings in large theaters, which were attended by many hundreds. Membership rose to an all-time high of almost 2500, 1200 of which were in Amsterdam alone. In July 1931, Hoving organized a much publicized propaganda tour into the heart of the Catholic south. De Dageraad's manifestations were directed not only against religion, but also against capitalism, fascism and Hitler's Nazism. In September 1929, in the first radio broadcast of the vroe (Vrijdenkers Radio Omroep Vereenging, "Freethinkers Radio Broadcasting Association"), Hoving warned against Mussolini's fascism. The authorities made it impossible for him to finish his talk. They argued that he offended a friendly head of state and hurt the head of the Roman Catholic Church. In the 1930s, the relationship of De Dageraad and the vroe with the Dutch government (a rather conservative and authoritarian Christian coalition) was decidedly bad. In 1934-1936, Hoving delivered six important radio speeches attacking anti-Semitism. At the end of 1936, the government closed down the vroe (Hoekman 1992). The freethinkers of De Dageraad in this period were among the most determined fighters against anti-Semitism, wherever it reared its ugly head, in the Netherlands, in Germany, or in the Soviet Union. They organized several protests against pogroms in the Ukraine and Russia.

At its foundation in 1856, De Dageraad regarded itself as the "church of the future" (Spigt, in Noordenbos & Spigt 1976: 158). Nonetheless, its attitude has been mainly that of a minority in a hostile environment. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the number of people in the Netherlands who were not members of a church was very low indeed: 0.1% in 1869 and 2.3% in 1899. This rose rapidly in the twentieth century to 8% in 1920 and 17% in 1947. In 1957, after a hundred years, the name of De Dageraad was changed to De Vrije Gedachte ("Free Thought"). De Dageraad/Vrije Gedachte no doubt contributed much to the social and intellectual undermining of Christian belief in the Netherlands, especially before World War II. Now it is a small organization with less than a thousand members.5

The organization that safeguarded the right through and strength to fight for the enmity church and had deeply strength of the Christian idea was that a constant in life would have grousome movement. The third reason for the second reason was the Democratic Workers Party (not just for workers), which had more than 30% of the support of the Protestant and Roman Catholic parties. The SPD never really participated. After the war, the situation was different. They therefore founded a new party (not just for workers), the Socialist Democratic Workers Party, and perhaps even spoke in its best to attract Church leaders to the SPD would offer a spiritual home for the social democrats themselves. The new SPD would offer a spiritual home for the social democrats themselves. The new SPD would offer a spiritual home for the social democrats themselves. It was "a necessary (1945). The foundat moreover have to regard One question that had to be asked was whether van Praag, a central problem: and a new organization for the fight against religion's positive reflection at society and a new organization for the fight against religion's positive reflection at society and a new organization for the fight against religion's positive reflection at society.
Humanistisch Verbond

The organization that has largely determined the meaning of the Dutch concept of humanism in the second half of the twentieth century is the Humanistisch Verbond (HV, "Dutch Humanist Association"), founded on February 17, 1946. There were three main reasons for founding the HV. Firstly, there was a need to safeguard the right to exist of a non-religious humanist worldview and to think through and strengthen its philosophical foundations. In short, the HV wanted to fight for the emancipation of non-religious humanists. In the second place, the HV wanted to enhance and corroborate the largely implicit humanist worldviews of the substantial numbers of men and women who had left the church and had descended into nihilism. The churches had to raise the spiritual strength of the Christian believers, the new humanist organization had to do so for the growing number of Dutch people outside the churches. The underlying idea was that a conscious Christian or humanist conviction about what is important in life would have prevented the rise of Nazism and would prevent such gruesome movements coming to power in the future.

The third reason for the foundation of the HV was an elaboration and specification of the second reason. To the disappointment of its leaders, the Dutch Social Democratic Workers Party (SDAP), founded in 1894, had never been able to win more than 30% of the votes in a national election. Because of a blockade by the Protestant and Roman Catholic parties, and because of its atheist image, the SDAP never really participated in a government coalition before World War II. After the war, the social democratic leaders wanted to change this situation. They therefore founded a new political party that would clearly be a people's party (not just for workers) and that would explicitly welcome Christian socialists. The SDAP before 1940 had been not just a political party but also a social, cultural, and perhaps even spiritual home for a large part of the non-Christian left. The new Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA, "Labor Party"), founded on February 9, 1946, did its best to attract Christian members. Many of the founders of the HV were social democrats themselves and active in the new PvdA. They knew that this successor to the SDAP would organize its members on their political views only. Now that the social democratic party no longer wanted to provide a humanist worldview and spiritual home for the Dutch atheists and agnostics, another organization had to take on this role. This is why, according to J.P. van Praag, the foundation of the HV was "a necessary consequence" of the new setup of the social democratic party (1945). The foundation of the HV meant that the non-religious worker would no longer have to regard his political party as his church.

One question that has to be dealt with is why the founders of the HV did not try to reinvigorate De Dageraad. The teacher and social democratic politician J.P. van Praag, a central figure in the new organization, wrote in 1946 that an important difference was that De Dageraad emphasized the negative and unproductive fight against religion, whilst the main aim of the Verbond was to be a center of positive reflection and inspiration for the non-religious part of the population (Bonger 1956: 14). Van Praag judged that De Dageraad had reached a dead end and a new organization was needed to unite and inspire the 1,500,000 non-churchgoing Dutch.
In the summer of 1949 Van Praag and H.A. Polak-Schwarz visited the congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in Rome, where the two HV-observers found the same differences as between HV and Dageraad, but even more pronounced. When they thwart humanists and humanism in their development, churches and Christians have to be fought, but, like free thought, this fight is a means and not an end in itself. Most French and Italian freethinkers were stuck in a nineteenth-century mould and did not understand this at all. For many of them, a fruitless (preaching to the converted), purely verbal and dogmatically atheist polemic with the churches was still the main goal. They were also of the opinion that the World Union was too much under the influence of communists. This reason was rather important in the early years of the Cold War between Eastern Europe dominated by Russia, and Western Europe and North America dominated by the United States. The rejection of the World Union by the HV was one of the starting points for the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), which was to be founded in Amsterdam in 1952.

