

# When happiness was a new idea in Europe

## *A Unificationist perspective on the Dutch Golden Age*

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*When countries think of advancement they don't think of one country advancing in democracy and another in art. Instead they think that they must advance in all of these areas. If one country is outstanding in all of these areas, every other country will admire its achievement. It is always important to determine the essence of a country which warrants respect. Then what is the element of a country which every other country can admire? It is not likely to be seen in one building or a modern factory. Even achieving the fullest perfection in art is not likely to warrant the fullest respect. Art is viewed as art, economy as economy and technology as technology, while the people who produced a brilliant result are not thought about. When we look for the most basic element of a nation we see it is people who produce a country.*

(Reverend Moon, For the Future, September 10, 1978, London)

The quest of happiness appears in the first sentence of the Divine Principle, “Every human being is struggling to attain life-long happiness and overcome misfortune”<sup>1</sup>. Here, we are talking about achieving a lasting satisfaction as a result of a commitment and not about something that merely *happens* (the etymology of happiness) for a while. There is also a warning that the first step is to overcome misfortune.

The struggle to move away from misfortune and seek a lasting happiness, more than any other factor, drove the Dutch Republic<sup>2</sup>, particularly through most of the seventeenth Century<sup>3</sup>. This period is sometimes labeled the Golden Century or the Dutch miracle. There are several reasons for this, and there are certainly many lessons which we can learn from this period, in a Unificationist perspective.

We are amazed to see how the small Dutch population united in a steady effort to overcome the various dangers and threats from a natural and political environment which were inimical. Whereas most Europeans were still plagued by several calamities, the Dutch enjoyed a remarkable spring.

We also admire the nation of religious freedom and tolerance. Religion and science worked in harmony, in a joint effort to improve the well-being of the whole population. In many ways, Netherlands was the first nation-State to adopt a republican regime, where the pursuit of liberty, equality and happiness gradually became core values. Netherlands thus developed a brilliant culture, which was not limited to the official and academic circles of a court and of aristocrats. The Dutch way of life, the daily culture of the population, became a source of inspiration for artists. The great paintings of Dutch masters reflected the effort of a whole population toward excellence. The domestic life became a central theme in the arts, this itself was a cultural revolution.

Much has been written about its liberal governance, in an age where Absolutism was the norm elsewhere. Netherlands also quickly became the leading commercial power of the world, laying some very important foundations of capitalism. All these achievements did not just happen. From this viewpoint, the “Dutch miracle”, popularized by K.W. Swart<sup>4</sup>, can be a misleading expression. The Dutch enjoyed a fortune which was neither miraculous, nor the effect of luck. Prompted by vision and courage, they made bold and steady choices, whereas neighboring countries remained at the stage of wishful thinking.

Historians generally agree that Netherlands was a model during its seventeenth century. Yet most hesitate with the ambiguous notion of a golden age<sup>5</sup>. Johan Huizinga (1872-1945), the major historian of the

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<sup>1</sup> EDP, 1996, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> The Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, commonly referred to as the Dutch Republic, was a federal republic which existed from 1588 (during the Dutch Revolt) to 1795 (the Batavian Revolution).

<sup>3</sup> Usually, the term Golden century is given to the period between 1588 and 1672 (The Rampjaar, or year of disaster). Strictly speaking, the Dutch dream was triumphant during 50 years (1620-1672). Before that period, there was a ascension, and the Rampjaar was followed by a relative stagnation and decline.

<sup>4</sup> Koenraad Wolter Swart *The miracle of the Dutch Republic as seen in the seventeenth century*, An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at University College London, 6 November 1967

<sup>5</sup> *de Gulden Eeuw* in Old Dutch, *de Gouden Eeuw* in modern Dutch, is translated as Golden Age

Netherlands, challenged this concept, for a simple reason: we talk about real history, not about legendary times. The present essay, therefore, is not just about the historical facts, what really took place. We shall deal more with mental representations, namely the hopes and ideals which were guiding the Dutch Republic in its magnificence. For the philosopher Georg W. Hegel, the Dutch 17<sup>th</sup> Century was one of the highest moments in the march of human history toward the self-realization of the Absolute Spirit. Ironically, Hegel did not see this grandeur of the Dutch civilization in the quest of the pure concept. In Hegelian terms, the Golden Age was the age where the ideal had descended on the earth and was no longer alienated in the reality. It was alive in the practical existence of the common people. He praised their “utterly living absorption in the world and its daily life”. **In other words, the Dutch people had created a society where the ideal and the reality tend to unite in the normal existence: the ordinary people were in communion with the Spirit not just in their religious life, but in everyday existence. We shall later mention this “biblicisation of the daily life” as a distinct feature of the Golden Age.**

### **The Golden Age when the reality tried to match the ideal**

For Hegel, the “absorption in the daily life” far from being vulgar and merely secular, was a part of a theodicy, of a Providence at work in the Dutch society,

The Dutch have selected the content of their artistic representations out of their own experience, out of their own life in the present. In order to ascertain what engrossed the interest of the Dutch at the time of these paintings, we must ask about Dutch history.

What fascinated Hegel so much is none other than freedom. Later, we shall suggest that Netherlands at that time was a pioneer of the modern four freedoms. This is what Hegel observed in their civilization.

**The Dutch have made the greatest part of the land on which they dwell and live; it has continually to be defended against the storms of the sea, and it has to be maintained. By resolution, endurance, and courage, townsmen and countrymen alike threw off the Spanish dominion [...], and by fighting won for themselves freedom in political life and in religious life too. This citizenship, this love of enterprise, in small things as in great, in their own land as on the high seas, this painstaking as well as cleanly and neat well-being, this joy and exuberance in their own sense that for all this they have their own activity to thank, all this is what constitutes the general content of their pictures.<sup>6</sup>**

Here, Hegel was not writing as a historian. The author of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* was interpreting the mental representations of this period in the art. The present essay will not try to prove that Netherlands at that time was an ideal society, but will explore its representations of an ideal world.

Indeed, Netherlands was then living a national dream, a national myth which cannot be measured quantitatively. The population was inspired by the vision of a happy society, where common people would find deeper and deeper satisfactions through steady progress. **According to Simon Schama the question of “how to create a moral order in an earthly paradise” dominated the Dutch Golden Age, or to speak like Aristotle: how do virtue and happiness walk together? how long? Can a society aim at the good, while seeking the goods of the earth? Can the quest of spiritual values (truth, goodness and beauty) go hand in hand with the pursuit of material values? How much can we integrate heavenly laws, human laws and natural laws, in order to arrive at a better life? Aristotle did not believe in a perfect and platonic Republic guided by king-philosophers. He envisioned a social life of gradual progress toward the good. The Dutch Golden Century implemented much of the Eudaimonia sought by Aristotle. Much later, Tocqueville studied the life of Americans in the nascent American Democracy and wrote,**

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<sup>6</sup> All quotes from Georg W. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, p. 168. In the last observation, Hegel clearly emphasizes the four freedoms achieved by the Dutch at that time, freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of expression, freedom of worship. We shall later elaborate on this.

