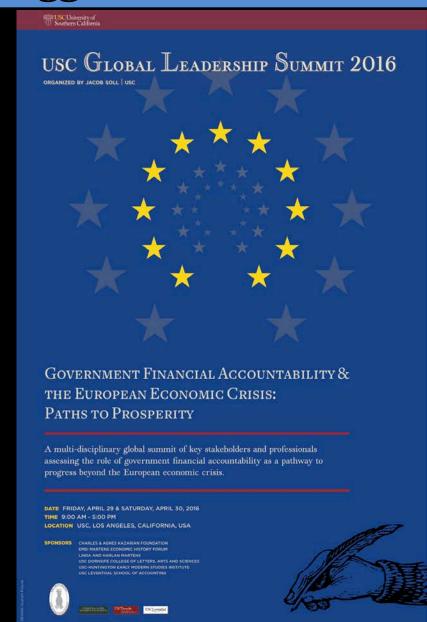
# Accounting, Accountability, and the Struggle for Nation-Building

Jacob Soll

**USC** 



 How do we manage and talk about debt as a political and economic challenge?

What language do we use?

What are our collective approaches?

What makes states succeed or fail in the long run?
Are there elemental ingredients?

- What makes states succeed or fail?
- Are there elemental ingredients?
   Accounting = Accountability

= sustainability and

Longevity: look at English and Dutch financial and political history

# Lorenzo the Magnificent, 1449-1492



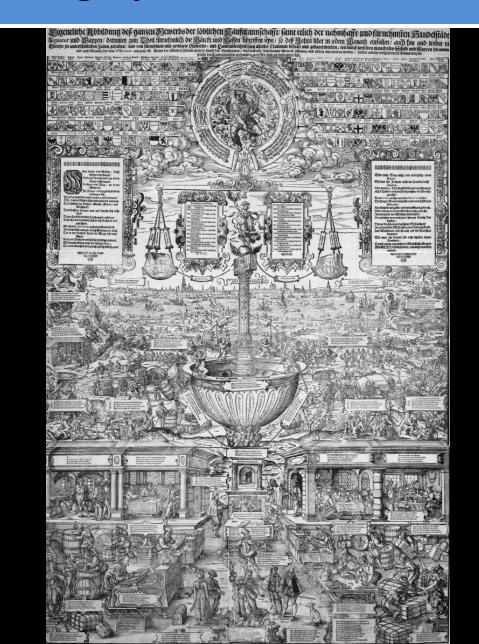
# Philip II of Spain ruled 1554-1598



### The Dutch Lion



# **Allegory to Commerce 1585**



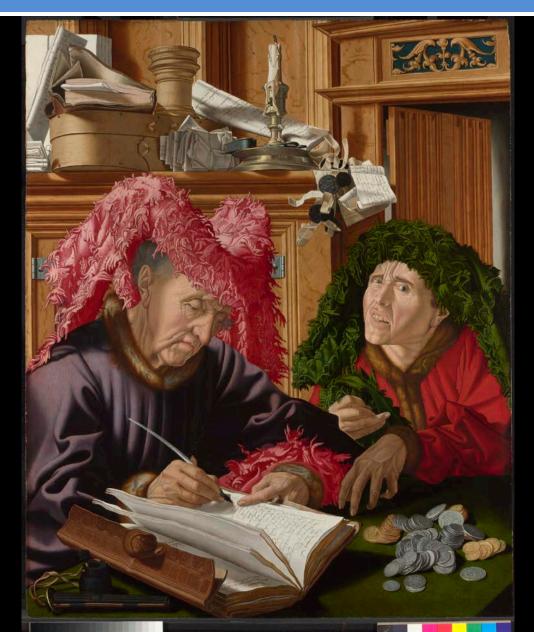
# Death and the Miser A Dutch Warning Painting About Accounting



