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Canaan Represented, the Birth of a Happy Nation: 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," London, September 10, 1978.

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."[1] Here, lasting satisfaction comes as a result of commitment and not as something that merely *happens* (the etymology of happiness) for a while. Moreover, 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[2], particularly in the seventeenth century[3]. What were the parameters of the so-called Dutch miracle, from a Unificationist viewpoint? Netherlands was often portrayed as the laboratory of modern times. The root cause of this modernity was the quest of national happiness. Netherlands identified itself with the role of a happy nation. Happiness was then a new idea in Europe[4], long before the French and American revolutions.

A Baroque Representation of the Joyful End of History Which Lasted 50 Years

Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) is the major historian of Netherlands. *Homo Ludens* (1938) was his final masterpiece. In this book, whose title can be translated "Playing Man," Huizinga stated that the driving force of culture is play, or competition. He also discussed the word *Agon*, central in the Greek culture, which has the meaning of a competition or debate, especially in sports and comedies. It denotes an act in theatre and an action in cinema. A court case is also an action, calling for a verdict. Every competition in sports is an action to determine the winner. According to Huizinga, humans are essentially actors, our whole life is an action, or a play. The small Dutch population united in an *Agon* to overcome the challenges from a natural and political environment which were inimical and dangerous. Whereas most Europeans were still plagued by several calamities, the Dutch enjoyed a remarkable spring, as if the age of misfortune had ended.

The Dutch Republic pioneered a form of liberal governance in an age where Absolutism was the norm elsewhere. 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.

After its war for independence, the new nation combined ethical strictness with religious freedom and tolerance. Religion and science managed to work in harmony, in a joint effort to improve the well-being of the whole population. The brilliant culture that flourished in the Netherlands was not limited to the official and academic circles of a court and of aristocrats. Emanating from a nascent civil society, this culture was carried by patrician families and later the middle class.

The daily culture of the population was represented by painters. In the rest of Europe, religious, mythological and historical topics continued to be the mainstream, relegating genre painting to a minor status. Netherlands turned genre painting into a great genre, and the whole population was represented. The domestic life became the center of arts. This itself was a cultural revolution.

Last but not least, Netherlands became the leading commercial power of the world. Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude explained in detail why and how the Dutch created the first modern economy[5], enjoying an unprecedented level of prosperity. The wealth of this nation involved external institutions. Amsterdam hosted the first national bank followed by the first stock exchange in world history. There was a strong insistence on a precise accountancy, checks and balances, transparency, in an atmosphere of thrift and diligence. The rich class was exhorted to remain moderate and to mind about the needy. Vanity and a frivolous life were presented as causes of spiritual and material ruin. But the more internal factor was a sense about human capital[6]. For the French Historian Alain Peyrefitte, an *ethos of trust* was central in the Dutch welfare. By this he meant trust in progress and science, but also trust among people[7]. This ethos of trust was grounded in the system of family values cherished by the Patricians and the middle class. Gary Becker, a major theoretician on human capital, once observed,

> Where does human capital come from? One has to start with the family. It is the foundation of a good society and of economic success. To understand human capital, you have to go back to the family, because it is families that are concerned about their children and try… to promote their children's education and values. Families are the major promoters of values[8].

The last part of this essay will explore the centrality of the happy marriage and of the joyful family in the Dutch culture of the seventeenth century. It was believed that the family was the real treasure of the whole society, especially when the intimate bonds and a playful atmosphere among family members would facilitate self-confidence, creativity, and a desire for excellence.

All these achievements did not just happen. To talk about a "Dutch miracle," like K.W. Swart[9], can be misleading. The Dutch enjoyed a fortune that 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.

Whereas the rest of Europe was lamenting in the past, a whole nation got on stage and played for 50 years a baroque representation of the joyful end of history.

Playing the Bible in Daily Life

Historians generally agree that Netherlands was a model during its seventeenth century. Yet most hesitate over the ambiguous notion of a Golden Age[10]. Johan Huizinga 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 guided the Dutch Republic in its magnificence. For the philosopher Georg W. Hegel, the Dutch seventeenth 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 created a society where the ideal and the reality tended 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. This "biblicisation of the daily life" was a distinct feature of the Dutch seventeenth century.