“I considered mores to be one of the great general causes responsible for the maintenance of a democratic republic . . . the term *mores* . . . meaning . . . habits of the heart.”<sup>7</sup>

For a few decades, the “habits of the heart” in the domestic and civic life of the Dutch people became the driving force of a whole society, announcing the modern aspirations of the Western world. Here we are not talking about an ideology, especially with a State ideology in the modern sense. We are probably dealing with a broader notion, sometimes called *Weltanschauung*, literally a vision, or representation of the world. We are dealing more with a cultural ideal than with a political project<sup>8</sup>. Later, part of this *Weltanschauung* became the driving force of the United States, with notions such as *City on a hill*, *Manifest Destiny*, or *American Dream*. All of these premises were already at work in the Dutch Golden Age

Was this euphoria merely the optimism of a small, preserved nation? It would be too simple. Taking great risks, driven by a strong sense of mission, the Netherlands became a major power in world affairs. It did so with confidence, but was also with angst, because its ideals were new, fragile, and not yet mature.

Much later, the French and Americans thought happiness through political and economic revolutions to overthrow the old order, but the Dutch mostly sought happiness *from within*, not *against* some external obstacle. More than that, the most devout Calvinist elites of the young Republic were convinced that their nation had become the chosen nation, and had received from Heaven a universal mission.

The Divine Principle, based on the teachings of Reverend Sun Myung Moon (1920-2011), states that God created human beings to be good and to enjoy a complete happiness, which combines the joys of the spirit and the physical pleasures, the collective and the individual satisfactions. The core of the Dutch Golden Dream is about such a quest, 400 years ago. In the Divine Principle, the chapter called the *Principle of Creation* can be read as a manifesto for a world of global happiness where God, human beings and the creation will rejoice. It is called the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in the Divine Principle, and Cheonilguk in the speeches given by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon from 2000. This vision of a world of happiness is guiding the Unification movement, which he and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, founded in Korea. In many ways, the Dutch Republic may be seen as one of the first modern utopias announcing a possible universal golden age for all mankind, which we are yet to define.

Analyzing the history of the Western civilization, the Divine Principle observes the following,

Religion and economy are integrated with our life in the society through politics. Especially in Western Europe, politics have sought to connect economic development, which has closely followed the progress of science, with the path of Christianity ...<sup>9</sup>

This was a paramount concern of the Dutch Republic. The elites knew that Calvinism alone would not bring happiness. It had to be accompanied by a political and economic project which would help all Dutch people practice Christian ideals in their social, earthly life, not in the perspective of a distant after life.

### The Dutch Collective Effervescence

All civilizations have sought, as a paradigm, but also as a real experience, a society of comprehensive happiness, encompassing the spiritual, cultural, political and economic levels, not the mere welfare and abundance. This may explain some exceptional moments of human history, for instance the Dutch Golden Age. Emile Durkheim called these moments the times of collective effervescence,

“At such moments, this higher form of life is lived with such intensity and exclusiveness that it monopolizes all minds to the more or less complete exclusion of egoism and the commonplace. At such times, the ideal tends to become one with the real, and for this reason men have the

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<sup>7</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, Pagnerre, 1848, tome 2, p. 198

<sup>8</sup> The Divine Principle suggests that the modern world was roughly guided by the Abel-type view of life and the Cain-type view of life. Both try to attain happiness, the former insisting on the spiritual values, the latter on the material values. The Netherlands in the 17th century can be seen as a forerunner of the Abel-type view of life.

<sup>9</sup> EDP, Parallels, 7.2.2

impression that the time is close when the ideal will in fact be realized and the Kingdom of God established on earth.”<sup>10</sup>

Durkheim warned that the collective effervescences may also take the forms of mirages or collective illusions. Totalitarian ideologies, such as Nazism and Communism, have aroused messianic expectations among the modern masses in quest of an ideal world. Dostoevsky announced that the 20<sup>th</sup> century might see the triumph of what he called *The Possessed*.<sup>11</sup> What is the driving force of negative and destructive forms of collective effervescence? They are often triggered by what Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) called the sad passions, namely fear, dread, resentment, hatred, anger, obsession.

Interestingly, Spinoza was the main Dutch thinker of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Joy is central in his thought. The human being, in his philosophy, is the “being-for-joy”. Spinoza uses a whole range of Latin words to describe joy. *Gaudium* (which gave joy) expresses a form of relief, *Titillatio* is a brief moment of physical excitement, which can also become spiritual, *Hilaritas* is a more lasting excitement that uplifts our mind and body while heading for some goal, *Laetitia* is the positive joy after completing something, and its perfect, ultimate form is *Beatitudo*. No other philosopher had explored joy so completely before Spinoza. In a certain sense, his quest of joy is a major landmark in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By contrast, angst was to dominate much of Western thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Spinoza emphasized the centrality of joy during the Dutch Golden Age. Is it a mere coincidence? The answer has to be balanced for two reasons. First, Spinoza was isolated and misunderstood in Europe in his lifetime. Second, he was not welcome in Netherlands and was even ostracized and deemed heretic. He was never the official philosopher or voice of the Dutch Republic. He was never acclaimed and recognized in his lifetime like Rembrandt, for instance. Moreover, it can be argued that Spinoza’s quest of joy is far too idealistic, mystical, compared to the quest of a gradual quest of happiness. Yet, from another angle, Spinoza is useful to grasp some aspects of the Weltanschauung of his time. He was aware of a step-by-step progress toward joy, as is evidenced in this excerpt of the *Ethics*,

The Mind can undergo great changes, and pass now to a greater, now to a lesser perfection. These passions, indeed, explain to us the affects of Joy and Sadness. By Joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection. And by Sadness, that passion by which it passes to a lesser perfection. The affect of Joy which is related to the Mind and Body at once I call Pleasure or Cheerfulness, and that of Sadness, Pain or Melancholy<sup>12</sup>

The Dutch people were struggling to find greater and greater happiness in a world of trouble, and Spinoza’s ethics may be read as summarizing, albeit in a very idealistic way, the quintessence of their aspiration. The Dutch people believed in a steady progress toward lasting happiness, and Spinoza tried to connect this step-by-step endeavor of the daily life on earth to the quest of eternal joy. In this sense, he is close to many still life Dutch painters. The purpose of still life is to capture the perfect beauty present in a house: fruits, vegetable, but also precious items. Of course, the message conveyed can sometimes be interpreted as the theme of *vanitas*: these beauties are ephemeral and transient. Human beings should not be attached to such objects, and to the sensual life. But Dutch painters, just like Spinoza may also invite us to convert our perception, and look at every single item *sub specie aeternitatis* (under the aspect of eternity).