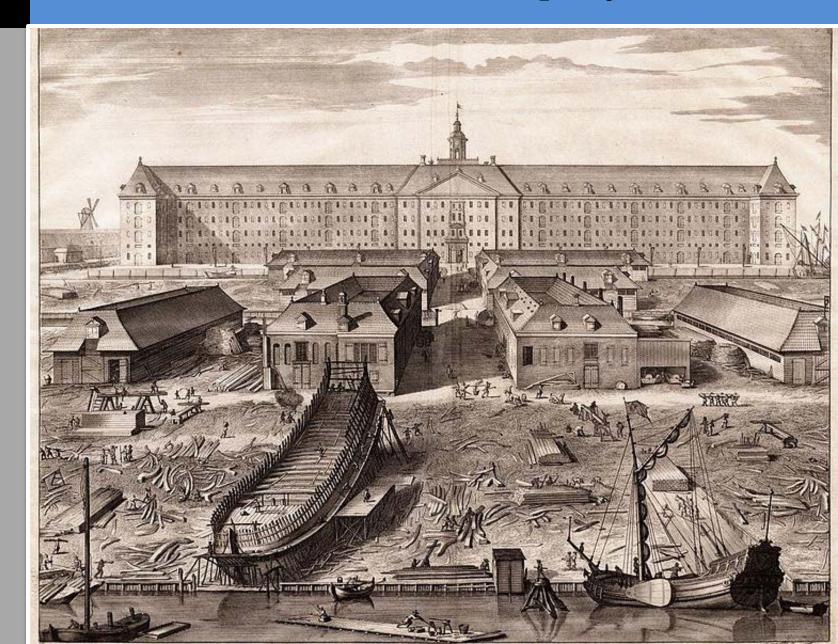




## Marinus van Remerswaele Two Tax Gatherers c. 1540



# **Dutch East India Company 1602**



 Again and again in history, state builders have insisted that leaders of countries be able to keep and analyze financial ledgers and balance sheets

# Prince Maurice's Double Entry Ledgers 1604

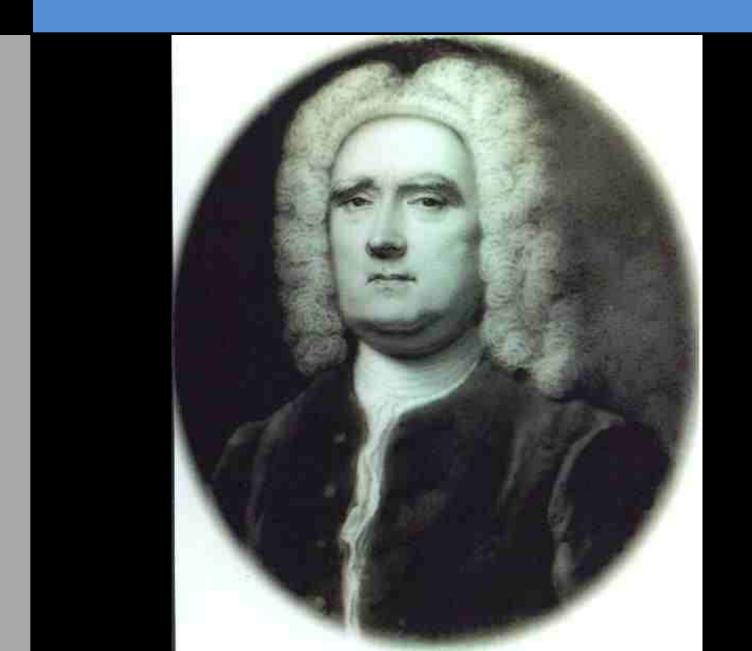
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# South Sea Bubble 1720



# Archibald Hutcheson 1659-1740



#### COMPUTATIONS

Relating to the

### PUBLICK DEBTS,

Takes from the

### ABSTRACT

Deliverid into

#### PARLIAMENT

The 14th of March, 1716.

With Some

CONSIDERATIONS in Relation to the fame.



LONDON:

Reprinted in the Y E a. R. M DCC XX.

# Prime Minister Robert Walpole from 1721-1742

Bails out South Sea Company in 1721

THE FIRST BAILOUT



• Using the languages of accounting and political accountability—as well as the tools of financial accounting (proto accrual), the British manage their debt.

# Richard Price's Sinking Fund



• The French do not

# The French Revolution 1789 to Napoleon



• But during the French Revolution, the premise of rebuilding the nation is based on accounting policy, bureaus, laws.

# **Article XV** - The society has the right of requesting account from any public agent of its administration.

Accountability as a human right?

YES



How Does Accountability Become

• Part of Political Discourse?

• How Does Accountability Become part of Political Discourse?

#### **» MECHANISMS:**

- Through the Publication of Accounts
  - and their subsequent debate by informed
  - Parties
  - Then it has to be integrated into discourse via debate as well as **constitutions and law**
  - They seem to be relatively co-dependent

# A theory gone awry

### The Maastricht Definition

Accounting standards subverted by government interests

### Our current situation

• Where are the accountants?

Where is the public debate?

Where are the accounts?

What role does accounting play?

Accounting as an industry answering purely to profit and not to accounting standards

In whatever order

Breakdowns in accounting, and the culture of accountability

Systematically produce debt and financial fraud crises

# Historical Lesson? Hans Memling, *The Last Judgment* 1471

Here's one Christian response

Balance your books before God does

Tommaso
Portinari,
Head of the
Bruges Branch
of the Medici
Bank