Membership of the HV continued to expand until it reached about 12,000 in 1956, since when it has settled at between 12,000 and 16,000. The history of the HV can be divided into two phases. In the period 1946-1965 it fought a successful struggle for emancipation as a worldview organization on behalf of non-Christian humanists, and atheists and agnostics in general. In 1965 one can say that it had completed this mission. An important factor in this success was not so much the size of the membership (which in view of the original expectations was disappointingly low) but the always very strategically formed board of the HV and its lobbying activities. Of decisive importance, of course, was the rapidly increasing number of people in the Netherlands who were not member of a church: 21% in 1960; 33% in 1966; 43% in 1979; 50% in 1980; and 60% in 1993 and 1997. The Netherlands was no longer a Christian nation. Atheists were no longer regarded as second-rate citizens and as people without morals and conscience.

The period 1966-2001 can be characterized as the period in which the HV attempted to find a new mission, a new humanist program. This was difficult, because Dutch society after 1965 was very much a humanist society. J.P. van Praag, president from September 1946 until May 1969, attempted with little success to present the struggle against nihilism, or the complete absence of a worldview, as the new publicly attractive main task. Personally he had always thought this was the main issue, or "the big fight". Of the presidencies after 1965, Rob Tieman's (1977 -1987) was probably the most successful. He gave the HV a clear identity as the organization that promoted a worldview centered on the principle of self-determination of individuals, and that crusaded in favor of the legalization of abortion and euthanasia and against discrimination of homosexuals. These moral and political priorities of the HV were very well adapted to the views of its members and leadership, including important politicians such as...
the conservative liberal Frits Bolkestein and the social democrat Klaas de Vries. On important issues, such as the arms race or social inequality, there were many differences among the humanists and among the non-Christian political parties in the Netherlands, but on desirable changes in laws and attitudes regarding abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality, they were very much united. After Tielemans’s presidency, the HV’s limited but clear and relevant identity again became diffuse. The continuing search for a new mission became even more difficult (although in some sense it may have become easier, because it had become almost impossible to deny its necessity) when in 1994, for the first time since 1918, the Netherlands got a government coalition that comprised not a single Christian party, and which adopted more liberal policies on euthanasia, prostitution, shop opening hours, and marriage and adoption by homosexuals (Trappenburg 2001). Many Dutch people saw this as confirmation that there was no further need for an HV after the successful emancipation struggle.

Two recurrent themes in debates on the humanism of the HV have been the relationship with Christianity, and non-theistic but religious humanism. These debates were emphatically not the same. In 1946 the HV decided that humanism is a worldview:

“That, without presupposing the existence of a personal deity, is based on respect for the human being as a special part of the cosmic whole, as a bearer of a sense of norms that cannot be changed at will, and as a creator of and partaker in spiritual values” (Bonger 1936: 12; translation by P.D.).

In 1955, the relevant part of this declaration of the humanist principle was changed into:

“The humanist life stance is characterized by the attempt to understand life and world by using human faculties and without starting from a special revelation” (Flokstra & Wieling 1986: 197-198; translation by P.D.).

In 1973, this was finally changed into:

“Humanism is the life stance which tries to understand life and world with human faculties only. The faculty to judge and discriminate is deemed essential for a human being, and nobody or nothing outside of himself can be made responsible for this” (Flokstra & Wieling 1986: 197-198).

These words were phrased very carefully to make sure they did not exclude pantheists and very liberal Christians. Before 1965 the HV waged many public battles against Christian attempts at repression. In spite of the careful wording of its principles, the Dutch humanisme in this period acquired an association with atheism, and HV-membership came to reflect this. After 1965, the mutual opposition of non-theistic humanism and a large part of Dutch Christianity weakened. The difference in worldview between many traditional Christians and many non-theistic humanists has remained obvious. It is also true, however, that it turns out to be very hard to pin down precisely the difference between many
enlightened Christians and many broad-minded non-theistic humanists. As early as 1961, the famous Roman Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx argued that the humanism of the HV as formulated in 1955 is a necessary prerequisite for any truly Christian belief. If Christians do not accept such humanist tenets as the ultimate personal responsibility for one's own life and decisions, they cannot really understand their own faith, and Christianity becomes superstition. But at the same time, Schillebeeckx wrote, Christians cannot accept humanism without God as offering a satisfactory and conclusive answer to questions about the meaning of life (Schillebeeckx 1961: 88). The beliefs of Dutch Christians and humanists have continued to change. More and more Dutch Christians wholeheartedly have accepted Enlightenment-inspired humanist principles, and more and more humanists have come to feel that the fight against Christianity and the churches is no longer a priority. In alliance with liberal and socially oriented Christians, these humanists would rather fight important social wrongs. Recent presidents of the HV (Jan Glastra van Loon, Marian Verkerk, and Liesbeth Mulder, but not Paul Cliteur) have often expressed this re-orientation. During the 1990s the HV's wavering policy in this respect has stood in the way of a clear identity and public image.