For Hegel, this "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 Netherlands:

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 was 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[11].

The Reality Tried to Match the Ideal

Here, Hegel was not writing as a historian. He was interpreting the mental representations of this period in art. No one asserts that the Netherlands at that time had become an ideal society. It was a hopeful and optimistic society which tried to play/represent this ideal in action.

Netherlands was then living a national dream, or myth, which is not measured quantitively. The population embraced 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 Dutch culture. This myth had two components. An internal, "vertical" component came from Hebraism. It was the idea of building Canaan in the Promised Land of Netherlands, under a Calvinist banner. Yet the Golden Age cannot be reduced to a Calvinist myth.

The external and "horizontal" component came from Hellenism, via humanism and Erasmus. The Dutch rediscovered the central theme of Aristotle's ethics: how do virtue and happiness walk together? 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 gradual progress toward the good. Later, Tocqueville studied the life of Americans in the nascent American democracy and wrote, "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."[12]

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 not a state ideology in the modern sense. We are dealing with a broader notion, sometimes called *Weltanschauung*, or representation of the world. We are dealing with a cultural ideal more than with a political project[13]. Later, part of this *Weltanschauung* became the driving force of the United States, with notions such as a city on a hill, manifest destiny, and the American dream. All of these premises had already been tested in the Netherlands.

The Golden Age cannot, then, be reduced to a mere optimism. Taking great risks, and driven by a strong sense of mission, if not messianism, the Netherlands became a major player in world affairs. It did so with confidence, but was also with angst, because its ideals were new, fragile, and not yet mature.

Integrating Religion and Economy through Politics

Much later, the French and Americans sought happiness through political and economic revolutions to overthrow the old order. The Dutch mostly sought happiness *from within*, not *against* some external obstacle. They did not think that happiness starts on the agora, in the public sphere, where enlightened citizens meet. They saw the nuclear family as the main school of happiness, good behavior, civic virtues, and contribution to the whole. For them the selfish individual is not turned into a public person through institutions. They saw the home as a small church and school to raise up conscientious citizens of Canaan.

The Divine Principle, taught by Reverend Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012), 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 Age is about such a quest. In *Exposition of 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 God on earth in the Divine Principle, and Cheon Il Guk in the speeches given by the Reverend 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 the first modern utopia 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[14].

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 that would help all Dutch people practice Christian ideals in their social, earthly life, not in the perspective of a distant afterlife.

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 merely material wellbeing and abundance. This may explain some exceptional moments of human history. Emile Durkheim called these moments times of collective effervescence, when

> 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 impression that the time is close when the ideal will in fact be realized and the Kingdom of God established on earth[15].

Durkheim warned that 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 twentieth century might see the triumph of what he called *The Possessed*[16]. 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 seventeenth century. Joy is central in his thought. The human being, in his philosophy, is a “being-for-joy.” Spinoza uses a whole range of Latin words to describe joy. *Gaudium* expresses a form of relief, *titillatio* is a 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, and *laetitia* is the positive joy after completing something. Its perfect, ultimate form is *beatitudo*. No other philosopher had explored joy so deeply before Spinoza. His quest of joy is a major landmark in the seventeenth century. By contrast, angst was to dominate much of Western thought in the twentieth century.

Living during the Dutch Golden Age, Spinoza stressed the centrality of joy. Is it a mere coincidence? The answer has to be balanced for two reasons. First, Spinoza was isolated in Europe in his lifetime. Second, he was never the official thinker of the Dutch Republic. He was not acclaimed in his lifetime like Rembrandt, for instance. In Amsterdam he was even ostracized and deemed to be a heretic. Moreover, some will argue that Spinoza’s quest of joy is far too idealistic and mystical, compared to the quest for a gradual happiness. Yet, from another angle, Spinoza is useful to grasp some aspects of the Dutch *Weltanschauung*. He was aware of 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[17]

The Dutch people were progressing toward a greater happiness in a world of trouble. 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 earthly life to the quest for eternal joy.

In this sense, Spinoza is close to many Dutch still life painters. The purpose of a still life is to capture the perfect beauty present in a house: fruits, vegetables, 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, like Spinoza, may also invite us to convert our perception and to look at every single item *sub specie aeternitatis* (under the aspect of eternity).

