BESCHEIDEN AND BESCHETEN = BESCHAAFD AND ONBESCHOFT

If you have read my previous piece, you will have come across the first two Dutch words. 'Beschaafd' means 'civilised' and 'onbeschoft' means 'rude' (uncivilised). AI is 'coy' about the etymology of onbeschoft, but I think it is very likely a dialect-related issue: onbeschoft is just dialect for onbeschaafd, either a sort of pseudo-sophisticated pronunciation and/or plat Nederlands (as spoken in certain regions. As there seems to be so much excessive 'boasting' and 'hubris' in the world these days I thought it worthwhile to revisit these words and their meaning and usage. After all, my whole educational background feels like it is anchored in and directed towards achieving the ideas of being beschaafd and civilised, from the (children's) Bible to the School with the Bible to the Gymnasium[i] to the University (Social Sciences), whereas now it feels like all that learning and potential wisdom is being severely challenged and 'aan de tand gevoeld'[ii], and if Trump and his ilk had their way, thrashed.

Mind you, I don't really like the words 'beschaving' and 'civilisation'. There must be better words to describe the aim of organising a society so that everyone potentially can get their fair share with the minimum amount of the 'pain or discomfort' of giving up their basic hedonistic impulses[iii]. Again, given your educational background is adequate, AI driven searches would probably not be a waste of time and may refresh or further develop your ability to nuance. I typed in 'Greek versus Roman civilisation', 'Eudaimonia vs Hedonia', 'Eastern vs Western' civilisations, 'can AI contribute to civilization?', and 'Might is Right?' I must say that I was pleasantly surprised by what Google's AI search engine produced. At first impression it was concise and well-balanced. Why does a little voice somewhere in my head now want to warn me not to be lured into a sense of false security and complacency…? Must I put that voice in its place…? When does too much beschaving/civilisation become counter-productive? Is it when the frame around it to keep the 'barbarians' out becomes more important and impenetrable than the content it is trying to protect? Who are those barbarians anyway, and what do we (*'us'*) actually know about *'them'*?[iv] When I typed in "who are the barbarians amongst the AI developers?", the AI generated answer summarised: "In summary, the "barbarians" are the new generation of autonomous AI systems that are rapidly taking over technical design tasks previously thought to be exclusive to human expertise". This would seem to make people like Elon Musk a barbarian. It will also tell you how you can turn off AI monitoring. But am I paranoid enough for that, and is it worth doing anyway? AI did reassure me that human beings will want to stay in charge and are working on it. Interesting and challenging stuff…to get lost in.

Meanwhile, Jewish culture is often held up as an example of enlightened liberalism, as is indeed (pretends to be?) American culture (and Persian culture as well as others). What has gone wrong? But more importantly, how to curb it without the self-perpetuating violence that accepts the curse of collateral damage? Sartre versus Camus, the old conundrum. Ask AI…

DP
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[i] AI overview (google translated from Dutch):

gymnasium in the Netherlands is the most academically rigorous track of secondary education (VWO), distinguished by the compulsory study of Latin and/or Ancient Greek, preparing students for university, especially in humanities, languages, or science fields requiring strong analytical skills, differing from the similar **atheneum** which omits these classical languages but offers similar academic depth. It's a selective path for intellectually driven students, focusing on deep theoretical knowledge, classics, and critical thinking, often seen as elite.

[ii] In English, "aan de tand voelen" usually means "to question someone thoroughly," "to probe," or "to grill someone," trying to extract information, just as a horse trader feels a horse's teeth to determine its age. Alternative expressions are "to feel someone out," "to put someone to the test," or in informal contexts, "to put the squeeze on someone.

[iii] See *'Civilization and its Discontents'* by Sigmund Freud.

[iv] See Kavafy's poem at the end of the chapter:
https://danandkatinaspages.com/Thoughts/LETTERS%20TO%20POSEIDON%20whole%20book%20with%20hyperlinks.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A119%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C87%2C806%2C0%5D