Right from the start the discussion about religious but non-theistic humanism has divided members of the HV. The issue came down to the difference between humanists who felt their sense of unity with the cosmos was essential and humanists who did not understand this. The issue was related to different views of the relationship between reason and emotion and of the importance of rituals. Piet Schut, a member of the national board of the HV from 1946 to 1955, forcefully defended religious humanism on many occasions. Other religious humanists in this sense were Han Sie Dhian Ho and J.P. van Praag. Van Praag played down his own religious humanism because of his strategic view of the role of the HV and his presidency, but he has always defended the legitimacy of non-theistic religious humanism within the HV.

Comparing the humanism of the Humanistisch Verbond with the humanism of De Dageraad, one might say that the main difference is that the HV—with Jaap van Praag at the center—always felt that it represented a large part, and possibly the majority, of Dutch society. The HV always wanted to be integrated into normal Dutch society, whereas De Dageraad and De Vrije Gedachte were always kicking against other groups and the culture they assumed to be dominant. Apart from its important role as the most visible defender and representative of humanism in Dutch society, the HV has tried to set up a structure for practical work to educate, guide and help the non-Christian part of the Dutch population. The successes in the struggle against nihilism were mainly to be found in this "practical humanism". This practical work was thought at the outset to consist of the formulation, elaboration and convincing presentation of a coherent humanist worldview by humanist leaders for the non-Christian mass in general. Later, from 1950, this work developed into the humanist counseling (geestelijke verzorging) of non-religious individuals in distress, and into humanist moral and spiritual education (geestelijke vorming) for small groups as well as in school settings. Chapter 6 on humanist counseling deals with this in more detail.

For the training of volunteers, the HV started a crash course training center (Opleidings Instituut) that was state-financed. Catholic and Protestant leaders agreed that a research task force should go to Universiteit voor Denkwijze to sort out the formation on the basis of the work found in chapter 9. Last but not least, a new organization, Humanitas, was formed to offer humanist moral counseling (geestelijke verzorging) in the classroom, church, parsonage, and in the homes of the sick and the elderly. Many Dutch citizens were totally convinced that religion is a betrayal of reason, and even in the church, they remained so.

Humanitas

Another important event was the creation of Humanitas in 1945, immediately after the war. It was original in a way, for it was inspired by the Belgian Humanitas foundation in 1923 and Mikhail Bakunin's ideas in 1863. The founders had three aims in mind:

1. To render to people and not in the pre-war sense of the word, religious aid. Joris in't Veld, the secretary of Reconstruction, wrote:

"True aid is only of the human being, and will be born of a self-sacrificing human in distress." (q.q.v.)

2. To help non-Christian labor and not in the pre-war sense of the word, religious aid. Joris in't Veld, the secretary of Reconstruction, wrote:

"True aid is only of the human being, and will be born of a self-sacrificing human in distress." (q.q.v.)

3. To help non-Christian labor and not in the pre-war sense of the word, religious aid. Joris in't Veld, the secretary of Reconstruction, wrote:

"True aid is only of the human being, and will be born of a self-sacrificing human in distress." (q.q.v.)

Thirdly, churches gave up their conflict with the state, and Humanitas was founded in 1937. From the beginning, Humanitas was opposed to religion and entirely given by the City
For the training of the counselors (there were about 125 in 1960, mostly unpaid volunteers) the HV published written material, organized conferences and started a crash course. In 1963 it was decided to continue this course in a permanent training center for humanist counselors and educators, the *Humanistisch Opleidings Instituut* (HOI, "Humanist Training Institute"). From 1989 this institute was state-financed as an accredited university in the same way as the Roman Catholic and Protestant theological universities. Among other things, this meant that a research task was added to the institute's mission. The name was changed to *Universiteit voor Humanistiek* (UvH, "University for Humanistics"). More information on the university and an interesting part of its curriculum can be found in chapter 9.

Last but not least, since the 1960s many primary schools have allowed the HV to offer humanist moral and spiritual education (*humanistisch vormingsonderwijs*, HVO) in the classroom, as an alternative to religious education by a Christian minister or priest, according to pupil or parental preference. In 2000 HVO was offered to 35,000 pupils in 2500 schools. In 1980, the HV started a new foundation that is now called *Pedagogisch Studiecentrum Humanistisch Vormings Onderwijs*, to train the HVO-educators.

Many Dutch citizens have come into contact with the HV through its practical activities. And even if they did not know or understand what else the HV was doing, they remained sympathetic to it because of this practical humanism.

### Humanitas

Another important humanist organization is Humanitas, founded on May 31, 1945, immediately after the German occupying forces withdrew from the Netherlands. It was originally called the "Foundation for social services on a humanist basis", but soon the name Humanitas, which was the title of its magazine, was universally used. In 1948 Humanitas became a member-based organization. The founders had three goals. Firstly, human dignity had to be restored after World War II. Secondly, a change was deemed necessary in the way social services were rendered to people: they must be approached as human beings with dignity, and not in the pre-war tradition of paternalistic Christian charity and poor-relief. Joris in 't Veld, president of Humanitas from 1945 to 1963, and Dutch Secretary of Reconstruction and Housing from 1948 to 1951, expressed it as follows:

"True aid is only offered by someone who regards the person in need as a fellow human being, and who is prepared to stand by him. Not aid offered condescendingly, but aid born of a sense of solidarity, of responsibility, also for the destitute of the fellow-man in distress." (quotation from 1953 in Zwierstra 1995: 11; translation by P.D.).

Thirdly, churches gave aid to their members first and to other people later. Humanitas was founded by individuals active in the social democratic, largely non-Christian labor movement who wanted an alternative to the aid traditionally given by the Christian parishes. Humanitas aimed to promote social services
“among all groups of the population, especially also those groups that do not belong to a church” (Zwierstra 1995: 18; translation by P.D.).