A Steady Progress toward Happiness

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

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 can be an icon of the divine presence. This explanation, where the infinite appears in the finite, would explain why Hegel saw the Dutch seventeenth century as so close to the realization of the ideal.

And Spinoza, in this sense, may help us grasp some aspects 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 are to understand the world, appreciate the world, and act in the world in a constant, prayerful relation to God, who is the Absolute, Eternal, Unchanging and Unique. Far from being a secluded, contemplative, and seraphic existence, the religious life calls for incarnation, where divine secrets are revealed to each of us, to the common man, here and now.

The Dutch seventeenth century was definitely an age of ethics, the quest for 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 perfectly applies to this period:

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[18].

Indeed, some modern ideologies have proposed imitations of an ideal society where ethics, arts and science seemed to converge. This was the case of both Naziism and Communism.

Communism pretends to be scientific, promotes a Marxist-Leninist ethics and education, and advocates socialist realism in the field of arts. Having witnessed many types of evil collective effervescences in the twentieth century, we have become cautious about utopias. Moreover, a growing trend of the twenty-first century is to anticipate global disasters without, and thus seek refuge in individual happiness within rather than pursue collective dreams. We may learn from the Dutch Republic in this context. It was a society of optimism, whereas the rest of Europe remained repressive and pessimistic, and had little hope for a better world.

The Dutch View of Happiness: Eudaimonia

What made the Dutch rejoice, then? Far from pursuing a form of private *hedonism* or *ataraxy*[19], they sought the Aristotelian *eudaimonia* ("doing and living well," also translated as "human flourishing.")[20] One might also speak of a practical wisdom, combining ethics and political philosophy. This *eudaimonia*, however, has a typically modern flavor that cannot be found in Aristotle's thought, and this has to do with the growing importance of technology, urban life, and the triumph of patrician values.

In the seventeenth century, Netherlands was already highly urbanized. Machines, tools, technology were making life much easier and more convenient. The population adopted a lifestyle that announced the future utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and many of the 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 trial and error. Shying away from dogmatism, the Dutch people were empirical, advocating an optimistic "whatever works." Many decisions were 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 a form of wisdom that was shared by a majority of people.

Concordia res parvæ crescunt (small things flourish by concord)[21], the motto of the Dutch Republic, illustrated the option for pragmatism and gradualism. We may indeed speak of some peaceful cultural revolutions during the seventeenth century, but throughout the modern history of Netherlands, and even during the Batavian Revolution, small steps were preferred to giant leaps. Willem Frijhoff points out,

> Ninety years after the French Revolution, the first political party founded in the Netherlands (in 1879) was even named the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Of Calvinist inspiration, it rejected the principles of the French Revolution, holding the implicit view that the Dutch were much more Christianized and polite than those barbarous French[22].

However, unlike pragmatism, the Dutch sought a constant Aristotelian balance between *arete* (virtue, or simply excellence) and *phronesis* (practical or ethical wisdom). In this atmosphere, Dutch painting attained a level of spiritual depth and sublime beauty that has no equivalent. It 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?

Simon Schama suggests that the Dutch patrician families were seeking to create the "Christian Arcadia"[23] in their beautiful interiors. In the Greek mythology, arcadia was a pastoral view of the Golden Age, an age of blissful communion between human beings in nature. For a Calvinist culture in an urban, bourgeois life in the first capitalist nation to speak of a Christian arcadia may seem odd. Yet, Simon Schama is right when he stresses that the whole purpose of life was to find happiness on earth in the frame of the domestic life. More likely, the Dutch people were seeking the happy days in Canaan.

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 look like a feasible project, through gradual reforms of human behavior. We should already observe signs of this future happiness in the here and now. We need to study the great moments of collective euphoria, where a whole nation was uplifted and managed to mobilize its material and human resources much above the average. Some societies do better than others in providing an environment where people feel that they live more 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 this period? First, 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[24].