### A steady progress toward happiness

The Divine Principle suggests that the restoration of all things is the foundation to restore human beings who lost their essence and dignity, and were degraded. It is not wrong to love things, take care of them, provided they are offered to God and serve the community. A certain number of still life paintings suggest, in a very Spinozist way, that the joys of the daily life, of the present moment, are the first steps of the ascension toward eternal joy. When human beings improve their relationship to the natural world, they also grow spiritually, become more human, but also more divine. The true religion does not ask us to deny the material and human realities, but to connect them with a heavenly dimension which is in our midst.

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<sup>10</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Translation Karen Fields, The Free Press, 1995

<sup>11</sup> *Demons* (Бесы, sometimes also called *The Possessed*) is a novel by Fyodor Dostoevsky, first published in 1871–72

<sup>12</sup> Ethics IIIp11s

Vanity starts when we possess these items out of greed, and are then possessed by them. These objects are turned into idols. But already in the Psalms, there is an invitation to see God reflected in the splendor of landscapes, in the poetry of the daily life. Then, any object is an icon of the divine presence. This explanation, where the infinite appears in the finite would explain why Hegel saw the Golden Age as so close to the realization of the ideal.

And Spinoza, in this sense, is the one who may have captured the secret quest of the Golden Age more deeply than anyone. A noble person is able to appreciate the beauty of the real world as a glimpse, a mirror of eternal beauty. This led Spinoza to write, “By reality and perfection, I mean the same thing.”

Wittgenstein and Romain Rolland suggested that Spinoza’s idea of *Sub Specie Aeternitatis* combines aesthetics and ethics, the beautiful and the good. We may add that this concept combines epistemology, aesthetics and ethics. We have to understand the world, appreciate the world, and act in the world in a constant, prayerful relation to God, the Absolute, Eternal, Unchanging and Unique. **The religious life is not a secluded, contemplative, and seraphic existence, it is a life of incarnation, where divine secrets are revealed to each of us, to the common man, here and now.**

The Dutch Golden Age was definitely an age of Ethics, a quest of the good life. It was also an age of aesthetics, where art was life, and life was art. It has been suggested that the Dutch Republic produced over 2 million paintings, i.e. as much as the Dutch population at that time. Finally it was also an age of intellectual and scientific curiosity. There was a passion to understand what nature really is, and to use the natural light of reason given to us by God. When discussing the Reformation and Renaissance, the Divine Principle makes an observation, which applies quite much to the Dutch Golden Age

According to the Principle of Creation, we are created to attain perfection by fulfilling our given responsibility of our own free will, without God’s direct assistance. We are then to attain oneness with God and acquire true autonomy. Therefore, it is the calling of our original nature to pursue freedom and autonomy. A person of perfect character understands the Will of God and puts it into practice through his own insight and reason, without the need to rely on revelations from God. Hence, it is only natural that we pursue reason and understanding. We also are endowed with the God-given right to master the natural world, to tame and cultivate it in order to create a pleasant living environment, by investigating the hidden laws of nature through science. Hence, we value the natural world, pursue science, and esteem the practical life.<sup>13</sup>

It is true that modern ideologies have tried to create imitations of an ideal society where ethics, arts and science seem to go hand in hand. It was the case of Nazism, and of Communism. Communism pretends to be scientific, promotes a Marxist-Leninist ethics and education and has a theory of socialist realism in the field of arts. Having witnessed many types of evil collective effervescence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we have become cautious about utopias. Moreover, a growing trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to anticipate global disasters without, and thus seek refuge in individual happiness within, rather than collective dreams. Lessons from the Dutch Republic are precious in this context. It was a society of great optimism, whereas the rest of Europe remained in a repressive and pessimistic mood, and had little hope for a better world.

### **The Dutch Eudaimonia**

What made the Dutch rejoice, then? Far from pursuing a form of private *Hedonism* or *Ataraxy*<sup>14</sup>, they sought the Aristotelian *Eudaimonia* (“doing and living well” also translated as “human flourishing”<sup>15</sup>). One might also speak of a practical wisdom, combining ethics and political philosophy. This Eudaimonia, however, has a typically modern flavor, which cannot be found in Aristotle’s thought, and this has to do with the urban life, the triumph of patrician values and the growing importance of techniques.

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<sup>13</sup> EDP, Preparation, 1.1 p. 351

<sup>14</sup> Ataraxy reflects Epicurus’ concept of Ataraxy, as the absence of trouble or tranquility. The quest of a safe society was perceived as important in the Dutch Golden Age, but was surely not the main concern.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1095a15–22)

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Netherlands became a very urbanized country, where machines, tools, techniques were making life much easier and more convenient. The population adopted a way of life which announced the future utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and many trends of pragmatism. For the Dutch, the good was partly revealed by Heaven, partly discovered by human reason, and partly dictated by the best adjustment to a fluctuating reality. This is because human beings try to revere the Absolute Being while living in an imperfect society in a certain environment, and can head for the ideal gradually, through trials and errors. Shying away from dogmatism, the Dutch people were empirical, advocating an optimistic *whatever works*. Many decisions had to be taken by consensus, among well educated people, who often were trained in business and management. This kind of governance had no choice but to seek “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”, long before Jeremy Bentham would express it. More than a philosophy or an ideology, it was some form of *weltanschauung*, which was shared by a majority of people.

The difference with pragmatism, and this is in line with Aristotle, was that the Dutch Republic sought a constant balance between *arete* (virtue, or simply excellence) and *phronesis* (practical or ethical wisdom). In this atmosphere, the Dutch art of painting attained a level of inspiration, of sublime beauty and of spiritual depth that has no real equivalent. This remains a source of amazement event today. How can we create a society of abundance, which is physically pleasant, while also investing in an exuberant creativity, where art and thinking are of paramount importance?

The belief in an ideal world and in a happy society cannot remain a conceptual, ready-made model heralded by a theology or an ideology. It should be presented as a feasible, step-by-step project, through gradual reforms of the human behavior. We should already observe signs of this future happiness in the present world. We need to study the great moments of collective euphoria, where a whole nation was suddenly uplifted and managed to mobilize its material and human resources much above the average. Some societies seem to do better than others in providing an environment where people feel that they live more meaningful and valuable lives, and are finally free to fulfill their aspirations, individually and collectively. This was the case in the Dutch Republic.