The founders of Humanitas and the HV did not know of each other’s plans, and when they did it was too late. Soon after both organizations had been founded their boards made several attempts to achieve a merger and close cooperation. Van Praag and In ’t Veld were very much united in this. All these attempts failed, however, because the rank and file of Humanitas voted against it. An important reason for the failure was that the HV was perceived as extremely atheist, while Humanitas included a significant number of liberal Protestants. Another reason was that the HV, certainly after 1947, did not like Humanitas’s tendency to identify humanism with socialism. In theory Humanitas, like the HV, was politically neutral, and Humanitas took great pains to create a neutral impression. In fact, however, it was very much a social democratic organization, like the HV but even more so. Another possible reason for the failure of the merger was, that in June 1946, In ’t Veld proposed that Humanitas would become a special subordinate organization providing practical social services on a humanist basis, and the HV would become the general humanist organization responsible for the further development of this humanist basis (Zwierstra 1995: 26). Many members of Humanitas could not stomach this. Organizations have their own dynamics, and the members of Humanitas could not accept the idea that Humanitas was to be a “daughter” of the HV. The trivial fact that Humanitas was founded a little earlier than the HV also became important in this context. A final reason for the failure was the ambiguous feelings of many Humanitas-members about the “humanist basis” of the social services Humanitas was offering. Many members of Humanitas thought the humanist basis should be interpreted in the sense of “universally human”, and therefore, they thought, worldview did not matter. Moreover, according to its constitution, Humanitas was meant to help and support all needy people, not just humanists or members of the HV.

In 1955, an organizational committee proposed to strengthen and clarify the humanist basis of Humanitas and again to link Humanitas to the HV. This led to a fierce discussion that lasted until 1959. The Rotterdam branch proposed deleting the humanist basis from the statutes. For the social services rendered by Humanitas, it did not matter whether the solidarity with other people sprang from a religious belief or a humanist worldview. Social work based on a worldview was out of date. Modern social work was based on scientific knowledge. Most of the professionals employed by Humanitas welcomed the proposal from Rotterdam. They had been employed without being asked for their humanist credentials and if humanism played a role in their work, it was only implicitly. In ’t Veld argued that the Dutch government would give money to Humanitas only if it was an organization with a humanist identity. The Department of Social Affairs, headed by a Roman Catholic secretary, did not subsidize neutral private organizations at this time, and strongly supported organizations on a worldview basis. Finally, the 1959 congress of Humanitas unanimously decided to strike the phrase “on a humanist basis” out of the official name of the organization, but at the same time to clarify the humanist principle in article 2 of its statutory regulations. The main elements in this augmented article were a non-dogmatic approach, a focus on people who are not a member of a church,
adherence to the "general humanist" principle of respect for the human person and to its corollaries of self-determination and self-development of each human being, constrained by the interests of society. The 1959 decision did not really bring the discussion to an end. The debate on the humanist basis of the activities of Humanitas has continued to flare up regularly.

It is impossible to provide a satisfactory description of the development of the work executed by the volunteers and professionals of Humanitas in this chapter. The matter is complicated, especially in view of constantly changing government policy and the necessity for Humanitas to respond to it. Broadly speaking, it can be said that until 1955 Humanitas worked mainly with volunteers and a few paid professionals. From 1955 to the beginning of the 1970s, the number of salaried professionals increased spectacularly, as a result of rising government subsidies. In 1955 Humanitas employed a little more than one hundred professionals, and in 1970 their number had grown to 1732, of which 1459 worked as home-helpers. In the same period, membership of Humanitas increased from 10,000 to 35,000. In 1970 the government started to force the many private organizations rendering social services into mergers to become large professional institutions. Compared with the Christian organizations, Humanitas was very small and the influence of Humanitas in this work diminished considerably, to the extent that it almost disappeared. The private organizations for social work based on a worldview, including Humanitas, started to concentrate on community development, which was defined by the government as the activation of worldview groups to the field of welfare improvement. Humanitas did not like the separation of social services and community development, and the fact that community development had to be based on a worldview re-ignited the debate on the organization's humanist basis. The champions of community development based on a humanist worldview, led by the president and former ivv-board member Stempels, won the debate within Humanitas on how to respond to the new government policy. Humanitas started community development in the sectors it was familiar with, e.g. after-care of prisoners and welfare work for older people. The focus on volunteers was re-established because of the government's refusal to finance professional community development workers, except for the training and support of volunteers. The relationship between volunteers and professionals has been a complicated problem for Humanitas throughout its history.

After 1980, Humanitas slid into a long crisis. It started new social services, but membership decreased rapidly from 37,000 in 1973 to 27,000 in 1984, and the decline continued. Members were also aging. The organizational structure was unwieldy, and financial problems arose. In 1987 the provincial government of Friesland stopped subsidizing Humanitas's work in community development. The alarm bell started ringing. A period of reconsideration and reorganization followed, culminating in an extraordinary general meeting in March 1994. The decisions taken in this meeting enabled a relieved Humanitas to make a new start.

In the meantime, Humanitas has developed into an organization that provides social services in the context of community development, and supports community development by providing social services. Humanitas organizes projects and
activities that empower people in socially excluded or marginal positions to rebuild social networks and to regain their place as full members of society, through their own strengths and capabilities and with the right to shape their own lives to their own liking. Some examples of these projects and activities: summer camps for the children of families who cannot afford to go on holidays; a buddy-project and friendship-circles for people with a mental disability; projects for unemployed people to help them regain self-respect; projects and assistance for the homeless; and many projects for migrants and refugees to assist them in integrating into Dutch society. The work of Humanitas is carried out by approximately 10,000 volunteers in five districts and eighty local branches. The volunteers are coordinated, trained and supported by about two hundred paid professionals. Humanitas now has approximately 15,000 financially contributing members.