The Netherlands in the seventeenth century responded to internal and external challenges. It was more than mere resilience. A small nation with limited resources and surrounded by hostile powers mobilized the best of its human capital (spirituality, education, diligence, discipline) to build a land of opportunity. Like a magnet, their model attracted the most creative minds of Europe, who sought shelter there and spread new ideas and techniques. Things impossible elsewhere were commonplace 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 started as a cultural movement in the sixteenth century became a national project embracing politics, the economy and the society. Meanwhile, other European nations were 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 later be called enlightened despotism. After all, we would perfectly admire the Golden Century if all its cultural and material achievements had been the work of a great national hero or king, of a brilliant court with official artists. But the 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 teamwork and consensus-building among people of strong character and firm beliefs, who also had a sense of compromise and negotiation because the 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[25]. By making this leap forward under great adversity, the Netherlands became a happier nation. This was represented in Dutch paintings and observed by visitors, arousing admiration as well as envy. Netherlands was the mirror of aspirations to “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 20th century, when the world had just emerged from the great depression and was facing two totalitarian threats (Naziism heralded by Germany and Communism heralded by the Soviet Union), the American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proclaimed the future universal victory of the Four Freedoms. Incidentally, but probably more than a coincidence, Roosevelt was himself a descendant of the Dutch patricians who had migrated to America in the seventeenth century and had founded New Amsterdam, which was later to become New York. It would be interesting to study how much the Patrician values of the Dutch Golden Century lie underneath his Four Freedoms speech[26], especially when we take into consideration Hegel’s observations quoted above.

Freedom from want and freedom from fear

The Dutch Republic was then a small nation, highly exposed to natural disasters and *surrounded* by authoritarian regimes. Yet through its system of dikes and polders it was able to expand its territory. This effort at land reclamation is unique in human history, and as a result the total area of the Netherlands today is be 20 percent larger than it was in 1300. Hence the famous proverb, "God created the universe, and the Dutch created Netherlands."

A nation once characterized by natural risks, hazards, and chronic poverty began to engineer its territory and use it as a platform for wealth and prosperity. *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 viewpoint, 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[27].

As for *freedom from fear*, throughout the seventeenth century the young republic was under constant threat from 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 Netherlands to control the seas and establish its settlements in the Americas, in the Caribbean, 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 a safe haven for many refugees from the rest of Europe. There, people enjoyed more public liberties and safety than elsewhere. Observers coming to the Netherlands discovered a city life where safety, hygiene, cleanliness were exceptional. This stemmed not so much from state policy but from the efficient and decentralized organization of what we would call today local governments. Citizenship and ownership were the key components of this freedom from fear. Urban safety became a major concern for the Dutch Republic. It prompted inventors to create new technologies. While France was obsessed by great works, and its state infrastructures were mainly concerned for military security and the art of war (especially Vauban), the Dutch Republic preferred to invest in the art of a peaceful and safe society.

Let us look at the case of Jan van der Heyden (1643-1712). This Mennonite painter was a specialist of still lifes and urban landscapes. As an engineer, he also made significant contributions to 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 preferring 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, in 1672 he invented an improvement for the fire hose. He modified the manual fire engine, reorganized the volunteer fire brigade (1685) and wrote and illustrated the first firefighting manual (*Brandspuiten-boek*). A comprehen¬sive street lighting scheme for Amsterdam, designed and imple¬mented 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 freedom from fear was the *schutterij*, the 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. The historian Willem Frijhoff offers his insight on this aspect of the Dutch culture,

> The [Dutch] have always managed rather effectively to organize their society so as to collectively avoid major disasters, or to contain excessive violence by an advanced process of, to paraphrase Norbert Elias, civilization.

For Frijhoff, this illustrates Netherland's "precocious and exemplary role in the organization of a société police" (i.e., in the sense given to politeness by Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock).[28]

Making people freer for a safer society

Yet, the freedom from want and the freedom from fear in the Golden Century involved more than the external, technological aspects of human security. Ideally, human security means the 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 seventeenth century, particularly the theme of the joyful family eating at a table, a great classic of the Dutch style.