### Challenge and Response, creative minorities

How can we characterize the Golden Age? First of all, the Dutch Republic seems to illustrate two major theories of the British historian Arnold Toynbee: the theory of *challenge and response*, and the theory of *creative minorities*. Focusing on the spiritual factors behind the rise of a civilization, Toynbee wrote,

“Man achieves civilization, not as a result of superior biological endowment or geographical environment, but as a response to a challenge in a situation of special difficulty which rouses him to make a hitherto unprecedented effort.”<sup>16</sup>

Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century responded to internal and external challenges. It was more than mere resilience. A small nation, with limited resources and surrounded by hostility, mobilized the best of its human capital (spirituality, education, diligence, discipline) to build a land of opportunity. This Dutch model became a magnet attracting the most creative minds of Europe who sought shelter there and spread new ideas and techniques. What seemed to be impossible elsewhere was kind of self-evident in the Netherlands. The creative minorities felt all the more inspired that an enlightened class of Patricians, mostly from Holland, managed to drive the six other provinces with a good mixture of authority and compromise, always taking great risks.

Second, the Netherlands became the first nation of the world built upon the new ideals of human freedom and human dignity advocated by the Reformation and the Renaissance. What had started as a cultural movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> century became a national project embracing the politics, the economy and the society. Meanwhile, the rest of the European continent was still resisting the transformations brought by the Renaissance and the Reformation. We may not realize how bold was the Dutch response to challenge. Any nation facing severe challenges within and without, could have chosen the path of what would be called later enlightened despotism. After all, we would perfectly admire the Golden Century if all the

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<sup>16</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee (1987). *A Study of History: Volume I: Abridgement of*. Oxford U.P., p. 570, ISBN 9780195050806

cultural and material achievements had been the work of a great national hero or king, of a brilliant court with official artists. But Netherlands had no sovereign, the clergy had limited power, and the aristocrats had to step back with the rise of Patrician families. The creative freedom was thus mostly achieved through team work and consensus building among people of strong characters and firm beliefs, who also had a sense of compromise and negotiation, because the sense of a common good was motivating them. This type of prosperity in a liberal environment was unthinkable elsewhere.

Third, by making this bold choice, the Dutch Republic became the successful forerunner of what would be called, much later, the four freedoms: freedom of worship and conscience, freedom of expression, freedom from fear, and freedom from want<sup>17</sup>. By making this leap forward, under great adversity, the Netherlands became a happier nation. This was represented in the Dutch paintings and observed by visitors, arousing admiration as well as envy. Netherlands was the mirror of aspirations to a “well doing and well being” that were still stifled everywhere.

### **Pioneering the four freedoms for a happier society**

Let us examine this aspect of the Golden Century more precisely. Much later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whereas the world had just emerged from the great depression and was facing two totalitarian threats (Nazism heralded by Germany, Communism heralded by the Soviet Union), the American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt boldly announced the future victory of the four freedoms everywhere<sup>18</sup>. Incidentally, but this it is probably more than a simple coincidence, Roosevelt was himself a descendant of the brilliant Dutch patricians who had migrated to America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and had founded New Amsterdam, which was to become New York later. It would be interesting to study how much the Patrician values of the Dutch Golden Century lie underneath the “Four Freedom Speech”, especially when we take into consideration Hegel’s observations mentioned above.

#### *Freedom from want and Freedom from fear*

We should remember that the Dutch republic was then a small nation, highly exposed to natural disasters and surrounded by authoritarian regimes. Netherlands, through its system of dikes and polders, was able to make its territory much bigger than it was originally. This case of land reclamation is unique in human history, the total area of Netherlands today is deemed to be 20% bigger than it was in 1300; hence the famous proverb, “God created the universe, and the Dutch created Netherlands”.

A nation once characterized by natural risk, hazard, chronic poverty, started to engineer its territory and use it as a platform for wealth and prosperity. The tradition of *freedom from want* is therefore a steady tradition of the Netherlands, more actual today than ever.

Modern Netherlands possesses a technological know-how which is useful for densely populated countries living near the ocean. Dutch engineers are often consulted by countries threatened by the submersion of the ocean. From this point of view, it is not anachronistic to say that, starting from the Golden Century, Netherlands has become a convincing example of the *freedom from want*, seen today as the first pillar of the notion of human security<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> We are aware that this might be seen by some as a form of historical anachronism, as if we were projecting notions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on a totally different model of society. We would say the opposite. The aspirations to the four freedoms are age old, but very few populations had dared implementing them until they started to finally become triumphant and mainstream in our age.

<sup>18</sup> Frank D. Roosevelt announced the triumph of the four freedoms on January 6, 1941, as part of the State of Union Speech. He stressed the Freedom of speech, Freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Stettinius (1900-1949), the first ambassador of the USA to the United nations had this formula about the strategy of peace of the UN: “The battle of peace must be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory spells freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace. Much later, in 1994, Mahbub ul Haq first drew global attention to the concept of human security in the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 *Human Development Report*. Ever since 1994, the field of human security has become very central in peace studies.

Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the young Dutch republic was under the constant threat of the major powers of Europe, namely Spain, France and England. It maintained its security until the 1660s, but did more than that. Its powerful navy outnumbered the fleets of France and England combined, enabling the young republic to control the seas and establish its settlements in the Americas, in the Caribbeans, in Africa, and throughout Asia. Here, we have an example of a country investing in trade rather than military expenses.

More interestingly, the Patrician families of Holland dared to develop a non authoritarian, almost liberal regime, which became the safe haven of many refugees from the rest of Europe. There, people enjoyed more public liberties and safety than elsewhere. Observers coming to Netherlands discovered a highly urbanized society, where the safety, hygiene, cleanliness in major cities were exceptional elsewhere in Europe. More than a State policy, it was the efficient and decentralized organization of what we would call today the local governments. Citizenship and ownership were the key components of this freedom from fear. Urban safety became a major concern for the Dutch Republic. This concern prompted inventors to create new technologies. While France was obsessed by great works and State infrastructures with a major concern for its military security and the art of war (especially Vauban), the Dutch Republic preferred to invest in the art of a peaceful and safe society.

We may take the example of Jan van der Heyden (1643 -1712). This Mennonite painter was a specialist of still lifes and urban landscapes. As an engineer and inventor, he also made significant contributions to the firefighting technology. The point, however, is not only the technology. Some societies develop technologies but accept a certain level of fatalities and hazard, their leaders may sometimes prefer to mobilize their human and material resources in pharaonic grandeur, with little concern for the welfare of their citizens. Heyden was seeking to help the population enjoy a better life. Together with his brother Nicolaes, who was a hydraulic engineer, he invented an improvement of the fire hose in 1672. He modified the manual fire engine, reorganized the volunteer fire brigade (1685) and wrote and illustrated the first firefighting manual (*Brandspuiten-boek*). A comprehensive street lighting scheme for Amsterdam, designed and implemented by van der Heyden, remained in operation from 1669 until 1840 and was adopted as a model by many other towns and abroad.