In the course of its history, Humanitas has started a number of separate foundations that have become very important in their own right. Two examples are the organization for aid to underprivileged children (Stichting Kinderopvang Humanitas), now with 1400 paid workers, and the organization in Rotterdam for older people's care and housing (Stichting Humanitas Rotterdam), now with 1750 paid staff members and 800 volunteers. Compared with the HV, Humanitas represents a very practical type of humanism, which one might call moral or political, and which even has an aversion to ideological debate and abstract worldviews. The motto of Humanitas is: "Do what you have to do!" The implicit nature of the humanism of Humanitas and the pragmatic attitude of many of its members and professionals has ensured that this humanism has never been secure. However, the humanist basis of the work of Humanitas has remained constant over time, in spite of several attempts from the inside to get rid of it.

Hivos and Other Humanist Organizations

Hivos

In January 1968 the Humanistisch Verbond and the Weezenkas ("Orphans Fund") founded Hivos (Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, "Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation"). Some time later, Humanitas joined as the third founding organization. A decisive role was played by L.I. de Winter, who had for a considerable time been the successful director of the life insurance company Aurora, which was owned by the Weezenkas. De Winter made two million Dutch guilders available to the Weezenkas for the purpose of founding Hivos (Hoeckman & Houkes 1998). Hivos (its name is spelled with only one capital nowadays) supports organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Southeast Europe. These organizations are active in the six policy fields chosen by Hivos: economy and credit facilities; culture and the arts; women and development; environment and sustainable development; human rights and aids; information and communication technology (ICT).

Since 1978, Hivos, because of the decision of Jan Pronk, to administer a limited number of non-profit organizations that will spend on development delegates in their countries, received 15% in 2000. Its head office is in The Hague, though in Costa Rica (San José, part of the European network Development Cooperation Federation). Hivos supports the interests of development. Before 1978, the management was now called Cordaid, an organization that Novib, its name is spelled with on commentator was the refusal by Novib. Novib continued to strengthen its position as personal responsibility and motivation, and the rejection of poverty as a consequence of knowledge, progress and nationalism. It feels that poverty is a consequence of the processes that determine the lives of people in developing countries, and the place of development organizations is to their own interest in helping to shape an environment that is linked to humanist values, Novib, Cordaid and development organizations in the amount of cooperation. Though Hivos has no link to the humanist character of its humanist basis as the humanist character of the practical nature of much time debating Humanitas and Humanism. Other Humanist Organizations

So far we have met the
- Dageraad/Vrije Geest;
- Weezenkas;
Since 1978, Hivos has been spending far more money than in its first decade, because of the decision in that year by the Secretary for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, to admit Hivos to the Dutch co-financing program, in which a limited number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) receive tax money to spend on development goals. The Dutch Department for Development Cooperation delegates in this way 10% of its development effort. Of this 10%, Hivos received 15% in 2000, which amounted to almost sixty million euros. The Hivos' head office is in The Hague. There are regional offices in Zimbabwe (Harare), Costa Rica (San José) and India (Bangalore). As an active member of Dutch and European networks (including Alliance 2015, Eurostep, and the South-North Federation), Hivos lobbies for a foreign policy that gives consideration to the interests of developing countries.

Before 1978, the main co-financing NGOs were a Roman Catholic organization, now called Cordaid, a Protestant organization, ICCO, and a nominally neutral organization: Novib. One of the main reasons for the foundation of Hivos in 1968 was the refusal by Novib to commit itself to a non-Christian ideology and focus. Novib continued to spend most of its money through explicitly Christian channels, augmenting the funding from Roman Catholic and Protestant co-financing organizations. The policy of Hivos is based on humanist principles such as personal responsibility for one's actions, the right of individuals to self-determination, and the advocacy of a pluralist and tolerant society. Hivos assumes that poverty is a consequence of unequal opportunities and an unfair distribution of knowledge, power, production and income—on a global scale and within national states. It feels that the world can become a sustainable and fair place to live only if more people have access to the resources and the decision-making processes that determine their future. Hivos wants to increase opportunities for people in developing countries and give them greater scope to develop themselves. NGOs in developing countries play a key role in this. The humanist development organization supports NGOs that support groups of citizens who defend their own interests and who fight for human rights and a better democracy, thus helping to shape an active and resilient society. These ideas certainly can be linked to humanist values and principles, but they are not exclusive to Hivos. Novib, Cordaid and ICCO nowadays subscribe to similar ideas and there is a fair amount of cooperation between Hivos and these organizations.

Though Hivos has not known the same number and intensity of conflicts about its humanist basis as Humanitas, one may say that there is a certain similarity in the humanist character of these organizations. Both are explicitly humanist, but the practical nature of their goals makes them both rather unwilling to spend much time debating and formulating their humanism. It is also clear that for Humanitas and Hivos, humanism is primarily a moral and political movement.

Other Humanist Organizations

So far we have met the following explicitly humanist organizations:
- Dageraad/Vrije Gedachte;
- Weezenkas;
There have been and are many more. I will mention a selection of the others:
- Socrates (a humanist foundation that establishes and maintains extraordinary professorships at state universities);
- Steunfonds Humanisme ("Support Fund for Humanism", a fund-raising organization);
- Humanistische Omroep Stichting ("Humanist Broadcasting Foundation");
- Humanistisch Overleg Mensenrechten ("Humanist Committee on Human Rights");
- Humanistisch Vredesberaad ("Humanist Peace Council");
- Humanistisch Archief;
- Humanist Media Support (provider of internet services and media products; website: http://www.human.nl/).