Norman Rockwell, “Freedom from Want” (1943)

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

Rockwell chose to represent 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 that once inspired Netherlands surrounded by danger. 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 is 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 Netherlands promoted a Puritan and practical ethics to 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 were in charge of their own daily security. Modern Netherlands is no longer Puritan, but it remains as safe as ever. Netherlands today is one of the most densely, most urbanized countries of the world; it is also a multicultural nation and the target of much trafficking. Yet, it remains safer than many Western nations, with low crime rates similar to Scandinavian countries, Austria and Switzerland[29].

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 seventeenth century, the security enjoyed during that time did not start outside, in the external world. If the *Night Watch* of Rembrandt illustrates the security with¬out, outdoors, most Dutch painting of the time is about a culture of safety within, at home. This is where the good citizen starts his or her journey.

The Dutch seventeenth century 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 seventeenth century, the Netherlands became the successful flagbearer of two major positive freedoms: the freedom of expression and the freedom of worship.

The "disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice"

People who are liberated *from* captivity do not always know clearly what they are free *for*. Throughout the sixteenth century and until the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the practical implications of the Reformation and of the Renaissance met 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 had the autonomy to think, to speak, to write, and to worship quite openly. As already suggested, they felt that the time was ripe to create a new political and social model grounded on human dignity.

Just like there are two ideas of freedom (negative freedom and positive freedom), there are also two ways of defining peace: the very word "peace" (derived from the Latin *pax*) simply means an absence of war or trouble, or a situation of armistice or truce between two conflicts. This negative or realistic view of peace should rather be called security. Only a lasting and perpetual state of concord can bring happiness. The Dutch Republic heralded the notion of concord through small steps in its national motto.

Human history is littered with cases where the long march towards independence and liberation is followed either by decadence (a decline of virtue and courage) or by the oppression of a new class. The Dutch Republic avoided both pitfalls. After conquering their national Canaan, the Dutch did not merely enjoy their life, but became hard working, creative and innovative, thus perfectly illustrating the famous view of peace promoted by Baruch Spinoza:

> The ultimate purpose [of the state] is not to dominate or control people by fear or subject them to the authority of another. On the contrary, its aim is to free everyone from fear so that they may live in security so far as possible, that is, so that they may retain, to the highest possible degree, their natural right to live and to act without harm to themselves or to others… For peace is not mere absence of war, but is a virtue that springs from a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice[30].

Actually, the various factions of the young Republic were in a constant *agon*, to speak like Huizinga. Far from being a dull and boring society of correctness where people mitigate their thoughts, it became a lively theatre of passionate debates. The talk show was permanent, disputes were the norm rather than the exception. It was a society where people agreed to disagree in the public square.

The rather smooth transition from the time of emancipation to the time of safe settlement owes much to the figure of William of Orange (the Silent). Often called the Father of the Fatherland (*Vader des Vaderlands*), he is also seen, more mystically, as the Dutch Moses. There are two reasons for this. First, he reigned exactly for 40 years (1544-1584), a number that is very significant in the biblical account of Moses' life. Second, he was seen as both a religious leader and also a statesman, who liberated his people from the Pharaoh (Philip II) and acted as the national visionary and legislator for the new nation. But it would be more appropriate to see in him a mixture of Moses and Joshua. Like Moses, he died before seeing the Promised Land, but like Joshua, he was throughout his life a man of negotiation, a federator, rather than the figure of a lonely and fearful prophet who was sometimes misunderstood by the masses.

We can understand why the character and destiny of William made 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 the sciences. His vision was more a theocratic regime than a secular nation with universal values. William the Silent was a man of action and power. As a soldier, he originally supported 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 a moderate. His tragic assassination by fire (the first political murder with a gun) added to his legend as the Moses of the Dutch Promised Land.

Combining Christian Hebraism and Hellenism

A poem written by Jacob Revius in 1609 expresses the identification of Dutch people with Israel:

> The Jews marched through the desert forty years
> In trouble, danger, and want of everything,
> But in the end and after that sad time
> Joshua led them into the Promised Land.
> The war forced us to march through the desert for forty years;
> Now the Truce opens to us the Promised Land.

William the Silent did not live long enough to see the end of the sad time and welcome the happy days. The Dutch Moses was not succeeded by any specific Joshua. After entering Canaan, the energy of fighting for freedom was turned into a collective positive force to build the happy nation.