Another aspect of the freedom from fear was the schutterrij, civic guard, or town watch. It was a defensive military support system for the local civic authority. Its officers were wealthy citizens of the town, appointed by the city magistrates.

#### *Making people more free for a safer society*

Yet, the freedom from want and freedom from fear in the Golden Century involved more than the external, technical aspects of human security. Ideally, human security means a safety of human beings, by human beings and for human beings. Regulations and protections are important, but human security starts with free and responsible persons, who follow their conscience and reap what they sow. This view of human security seems to have inspired the American artist Norman Rockwell, when he painted *Freedom from want* and *Freedom from fear* in 1943. He adopted a style of family pictures reminiscent of the Dutch Golden Age, particularly the theme of the joyful family eating at a table, a great classic of the Dutch style in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (*Freedom from fear*).

Rockwell was commissioned to illustrate the *Four Freedom Speech* of President Roosevelt. In 1943, American soldiers were dying far away from home, in Europe, in North Africa, and in the Pacific. They were fighting the Nazi and Fascist Regimes which then occupying almost all Europe and South-East Asia. The world was in grand danger. Norman Rockwell could have adopted a grandiose official style. He did not. Others would have painted the freedom from want and freedom from fear with scenes of external might and power, in order to show that America was much greater, much stronger than its foes.

Rockwell made the choice to representing good American people, rather than heroes. In this, he was really the heir of the Dutch philosophy of painting, in which the allegory of virtue should be as down to earth as possible, thus conveying an emotion from within. In a society of eudaimonia, human virtue and wisdom do not appear in exceptional circumstances, with heroic figures, they spring from the conscience. He painted people in their interiors, thus returning to the philosophy of human security which once inspired

the Dutch Republic surrounded by a dangerous world. Deep reasons probably prompted Rockwell to portray freedom in its civil form, associating it with the Eudemonia of the ordinary life. He did not paint anonymous battalions in uniforms dying for freedom, but ordinary citizens living for it.

His *Freedom from fear* shows neither danger nor fear. A mother tucks her two young children in the same bed. Dad looks at them with love, a newspaper in his hand. The freedom to express love in a stable household is the major source of safety, the supreme protection against the trouble in the world. *Freedom from want* shows neither factories spewing smoke for mass production, nor bountiful harvests. Such frescoes were common in the official art of totalitarian regimes. For Rockwell, in the same vein as for the Dutch painters, true prosperity entails a spiritual rather than material wealth. He portrays grandparents serving Thanksgiving turkey for their children and grandchildren. Three generations sharing food on a special holiday (not a working day), that's how we free ourselves from the scourge of scarcity. It is a family scene where we share what we have with those whom we love.

### The Dutch Republic versus Machiavel and Hobbes

The style used by Rockwell in times of global danger is very reminiscent of the Dutch Golden Age representation of the world, which valued civility over citizenship, civilian life more than military heroism and is more patriotic than chauvinistic or nationalist. The Dutch view of social life was the antithesis of a Machiavelian or Hobbesian representation, where the mighty State is the provider of security.

Thomas Hobbes published most of his books in Netherlands. He expressed a view of the human condition which was valid throughout Europe at that time, but not in the country where his essays were printed. According to Hobbes, human beings in the state of nature are selfish and hostile to one another<sup>20</sup>. The life in the society requires them to alienate part of their freedom and live as citizens under the protection of the law, which is seen as repressive. It is a dialectical and pessimistic view of the human nature, which suggests a sharp antagonism between freedom and security. Taking another viewpoint, the Dutch Republic assumed that human beings are naturally social and relational. The greater world is a projection of the inner world. When the free-will and freedom of action are well oriented, every individual action will serve the whole and reinforce the law. It is a liberal view, best expressed by Montesquieu later, "a thing is not just because it is the law; but it ought to be law because it is just"<sup>21</sup>

Netherlands was trying to develop a puritan and practical ethics, which guarantee a good and healthy society. As suggested before, the ethics had to apply to a social and political philosophy, which concerned less citizenship than civility. It meant that the common people became the owners of their own daily security. Contemporary Netherlands is not longer driven by a puritan ethics, but the tradition of safety has survived, and is part of the Dutch exception. Netherlands today is one of the most densely, most urbanized countries of the world, it is also a very multicultural nation, and the target of much trafficking. Yet, it remains much safer than many Western nations, with low crime rates similar to Switzerland, Austria or Scandinavian countries.<sup>22</sup>

The Dutch prisons are never overpopulated, a major difference with France, for instance. Short sentences are very common in Netherlands, and rare in France. A short sentence in Netherlands is often used to reeducate and rehabilitate the inmates, rather than merely punish them, which is the main philosophy in France. The two nations have evolved with different weltanschauung for many centuries and their approach of human security remains very different.

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<sup>20</sup> *Homo Homini Lupus* (man is a wolf for man) and *Bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all) typically summarize Thomas Hobbes' weltanschauung. It is a dialectical view (War is the father of all, had declared Heraclitus) In *Leviathan* Hobbes wrote, *Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that Condition which is called War; and such war, as is of every man, against every man.* *Leviathan*, part 1, chapter 13, § 62

<sup>21</sup> Montesquieu, *Pensées* N° 460

<sup>22</sup> According to *safe cities index* 2021, the safest cities in the world are now (1) Copenhagen, (2) Toronto, (3) Singapore, (4) Sydney, (5) Tokyo, (6) Amsterdam, followed by (7) Wellington (8) HongKong (9) Melbourne (10) Stockholm

The Dutch mindset remains that if you follow good principles and habits in your daily life, you may reduce risk factors considerably. As is so much illustrated in Dutch paintings of the Golden age, the security enjoyed during that time did not start outside, in the external world. If the *Night Watch* of Rembrandt illustrates the security without, outdoors, most Dutch painting of the time is about a culture of safety within, at home. This is where the good citizen starts his/her journey.

The Dutch Golden Age did not identify happiness merely as an absence of trouble, as a freedom from fear and freedom from want. Freedom has two complementary aspects. *Freedom from* is sometimes defined as a negative liberty, in other words, the freedom from external restraint on one's actions. Liberty comes from the Latin *liber*, the emancipated person who is no longer a slave. By contrast, *freedom of* is the possession of the capacity to act upon one's free will. It is autonomy, self-rule and is therefore a positive liberty. For political theorist Isaiah Berlin, "I am slave to no man" is the slogan of negative liberty. By contrast, "I am my own master" is the credo of positive liberty, the freedom to choose one's own pursuits in life. In its Golden Age, the Netherlands became the successful flagbearer of two major positive freedoms: the freedom of expression and the freedom of worship.