Two remarks have to be made on this proliferation of humanist organizations. Firstly, these organizations are very much related to one another. As we saw, Hivos was founded by the Weezenkas, Humanistisch Verbond and Humanitas. This pattern, in all kinds of variations, is not unusual. Secondly, what is the explanation for this large number of humanist organizations? Part of the explanation must be found in the pluralist character of Dutch society and the specific way in which this pluralism has been organized since 1860. Sociologists and historians have often referred to this dynamic phenomenon of segregation by the word "pillarization" (verzuiling or verzuildheid in Dutch). In essence it means that society is divided into "pillars": a Protestant, a Roman Catholic, a socialist and perhaps a rather diffuse and underdeveloped liberal or neutral. The leaders of each pillar had the task of reaching agreement with the leaders of other pillars on issues of common concern or national interest.16 This pillarized system, strongly present during the period 1917-1965, was connected with a specific interpretation of the constitutional separation of church and state. In the Netherlands, this separation does not prevent the government spending tax money on the facilities and activities of churches and similar institutions. What it does mean is that the government may only provide money to worldview organizations if it treats all of them in a just and proportionally equal way. This arrangement has had important effects for the humanist movement. When in 1946 the HV started its campaign for the equal treatment of atheist and agnostic Dutch citizens, it was able to use the constitution as a lever to acquire government funds for all kinds of humanist activities. Because, for example, the government gave money to a Protestant and Roman Catholic development organization, it could almost be forced by law to give money to a humanist development organization, too. And so on. The main trouble for the humanist organizations in this respect was to be recognized as being different from the churches, but at the same time being broadly similar. Eventually the HV was very successful in this.
The large number of professionals Humanitas was able to enlist in the 1960s were also the result of the pillar-system. It is doubly ironic that the humanist organizations have benefited so much from this pillar-system. They actually started to benefit at a time when the system began to fall apart. And ideologically speaking, humanists do not really like and never have liked the system of pillars. The humanist worldview prefers individuals to make up their own minds and to decide for themselves what other people they want to associate with. The "pillarization" (verzuilheid) can be, and was, regarded as a system that imprisons people within the confines of the group "they belong to". The general "depillarization" (ontzuiling) that started in 1965 was a process, then, that increased the freedom of the individual, which was regarded by most humanists as a boon. But the same process destroyed the financial system that was so beneficial to humanist organizations.

The financial problems of some humanist organizations have contributed to the success of recent attempts to create a stronger institutional cooperation within the humanist movement. The Humanistisch Kenniscentrum ("Humanist Knowledge Center") was founded early in 2000, and was instrumental in the merger of the two scholarly humanist journals Rekenschap and the Tijdschrift voor Praktische Humanistiek. They were replaced by the Tijdschrift voor Humanistiek—Journal for Humanistics. At the end of 2001, ten humanist organizations—among them the Humanistisch Verbond, Humanitas, Hivos, the University for Humanistics and De Vrije Gedachte—decided to form a Humanistische Alliantie ("Humanist Alliance"). This loosely structured alliance aims at closer cooperation of the humanist organizations in the Netherlands. The aim is to bring about a clearer and more publicly visible identity of the humanist movement, starting from the many successful practical activities of the humanist organizations and emphasizing the affinities between them.

The Changing Meaning of "Humanism"

Recalling the nineteenth-century meanings of the Dutch word humanisme, we can say that the pedagogical meaning has practically disappeared in the Netherlands. It certainly doesn't play a substantial role in the humanism of the organizations calling themselves humanistisch, including that of the Pedagogical Study Center for Humanist Moral and Spiritual Education.

It would be a reasonable guess that Erasmus of Rotterdam alone would succeed in keeping the Renaissance meaning of the word in the air. Renaissance humanism is a historical phenomenon, studied by a large international community of scholars who generally try to do so independently of humanism as a worldview or a moral and political effort. New Dutch translations of the writings not only of Erasmus but also of Petrarch, Thomas More, Rabelais, and Montaigne continue to be published. There is no doubt that Renaissance humanism continues to inspire today's Dutch humanists. The question is rather: how exactly? Many Dutch humanist intellectuals admiringly refer to Renaissance humanists, but they do so in different ways. The Renaissance humanists are used to bolster present-day interpretations of humanism as a worldview and as a moral com-
mitment. Fons Elders uses the work of Renaissance thinkers such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola to promote a humanist worldview that bridges the gap between nature and culture, between cosmology and anthropology, a gap which he criticizes in the humanism of J.P. van Praag (Elders 1996). Wim van Dooren interprets the Aristotelian philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi, Christian in name but hardly in position, as a forerunner of the nineteenth-century freethinkers and atheists. More so than Elders, Van Dooren realizes that not all Renaissance thinkers can be called Renaissance humanists (Van Dooren 1991; Nauert 1995: 59-68). Harry Kunneman refers to Montaigne's humanism to show that giving attention to bodies, to local and historical contexts, and to differences between people is part of the humanist tradition. Therefore, according to him, there is no necessary contradiction between humanism and postmodernism (Kunneman 1993: 68).