Once emancipated from servitude, human beings are free to fulfill the good desires that will inevitably guide them to joy, here on the earth in their daily life. Before the Dutch seventeenth century, most Europeans saw felicity and happiness as goods that only special people could think about: the saints going through an ascetic life, the heroes or the mighty born with privilege. But the good news spread in the Netherlands that every "common man" was free to live a happy existence by following some rules. Two modern ideas became mainstream: human beings are born to be free, and they are born to be happy.

Here a simplified view of Calvinist predestination merged with an age-old (rather pagan) belief that the Batavians were exceptional, if not chosen people. The idea of being chosen was a cultural cement among all the Dutch, Calvinist or not, in the absence of a nation-state. To be more precise, the Dutch people thought that some Manifest Destiny was at work. On the one hand, they had been given a fragile promised land. On the other hand, they became more cosmopolitan than ever. The stage of their covenant with God was to be the whole world, rather than a limited Canaan in a northern corner of Europe.

The Divine Principle suggests that the Humanism of the Renaissance was largely a revival of Hellenism, whereas Reformation was a revival of Hebraism[31]. This was apparently the vision guiding William the Silent and his followers. Theodor Dunkelgrün invites us to revise the idea that Calvinism was the ideology of the new nation. Regarding the building of Canaan in the Netherlands the model was Hebraism, understood as a culture encompassing religion and nation building. The Dutch Republic adopted many elements of Calvinism within a much broader view, which we may call Christian Hebraism[32], and which was to become central in most Anglo-Saxon countries. And, as Dunkelgrün points out, the political model of Christian Hebraism is less the Jewish monarchy (the period of the United Kingdom) than the period of the Judges. He also quotes the cogent remark of Simon Schama,

> In the Dutch Republic, the Hebraic self-image… flowed out of the pulpit and the Psalter into the theater and the print shop, diluting Calvinist fundamentalism as it did so, but strengthening its force as national culture for the very same reasons. Indeed it was just because the roots of Netherlandish Hebraism were not exclusively Calvinist, but reached back to an earlier and deeper humanist reformation, that it could exert such broad appeal… This interpenetration with profane history lent Dutch scripturalism its tremendous strength. It was used not in order to swallow up the secular world within the sacred, but rather to attribute to the vagaries of history (with which the Dutch lived, at times, very painfully) the flickering light of providential direction[33].

William the Silent was the founder the university of Leiden, the Batavian Athens[34]. He gave two missions to the university. First, it was to provide a Protestant vision to the country which was liberating itself from Spain and Catholicism. Second, it was to serve the purpose of nation-building by educating the citizens in all fields of modern knowledge.

Freedom of expression in the Netherlands was remarkable in two areas: freedom of thought and freedom of printing and publishing, which are cornerstones of open societies. A climate of religious tolerance attracted many refugees, namely Jews from Portugal and later Huguenots from France. Tolerance may not be the right word for this period. The Dutch Republic tried to create bridges of communication among various and sometimes antagonistic or rival sectors of the society. It would therefore be more appropriate to see Netherlands as a melting pot, a society of "pluriformity" where different voices were free to express themselves. Willem Frijhoff says that "Dutch society, ever since its formation, has basically been a communicative society."[35] As can be seen in many paintings, it typically became a society of open windows, where the neighbors could see what you were doing and where daily existence tended to be somehow theatrical, because each household has a message to convey, a family culture to exhibit. Modern architecture in Netherlands is studied worldwide as facilitating socialization and meeting others easily. And Frijhoff adds,

> Its way of arriving at decisions within a divided community is presently known as the polder model[36] of consensual communication. This corresponds largely to what my colleague Marijke Spies and I have called, in relation to the seventeenth century, a discussion culture… It is perhaps one of the most intimate secrets of the Dutch nation as a historically structured community[37].

This drive for communication is the background for the explosion of printing and publishing books throughout the seventeenth century.

The Elzevir family were booksellers, publishers and printers in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, originally from Leuven (Belgium), who had moved to Amsterdam. They were famous for the high quality of their typography and 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 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 their imagination, in books. The printed word offered a new freedom to people, they could broaden the scope of their thinking and project themselves from their homes to the greater world. This is also because there was a popular readership. The level of literacy was then much higher in Netherlands than in any other European country.