The Reformation and the Renaissance had liberated human beings from the oppression, the fetters, the ignorance and stagnation of the feudal society. However, people who are *liberated from* servitude, do not always know clearly what they are *free for*. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century and until the Treaty of Westphalia, in 1648, the practical implications of the Reformation and of the Renaissance met a strong resistance, almost everywhere. In this context of uncertainty, the Dutch Republic was not only a safer place, it was a nation where most people felt more free than elsewhere to think, to speak, to write, and to worship, without being ostracized or intimidated. As already suggested, they felt that the time had come for the main ideas of the Reformation and Renaissance to create a new political and social model.

Once free from servitude, human beings are free to fulfill good desires which will inevitably guide them to joy, here on the earth, in their daily life. Before the Dutch Golden Age, most Europeans saw felicity and happiness as goods that only very special people could think about: the saints going through ascetic life, the heroes, or the mighty born with some special privilege. Calvinism and humanism gradually spread the good news that every "common man" in Netherlands was free to enjoy a happy existence by following some rules in the daily life. Netherlands became the fatherland of two modern notions: the idea that human beings are born to be free, and the idea that they are born to be happy.

The Dutch Republic managed to attract the most brilliant minds in the fields of philosophy, law and sciences. It created a remarkable exception in Europe, by establishing a tradition of tolerance and pluralism and a balance between religion and science. Whereas absolutism and feudalism remained dominant elsewhere, the country adopted a Republican regime which was to inspire much of the American institutions later. William of Orange (the Silent) is to be credited for much of that vision, especially when he is perceived in the historiography as the Dutch Moses. In an interview to *Le Figaro*, the French historian Blandine Kriegel<sup>23</sup> states,

The first modern Republic was not born with the French Republic nor with the antique or medieval city republics. It appears at the Renaissance with the foundation of the United Provinces (...) thanks to the struggle of William of Orange.

From a purely historical viewpoint, this statement should be nuanced. But from the viewpoint of historiography, we can understand why the character and destiny of William can make him an icon of our modern idea of the Republican ideal. Jean Calvin was a religious leader and theologian who had tried to establish a Calvinist Republic in Geneva, but had paid little attention to humanism and sciences. His vision was more a theocratic regime than a secular nation with universal values. William the silent was a man of power and a soldier, originally supporting Spain and Catholicism. The fate of his native Netherlands, oppressed spiritually and politically, gradually turned him into a Dutch patriot who embraced Calvinism, but always remained moderate. Like Moses, he died without seeing the Promised Land, in

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<sup>23</sup> Blandine Kriegel wrote a book about William the Silent, called *la République et le Prince Moderne* (the Republic and the Modern Prince)

1584. His tragic assassination by fire (the first political murder with a gun) added to his legend as the Moses of the Dutch Promised Land.

The greatest legacy of William the Silent was the foundation of the university of Leiden. He gave two missions to the university. First, it was to provide some kind of Protestant vision to the country which was liberating itself from Spain and Catholicism. Second, it was to serve a purpose of nation-building by educating the citizens in all fields of modern knowledge. William the Silent is called the Father of the Fatherland (Vader des Vaderlands). More mystically, he appeared as the Moses to those who saw God's special election on the birth of the new nation. There are too reasons for that. First, he reigned exactly for 40 years (1544-1584), a number which is very significant in the Biblical account of Moses' life. Second, he was seen as the religious leader, but also statesman who had liberated his people from the Pharaoh (Philip II) and was acting as some sort of national visionary and legislator for the new nation.

The freedom of expression was remarkable in two fields, the freedom of thought, and the freedom of printing and publishing, which are cornerstones of open societies. The Dutch Republic established a climate of religious tolerance which attracted many refugees (Jews from Portugal and later Huguenots from France) but more than this, Netherlands made the choice to be the first nation of the world where the new ideals of the religious Reformation and of the humanist Renaissance would become the driving force of nation building.

The Elzevir was a family of booksellers, publishers, and printers of the 17th and early 18th centuries, originally from Leuven (Belgium), who had moved to Amsterdam. They were famous for the high quality of their typography, the quantity of the works published in many European languages which could not be published elsewhere. Elzevir was publishing the works of the greatest writers of all Europe: the philosophers Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Comenius, or René Descartes, the poet John Milton, the Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius, jurist, poet and playwright, the playwright Pierre Corneille, and many others.

The curiosity for the world, which started to be discovered, was another strong point of the Elzevir family. Here, one detail is worth mentioning, in this essay on happiness. Between 1626 and 1649, Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir published a bestselling series titled the *Respublicae*. It was the ancestor of what would later become the modern travel guide. Each of the thirty-five volumes in the series gave information on the geography, inhabitants, economy, and history of a country in Europe, Asia, Africa, or the Near East. Of course, the common people were not able to travel. Tourism would appear much later in Europe, but the collection published by Elzevir helped people to travel in imagination, through the agency of books. The printed word offered a new freedom to people, they could broaden the scope of their thinking and project themselves, from home, to the greater world. This is also because there was a popular readership. Many more people in Netherlands could read and write, than in any other European country.

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From the invention of the self to self-realization

What motivated the Netherlands to make such bold innovations ? The 16<sup>th</sup> century had been marked everywhere in Europe by what has been called the invention of the self. However, the practical realization of the self in the social life still stumbled against feudalism almost everywhere in Europe. The Dutch Republic turned into land of opportunity for modern self-realization as a way to happiness.

The invention of the self

Andrew Spira has explored the progressive invention of the self in the modern era, especially through art and the experience of the daily life<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Andrew Spira, *The Invention of The Self, Personal Identity in The Age of Art*, Bloomsbury Academic 2020

Dürer's three self-portraits  
Cogito, Ergo Sum  
Reformation : spirit self, conscience  
Renaissance : physical self, habeas corpus  
Autonomy, attention to the daily life, to the common man.  
Human dignity (Pico della Mirandola)

The invention of the self, of the “first person of the singular”, is something that takes place throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, stemming both from the Reformation and the Renaissance. In a sense, the invention of the self is expressed most triumphantly in Descartes' *Cogito Ergo Sum*, I think therefore I am. Descartes will really feel at home in Amsterdam, where he will stay for many years.