The moral or political meaning of humanism is clearly alive in the humanist organizations of the Netherlands. *Humanistisch Verbond*, Humanitas, Hivos, and all the others regularly use h-words to express their humanitarian strivings and their activities aimed at a more humane society. The worldview meaning of humanism also has remained very much present in Dutch humanism, sometimes in the militantly atheist version (as in Paul Cliteur's newspaper columns), but more often in an open variety. In this context it is important to be aware of recent changes in Dutch society and in the way worldviews are conceptualized and studied. I already mentioned the fact that Dutch society is no longer Christian. It is now an intercultural and multicultural society in which only 37% of its citizens are members of a Christian church or regard themselves as Muslim (Becker & De Wit 2000: 73). But there is more: in 1999, 45 to 60% of the church members went to church only a few times a year, if at all. Between 1979 and 1995, men and women who were a member of a Christian church but did not subscribe to the central tenets of the Christian belief, increased in number. Since 1985 the group of non-believing church members has become even larger than the group of traditional Christian believers in the churches.17 We might be evolving towards a situation in which the large churches have disappeared, leaving a large number of smaller churches with a more conscious, convinced and "orthodox" membership. And what do Dutch people believe who are not a member of a Christian church and not a Muslim? Fewer than 10% of them have traditional Christian beliefs. The others have (implicit) beliefs about freedom, determinism and chance, about the malleability and manageability of human life and society, about the (possibility and methods of) justification of moral positions and claims to truth, about what is important in life, about purposes and values, about retaining one's self-respect and personal identity (Baumeister 1991; Elders 1999). They are no nihilists. They want to decide for themselves what to believe in. They are members of all kinds of organizations, but in most cases these are not organizations that provide them with an all-encompassing worldview. One might say that they all have a "meaning frame" (*zingevingskader*), but only some have a "worldview" (*levensbeschouwing*). A meaning frame is a set of experiences, principles, values and views that makes a person feel that her or his life is meaningful. This set may be largely implicit and only have a limited coherence, but it is there and it works. A worldview is a meaning frame that is necessarily explicit in terms of internal coherence. The non-churchgoing Dutch population, has a non-Chr

Because they have a large number of smaller churches with a more conscious, convinced and "orthodox" membership. And what do Dutch people believe who are not a member of a Christian church and not a Muslim? Fewer than 10% of them have traditional Christian beliefs. The others have (implicit) beliefs about freedom, determinism and chance, about the malleability and manageability of human life and society, about the (possibility and methods of) justification of moral positions and claims to truth, about what is important in life, about purposes and values, about retaining one's self-respect and personal identity (Baumeister 1991; Elders 1999). They are no nihilists. They want to decide for themselves what to believe in. They are members of all kinds of organizations, but in most cases these are not organizations that provide them with an all-encompassing worldview. One might say that they all have a "meaning frame" (*zingevingskader*), but only some have a "worldview" (*levensbeschouwing*). A meaning frame is a set of experiences, principles, values and views that makes a person feel that her or his life is meaningful. This set may be largely implicit and only have a limited coherence, but it is there and it works. A worldview is a meaning frame that is necessarily explicit in terms of internal coherence. The non-churchgoing Dutch population, has a non-Chr
meaning frame that is more conscious, more explicit, and has been improved in
terms of internal consistency and external relevance (Hijmans 1994). Of the
non-churchgoing Dutch, the overwhelming majority, about half the total popu-
lation, has a non-Christian meaning frame, but it is very hard to pin down pre-
cisely what it means, often also for these people themselves. Meaning frames and
worldviews can be highly personal, but even then they can also be shared by
many, to a certain extent. Most Dutch people have meaning frames that have a
lot of common characteristics, not because they adhere to the same worldview-
organization, but because they have lived through the same social changes. Re-
search has shown, for instance, that since 1979 the Dutch in general have come
to think less of traditional family ties and the traditional division of labor be-
tween men and women. They now think more important issues are: their own
career; freedom to enjoy life; freedom of speech and expression; and individual
freedom in matters of life and death (e.g. abortion and euthanasia) (Felling, Pe-
ters & Scheepers 2000).
Because they have a better understanding of the way in which people nowadays
give meanings to their lives (and did so in the past?), and because they are aware
of the prime value of individual freedom in present-day Dutch society, many
Dutch humanists are on the alert when talking about humanism as a worldview.
A humanist worldview is not something to be handed down the generations as a
complete and finished, collectively celebrated package. It is more a task than a
traditional result. Many Dutch humanists realize that they "have", or rather
"live", a largely implicit meaning frame, and that it is hard work to create and
express a coherent worldview of their own. From these empirical and conceptual
considerations, we are in a position to reformulate J.P. van Praag's fight against
nihilism. He thought it very important to a vital society for most people to de-
velop their largely implicit meaning frames into more conscious worldviews, and
to share and discuss them with others.
One of the more important and interesting debates in Dutch humanism at the
beginning of the twenty-first century is about the status and content of human-
ism as a meaning frame and a worldview, and its precise relation to humanism
as a moral and political effort towards a more humane society. In the organiza-
tions joining forces in the Humanist Alliance, the humanitarian meaning of hu-
manism and the worldview meaning will have to find a common understanding
in some way.
Notes

Introduction

1 'The name originally adopted was 'University for Humanist Studies'. However, in 2002 the name is set to change to 'University for Humanistics'. The reason for adopting this new name is that the neologism humanistics is closer to the intention of instituting a new human science (see the contribution of Harry Kunneman to this volume).
2 For the text of the research program go to our website: www.uvh.nl