What made Netherlands the laboratory of the happy nation? The Dutch themselves may not have identified any historical cause of their happiness. They apparently knew rather well where happiness starts. It starts at home, in the family. We study their family culture in order to grasp the gradual blossoming of their *eudaimonia*. They discovered that the best place for people to live happily on earth is the family, more precisely the nuclear family based on affection and bonds of heart.

From negative proclivities to good habits

In 1559, Pieter Bruegel the Elder painted his Nederlandse Spreekwoorden, the Netherlandish Proverbs[38]. In this giant painting, a crowd of people are busy doing stupid things. Just like in Aesop's fables, they are stereotypes of our bad character. The Divine Principle speaks of proclivities which "have become the fallen inclinations in all people. They are the primary characteristics of our fallen nature."[39] Bruegel wanted to illustrate how the misuse of our free will and freedom of action works to sabotage our own happiness. Bruegel's painting is in no way a Last Judgment scene where the wicked go to hell at the end of their life. It is more about average people harvesting bad luck instead of joy at the end of the day. Mocking the absurdity of our habits, the painting can also be seen as a joyful group therapy.

No less than 112 such behaviors are shown on the picture. The implicit message is that we are not fated to act forever in the wrong way. We all could start to live differently, to make other choices instead of repeating endlessly the same mistakes inherited from our culture. The people in the painting now look all insane and ridiculous, but the picture could become completely different tomorrow if people were being told the other way of doing things. In 1559, Bruegel was painting a society which already knew that remedies existed for many illnesses. The Reformation and the Renaissance had showed that other options were possible in Europe, if the ideals of faith and of reason were properly implemented. But hope would vanish if the old world continued to stifle the quest of a better society.

Netherlands, the test bed for doing well, living well

Later on, the Puritans made the choice to leave Europe with the dream to build a new type of society in America. They hoped to revive the project of Hebraism and Hellenism, but without the burden of privileges, aristocracies, monarchies, feudalism of the old world, which always blocked human desires. New York came to symbolize the land of opportunity, where everything that is impossible elsewhere on the earth becomes possible and self-evident. It may not be a coincidence. New York was first called the New Amsterdam. Places like Harlem, Staten island, and Flushing Meadows, to mention just a few, are all reminiscent of the Netherlands. New York was first a Dutch colony, a microcosm of Dutch values in the new world. Later, the city flourished and became the test bed of every sort of innovation and the symbol of a prosperity unimaginable in other horizons. Today, it remains a unique center of study and culture, of political power, of prosperity and of entertainment, with no equivalent elsewhere. Who knows? Part of the Dutch dream may be more alive in New York than we usually think.

Long before the triumph of New York, the Dutch Republic had showed that a new world was possible in Europe, a world with new proverbs, where human desires would not be frustrated because of foolish habits of the past. The promises of modern times could start to be implemented at a national level, i.e. in a human community having a sovereignty, a people and a territory. Netherlands determined to be that kind of Canaan, the test bed for human advancement.

According to the Divine Principle, human progress takes place both on the spiritual level, by overcoming internal ignorance through the development of religion, and on the physical level, by overcoming external ignorance through the development of science. Baudelaire rebuked a purely external progress:

> The only true progress (i.e. the moral progress) takes place in the individual and by the individual himself… My theory of the civilization: it is not in gas, steam, or séance tables. It is in the reduction of the traces of original sin[40].

In 1559, Bruegel had portrayed a society where misfortune reigns, a society which is officially Christian but where the traces of original sin have not been really reduced and where the internal and external environments block human happiness. Medieval society had tried to realize a synthesis of Christian theology and Aristotelian thought, yet ignoring the calls for a better life, it had fallen into scholasticism, dogmatism, even obscurantism. The Reformation and the Renaissance had brought new hope, but the old proclivities were hard to leave behind. Therefore, the coming of happy days was again postponed. The Bible mentions the happy days twice,

> 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

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

As can be seen, even the Biblical proverbs about happiness tend to be expressed negatively, as if human beings should always be told about the don’ts and are not easily motivated to do good things.