Joanna Woodall argues that Dutch citizens grew increasingly comfortable with adapting the received conceptions and conventions of aristocratic forms and values to their modes of self-representation and self-promotion as a new elite.<sup>19</sup> Leading Amsterdam citizens used portraiture to claim positions equal to, yet distinct from, the hereditary nobility as well as to define their status in relation to each other (96). Woodall argues that a changing conception of nobility lay at the roots of this development in the Dutch portrait, a revolution that ultimately aimed at justifying its sitters' exercise of authority despite their lack of noble blood. Portraits of the newly established elite, presenting the recently fashioned identity of a class of burghers not yet grown into a full-blown bourgeoisie, were meant to make up for the lack of aristocratic heredity by acknowledging virtues linked not to the noble body but to the subject's interiority, such as intelligence or genius. Nobility became a broadly defined concept, encompassing more than high birth. Valorized as well was the virtue of those who served the state, or the skill of men of letters. Nancy has said that the portrait does not look at or for an object but rather looks out for itself. The exclusive concern of the portrait, according to Nancy, is a self in and for itself. The rise of portraiture in the Netherlands can be said to be an effect of the self-consciousness of a newly affluent merchant class who considered pictures as mirrors in which their riches and prosperity were reflected in images of themselves

### **The Netherlands, as a forerunner of the society of Kong Saeng, Kong Yong and Kong-ui**

Throughout his life, Reverend Moon stated that the ultimate purpose of God's Providence is to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. For decades, it was expressed as a religious vision, using a theological language. As long as the world remained divided ideologically between the Free World and the Communist bloc, Reverend Moon remained rather elusive about the constitution, institutions and structure, of the ideal world, mostly focusing on the changes in the human heart and on family ethics. However, during the last 12 years of his life (2001-2012), Reverend Moon campaigned worldwide about building Cheon Il Guk practically. Cheon Il Guk is the ideal world, and literally means the nation of cosmic peace and unity. Inspired by a messianic vision, but also working in a pragmatic way with people of good will, Reverend Moon built various coalitions. In the field of culture, he emphasized the importance of the interreligious dialogue as well as the harmony between religion and science. In the field of politics, he stressed that the ideal governance will be headwing, transcending the limitations of right wing and left wing ideologies. In the field of economy, he advocated a profound transformation in modern capitalism, so that the free-market economy could become much more human and concerned about sustainable development. Reverend Moon never entered into the practical details of Cheon Il Guk, but gave three major directions, which are particularly relevant in this essay.

First, he talked about the leadership in the ideal world, and the legitimation of power. The Western Christian Thought has often advocated the proper balance between *auctoritas* and *potestas* to create an ideal society. In other words, the population living in a nation should have a legitimate State based upon the rule of law, and exercising power through institutions and a strong administration.

More than people of formal knowledge, they should become teachers and guides, balancing wisdom and knowledge, conscience and science. Any person having a social status and a power should act with the heart and mind of a parent toward the other people and should thus inspire brotherhood among others. And finally, the mastery over the natural world should be based on divine creativity, more than on technical know how.

Second, he described the ideal world as a world of kong saeng, kong yong and kong-ui

Last but not least, he stated that the key of Cheon Il Guk is the unity of two people, namely a man and a woman united in love.

Amazingly, the Dutch Golden Age is probably a convincing example of a society where these general principles were accepted and brought a whole population to an unprecedented development

### **From an ethics of fear and obligation to an ethics of joy**

Netherlands proverbs.

“If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. (1Peter 3.10)

Do you want to enjoy life? Do you want to have many happy days? Then avoid saying anything hurtful, and never let a lie come out of your mouth. Stop doing anything evil, and do good. Look for peace, and do all you can to help people live peacefully. Psalms 34.12-14

And the core of the ideal Dutch society was the ideal marriage and the joyful family. Recently, a certain number of scholars have found much evidence that this was indeed the core of the Dutch values in the Golden Age.

In *All Too Human*, Friedrich Nietzsche defined marriage as a long conversation<sup>25</sup>, observing quite wisely, “When marrying you should ask yourself this question: do you believe you are going to enjoy talking with this woman into your old age? Everything else in a marriage is transitory, but most of the time that you're together will be devoted to conversation.” This art of conversation in the married couple seems to be the central topic in many Dutch painting of couples, throughout the Dutch Golden Age.

Initially, Dutch painters will rather represent the nascent love and intimacy in the young couple, at the outset of the married life. But gradually, another theme will surface, which seems to illustrate André Maurois' observation that “A happy **marriage is a long conversation** which always seems too short.”

(slide 11) It seems they are not interested in showing off their wealth or prosperity, but they seem to celebrate their pure marital companionship. Casteleyn seems to be interrupted at his work by his wife, but she seems to be welcomed by him. Their hands are joined as a symbol of marital fidelity, and she is smiling at her husband who seems to be casually greeting the viewer to introduce his wife as his companion.

Slide 13

- *I have come to think there is something inherently appealing to the human morals or ideals toward family life, beyond any cultural differences, underneath seventeenth century Dutch art.*
- *the relationship between husbands and wives and between parents and children became more intimate and warmer; the family spent more time together at home and enjoyed many family activities and celebrations.*
- *The wedding festivities in seventeenth century Holland were extravagant and even a middle-class wedding lasted many days with many guests enjoying music, dancing, and the reading of poems written for the special occasion. (Eriko Taira)*

The invention of the couple, of the second person of the singular and of the “joyful family”. Attention to the home, biblicisation of the daily life.

Slide 14 Dutch Interiors and the biblicisation of daily life

*Godliness, cleanliness, healthiness.*

The house should be clean, healthy and decent, but excess in good, drinks, wealth is detrimental to earthly life and eternal life. Netherlands developed a strong culture of family life in a clean house, in a safe city. The home life is considered a key of citizenship and patriotism.

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<sup>25</sup> “Marriage as a long conversation. - When marrying you should ask yourself this question: do you believe you are going to enjoy talking with this woman into your old age? Everything else in a marriage is transitory, but most of the time that you're together will be devoted to conversation.” — Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human

The essence of Dutch paintings of interiors is to suggest that the holy person is the common man and not need to be a saint in extraordinary circumstances. The house is a daily chapel, well decorated, with mirrors to show our daily progress toward some form of goodness and happiness. (1)

Man lives outside, the woman reigns inside, at home. Harmony, tenderness and companionship were strongly emphasized by Calvinists, as a way to remain God centered and prosperous. Some historians suggest that the attention to the child came much earlier in Netherlands than in France and England (similar to Switzerland).