Chapter 3

2 For a solid survey of Allard Pierson's humanism see Molenberg (1998). An English but much less complete article on Pierson's humanism is to be found in Molenberg (1997).
3 I am grateful to Jo Nahuurs for his useful comments on an earlier version of this section on De Dageraad.
4 These conservative figures are based on research by the Dutch CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics), asking simply what church one belongs to.
5 In its long history, many courageous and important individuals have been active in and associated with De Dageraad. Apart from the already mentioned Johannes van Vliet, Adriaan Gerhard and Jan Hoving, I mention the natural scientist and anthropologist Franz W. Junghuhn, the publishers Frans Ch. Günst and Rudolf C. d'Ablaing van Giessenburg, the important writer Multatuli (Eduar Douwes Dekker), the Darwinian H.H. Hartogh Heys van Zouteveen, the natural scientist and socially committed liberal Pieter C.F. Frowein, the anarchist and political activist Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, the writer and socialist Cornélie Huygens, the physician and feminist Aletta Jacobs, the anarchist and anti-militarist Bart de Ligt, the businessman and socialist anti-zionist Louis Fles, the philosopher Leo Polak and the journalist and anarchist Anton Constandse. The most important publications on De Dageraad and De Vrije Gedachte are: Gerhard (1906), Noordenbos & Spigt (1978), Noordenbos (1956) and Baars (1981).
6 Apart from J.P. van Praag, important individuals connected with the Humanistisch Verbond were the social democrat and professor of Dutch Garnt Stuiveling, the radical socialist philosopher H.J. Pos, the radical socialist and anti-colonialist physics te-
acher Piet Schut, the social democrat and professor of comparative literature Jan Brandt Corstius, Leo Polak's wealthy widow H.A. Polak-Schwarz, the radical H.J.J. Lips, the first humanist counselor Cees Schonk, the law professor Max Rood, the sociologist and prominent homosexual Rob Tielman, the philosopher of law and liberal politician Jan Glastra van Loon and the philosopher of law and conservative liberal Paul Cliteur.

7 These figures of the Dutch Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP 1998: 139) have a different basis from the CBS-figures mentioned earlier. The SCP-figures are based on a two-step question. First it is asked whether one regards oneself member of a church, and only people whose answer is affirmative are asked what church they belong to. This two-step method produces higher numbers of people who do not belong to a church. According to experts, it is a more trustworthy method. Another interesting possibility is the following. Obviously people join, stay with, and leave organizations for many different reasons: intellectual, social, emotional and so on. It is possible that people leave their church but stick to the Christian faith. It is equally possible that somebody is a member of a church, but does not believe in a personal God or an afterlife.

8 In 1986, in his speech at the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the HV, the Roman Catholic prime minister Ruud Lubbers said that Dutch society is based on Christian and humanist principles combined.

9 The most important publications on the history of the HV are: Van Baalen (1998a); Bonger (1956); Derks & Gasenbeek (1997) and Floksa & Wieling (1986). At the end of his life, J.P. van Praag wrote his magnum opus *Grondslagen van humanisme* (1978), which was also published in English as *Foundations of Humanism* (1982). Website: http://www.humanistischverbond.nl/


11 Apart from J. in ‘t Veld, important individuals connected with Humanitas were: P.C. Faber, co-founder, of liberal Protestant origins and board member of several organizations for the after-care of prisoners and for youth protection; H. Ploeg Jr., founder of the first local branch of Humanitas (in Utrecht), president of the Dutch Association for the Abolition of Alcoholic Beverages, and later a member of parliament for the PvdA; M.A. Molzner, co-founder, a Christian socialist who was convinced of the importance of a non-church organization for social aid; G. Hendrikse, head of Humanitas’s Research and Community Development section from 1953 to 1965 and later a senior government official; A.D. Belinfante, professor of law at the University of Amsterdam and president from 1963 to 1967; Tiemme van Grootheest, director of the Central Office from 1963 to 1972; A. Stempels, president from 1967 to 1977 and a well-known conservative-liberal journalist; Aad van Oosten, director of the Central Office from 1973 to 1993; Henk Rengelink, president from 1977 to 1987; and Marius Ernsting, the present director of the National Office in Amsterdam.

12 The most important publication on the history of Humanitas is Zwierstra (1995). Marius Ernsting and Annette Jansen of the National Office of Humanitas in Amsterdam kindly provided additional information. See also Van Baalen (1998b). Website: http://www.humanitas.nl/

13 The Weezenkas is an association founded in 1896 to support orphans of freethinkers and to guarantee them an education free of (Christian) dogmas. The Weezenkas still exists.
Chapter 6

1 The 'human potential movement' in psychology is also known as the 'humanistic approach' in personality theory and psychotherapy, with Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow as its principal exponents.

2 The metaphor used in the Dutch language to indicate this state of affairs is that of pillars standing side by side, without contact, except by way of the roof that they are supporting.

3 Jaap van Praag (1911-1981) was co-founder of the Dutch Humanist Association and of the Humanist Training Institute, the institute that preceded the University for Humanistics. This 'father of modern Dutch humanism' (Derkx & Gasenbeek 1997) also devoted his energy to the recognition of humanist counseling as a profession in its own right. He labeled the battle with nihilism 'the great fight' and the struggle for recognition and equal rights 'the small fight'.

4 Of course, psychology (or, more precisely, psychotherapy) also deals with problems of this kind. But the goal of the psychotherapist is to strengthen the client's capacities for feeling emotions, for self-regulation of inner states and behavior, for reality-oriented perception, and so on. It is easy to extend this list of focal points, because of the many schools of psychotherapy that have been developed. The point here is, that psychotherapy conceptualizes the questions and problems of the client in terms of a psychological theory. This theory indicates the best course of treatment in the situation at hand. In other words, psychotherapy focuses on the psychological dimension of the problems (Mooren 1989).

5 Some people object to the expression that one 'gives' meaning to life, because of its connotation of rationality and deliberation. They argue that meaning in life is not something we can create by an act of will, but that a sense of meaning in life comes to us unexpectedly, when we surrender ourselves and open up our inner self to what is around us. They have a point, but in humanism this experience—for some it is a religious experience—is seen as originating in human beings (so it is a human act) instead of being given to us by some higher being or power. And psychologists see this experience, whatever its origin, as an act of the organism. Hence the expression that people 'give' meaning to life. Acknowledging these views does not presuppose a purely rationalistic and voluntaristic approach to the process of giving meaning to life.

6 Looking back, it is therefore remarkable that the discussion did not start before 1989. The reason was probably the low level of professionalism of humanist counseling at that time, a process that gained momentum with the start of the University for Humanistics.
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