

Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for History 2006 awarded to Joel Mokyr

Amsterdam, 30 March 2006 - The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences has awarded the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for History 2006 (USD 150,000) to Professor Joel Mokyr, Department of Economics, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, United States, for

'his research into the origins of the modern industrial economy'

The subject

Why are some societies innovative and others not? That is the key question in the fertile and influential work of Joel Mokyr, who has published on European and world economic history. In his view, knowledge and technology play a crucial role. Starting with his first study of the industrial revolution in the Low Countries, Mokyr pioneered what is now known as 'New Economic History'. He draws from many different disciplines, ranging from demographics to cognitive psychology, and in this way offers relevant insights into the present, for example the origins of the knowledge society. Mokyr has shown that there is an unmistakable relationship between Europe's Industrial Revolution in the late 18th and 19th centuries and the intellectual movements of the previous centuries. Without that knowledge base, the modern industrial economy would not have evolved. Mokyr also makes clear that if that knowledge base is too narrow, economic development will eventually grind to a halt.

The prizewinner

Joel Mokyr (1946) was born in Leyden, the Netherlands, but migrated to Israel at an early age and is now an American citizen. He studied economics and history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and received his doctorate at Yale in 1974 for his dissertation on the economic history of the Low Countries.

In the same year he accepted a position at Northwestern University (Illinois), where he has worked ever since. He is currently a Professor of Economics and History and, since 1994, the Robert H. Strotz Professor of Arts and Sciences.

Mokyr is an undisputed world authority in his field. He is or has been a member of the editorial boards of the leading journals of economic history and is the editor in chief of the five-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History*.

Mokyr is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has been elected a foreign member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2001. A number of his books, many of which are suitable for a wider readership, have been translated and he has received numerous awards for his publications. Mokyr is well-known for his enthusiasm, his wide-ranging outlook and his ability to inspire other researchers.

Further reading

Mokyr, J., *Industrialization in the Low Countries, 1795-1850*, New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1976

Mokyr, J., *The lever of riches: Technological creativity and economic progress*, New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1990

Mokyr, J., *The gifts of Athena: Historical origins of the knowledge economy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002

Mokyr, J., Long-term economic growth and the history of technology, in: Ph. Aghion and S. Durlauf (eds.), *Handbook of Economic Growth*, 1113-1180, Elsevier, 2005

About the prize

The Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for History has been awarded since 1990. Until 2004, it was awarded in the field of European history, but as of this year all fields of history are eligible. Previous winners include Peter Gay, Mona Ozouf, Heinz Schilling and Jacques Le Goff. For more background information, see <http://www.knaw.nl/heinekenprizes>.

The awards ceremony

The six Heineken Prizes for science, scholarship and art are presented every other year during a special session of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. This year the presentation will take place on Thursday 28 September at the Beurs van Berlage Building in Amsterdam.