**Brandenburg culture:** Lutheranism + music (Bach)

**Dutch golden century:** Calvinism + images (normally, Protestantism bans representations and forms (paintings, sculptures). But the Dutch golden century is characterized by “family protestant icons”

Slide 15 The family is the microcosm of the nation, the dollhouse is a house in miniature, to exhibit the social but also moral status. The dollhouse is a testament of the family values that will survive the life on earth. The message is that what we leave behind is love and lineage, more than a house, furniture and memorabilia. The invention of the civil society and of the citizen, of a republican regime aiming at liberty and equality among human beings => middle class. Highly urbanized society with Patrician values

Slide 33

- After the failure of the Holy Roman Empire (unity between the Catholic Popes and the German Emperor), God worked mostly through the Protestant Reformation and the Humanistic Renaissance, in order to bring about religious freedom, democracy, and prosperity.
- Most nations needed political revolutions to destroy the Old Regime and break the feudal order.
- The case of Holland is different. The Republic tried an experiment where the best of the Reformation and the best of Renaissance could work together in harmony. The motto of this experience was *Concordia res parvae crescent* (“Small things flourish by concord”, Sallustus). In this rather peaceful cultural revolution, small steps were preferred to giant leaps.
- The aristocrats and the Clergy were not “punished”, but an elite of Patricians established a new type of governance, in a predominantly urban society. The main source of income became trade and a fair taxation. The rule of law was established and the embryo of a self-governing middle-class appeared. Netherlands was the first important nation in Europe to build a real civil society.

The invention of a free-market economy (stock-exchange, central bank, trade and transformation)

Location of the Netherlands, Lotharingia, Blue Banana

## Geography

Geography favored the Dutch Republic, contributing to its wealth. "The foundations were laid by taking advantage of location, midway between the Bay of Biscay and the Baltic. Seville and Lisbon and the Baltic ports were too far apart for direct trade between the two terminal points, enabling the Dutch to provide profitable intermediation, carrying salt, wine, cloth and later silver, spices, and colonial products eastward while bringing Baltic grains, fish, and naval stores to the west. The Dutch share of European shipping tonnage was enormous, well over half during most of the period of their ascendancy." Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke

Principle about the Netherlands

In the history of Western Europe, we find that the center of power changed many times, from Rome to the Carolingian court, to the cities of Renaissance Italy. Spain and Portugal then became the leading powers of Europe, followed briefly by France and the **Netherlands**, and then England. In the modern era, the leadership of the West has been divided between America and the Soviet Union. (*Eschatology*, 2.3 p. 85)

The flames of the Reformation grew strong and soon spread to Switzerland under the leadership of Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), to France as led by Jean Calvin (1509-1564), and into such nations as England and the **Netherlands**. (*Preparation 2 1.2 p. 353*)

Slide 37

There is a Calvinist idea that God elected the United Provinces through His predestination. This is the divine covenant (*vaste verbond*) between God and His people.

He gave a promised land, a safe haven, which is constantly saved from the waters and preserved from disaster through dikes, hard work, solidarity. Some Calvinists insisted on the covenant between God high above and His children down below (*Nederkinderen*).

The Netherlands are at the lowest possible level, but may become the Netherlands Garden (*Nederlandse Tuin*) with wealth, abundance, beauty and prosperity.

Calvinists and humanists agreed that prosperity would remain as long as the ethical principles would be preserved.

Slide 38

- Some historians have talked about the national ideology of *Nederkinderen* Israël, the New Children of Israel. Dutch saw themselves as the spiritual successors of the chosen Jewish nation
- Analogies in the Republic:
  - overthrowing the Spanish rule was seen as the counterpart of the biblical Exodus,
  - William the Silent = new Moses, enemies of the Republic = Amalekites
  - Colonial expansion = the rightful conquer of the promised Canaan,
  - The preachers would compare the sinners to Philistines and Sodomites and make them responsible for the new Flood, obviously soon to happen. In the didactic and theological writings Dutch women were advised to look up to patriotic Esther, brave Judith or virtuous Susanna. Moreover, Calvinistic iconoclasm perfectly corresponded with the condemnable worship of golden calves and false deities. The narratives from the Old Testament served as a constant point of reference, political and confessional propaganda, and social models.

Slide 41

- The County of Holland was the wealthiest and most urbanized region in the world.
- In 1650 the urban population of the Dutch Republic as a percentage of total population was 31.7 percent, while that of the Spanish Netherlands was 20.8 percent, of Portugal 16.6 percent, and of Italy 14 percent. In 1675 the urban population density of Holland alone was 61 percent, that of the rest of the Dutch Republic 27 percent.

Slide 41

Homo Batavus, Civis Mundi

- A tiny and fragile homeland, the whole world as stage of human activity.
- An economy of men, by men and for men. The human capital is far more important than “natural resources”. Brain drain: The Dutch Republic attracted all the grey matter of Europe. The whole nation was involved in Research and Development
- Capitalism, based on local production (limited) but mostly transformation (lace, porcelaine, cheese, flowers) and foreign trade. Development of a urban, safe, highly mechanized civilization (windmills, dikes, boats)
- Dutch pragmatism, empiricism: whatever works
- Precise accountance, checks and balances, transparency, thrift, hard work, moderation
- The first national bank
- Amsterdam’s stock exchange
- Patricians as a class of entrepreneurs
- Foreign trade between the South of Europe (Spain, Portugal) and the North of Europe (Baltic sea), and then with the whole world (Americas, Africa, Asia, Oceania)
- Wealth is not an end in itself, but should serve the advancement of human beings in the daily life, culture, education, art, creativity.

Slide 55

The Netherlands: Europe’s playground

Playfulness is a recurring theme in the Dutch culture. There seems to be a particular gamesome gene in our culture, starting all the way back with Erasmus. **Hans Luyckx**

- Johan Huizinga defined man as *Homo Ludens* (playing man). A historian, anthropologist and cultural theorist (1872-1945), he elaborates his theories on the ‘splende mens’ and the playful nature of humankind. There is a natural impulse to think, create and play. According to Huizinga, all human

beings are interested in games and playing. Everybody likes to play. In Huizinga's definition, playing can be any voluntary activity that takes place under set conditions and results in excitement and joy. To be able to play, people need a space where they feel secure and embedded. It could be any kind of space, whether it be an arena or a podium, a pool table or a temple.

- In the 17th century, Dutch people sought justification through faith in God and through good deeds on earth. They tried to practice God's words by playing their role well in the daily life. Everyone could see through the window, because your life was exhibited. As Dutch did that, the whole nation became one powerful team with a tiny homeland and a huge empire where the sun never set.
- This led them to see their whole existence as some sort of play in the presence of God, on the world stage. And in this play, there is much learning, much doing and traveling, much counting, cleaning, praising, painting. The whole life is to be represented realistically, as the quest of an ideal. And this has to be done with an adventurous spirit under the coaching of a good God.