Desacralizing Marriage, Demythologizing Love, Sanctifying the Couple

We have already suggested that Dutch society believed in the possibility of progressing internally through *arete* (virtue) and through *phronesis* (practical wisdom). A key element of this *eudaimonia* was marriage. Western civilization had not managed to overcome the conflict between the Christian doctrine of marriage and the humanistic view of sexuality. The sacrament of marriage was central in Catholicism, but in practice the theology of marriage coexisted with pagan rituals. The Renaissance brought Greek mythology back into the culture. All the cupids, the charming Venuses and the sensual representations of the human body were back. Love was represented more as idolatry and passion than as a Christian virtue.

What was the Dutch way? Happy couples became an important motif of genre painting. Gradually, the couple in love, painted informally and not in a hieratic manner, became central in paintings, apparently completely desacralized and demythologized. Eriko Taira speaks of a major change in marriage portraiture. Before the seventeenth century, most painters "still emphasized the pictorial formality of the sitters reflecting the ideals of a feudal society in a medieval flavor and full of symbolism associated with Christian obligations. Dutch marriage portraits in the seventeenth century showed informal expression of sitters and settings emphasizing a secular aspect of marriage life."[41]

In the early seventeenth century, scenes of marriage still put the church at the center of the painting, giving legitimacy to the couple. Then, the church is just in the back and finally disappears completely. It may be seen as a modern desacralization and secularization of unions, but more research suggests another view. When the home becomes a small church, when biblical verses are written on the tiles of the kitchen and other rooms, and with the biblicisation of the daily life, especially of the domestic life, the church as an institution loses its importance. The main raison d'être of marriage then becomes the sincere love, affection, sharing between husband and wife, rather than the blessing of a priest.

While acknowledging that marriage was "a good and holy ordinance of God," Calvin said, "so also are agriculture, architecture, shoemaking, hair-cutting legitimate ordinances of God, but they are not sacraments." John Witte summarizes the Calvinist view of the good marriage:

> God participates in the maintenance of the covenant of marriage not only through the one-time actions of his human agents, but also through the continuous revelation of His natural or moral law. The covenant of marriage, Calvin argued, is grounded "in the order of creation, in the order and law of nature." By nature, the man and the woman enjoy a "common dignity before God" and a common function of "completing" the life and love of the other[42].

Calvin emphasized the order and law of nature in the daily life. But what about the poetry, the romance and the carnal aspects of marriage? They were present, but most Dutch poets and artists dismissed the Greek mythology, in contrast to the French art of the same period. In the field of poetry and literature, Dutch culture favored epithalamia, wedding songs, with a Protestant perspective. Epithalamia were popular in certain regions of Europe during wedding celebrations. They were designed to prepare the newlywed for their first night and the beginning of marital life. Dutch pastors decided to use epithalamia in a biblical way. In an insightful essay[43] on this practice, Jungyoon Yang observes,

> There are two prime characteristics of the epithalamia. First, the main poetic strands were taken from biblical episodes, so were very similar to what a preacher would have said at a wedding. These replaced the mythological and classical allusions employed by learned poets in their classical Latin encomia for powerful ruling families and monarchs on such occasions. A political message was largely absent from seventeenth-century Dutch epithalamia for the mercantile elite, the purpose of which was solely to commemorate a single, special day in the lives of the newlyweds, with content that was focused exclusively on the private circumstances of the families, friends and social circles to which the couple belonged.

The Old Testament figures of Tobias and Sarah going to bed for their first night together[44] were often used in the Dutch epithalamia and painting. They were the holy models of conjugal love to be imitated. Here again, we witness that core values of the Dutch Republic transcended Calvinism in the narrow sense and belonged to a much broader Christian Hebraism, which the Divine Principle calls the Abel-type view of life. Jungyoon Yang continues,

> The main concern of seventeenth-century Dutch religious epithal-amists was to instruct the bridal couple that Christ is the only sponsor of a chaste Christian marriage, and that the couple must offer up a preparatory prayer before consummating their union. The arousal of inner, more refined feelings about the wedding night in the context of prayer and meditation on biblical precepts was the important point… and the scene of the prayers before the nuptial bed is thus a symbolic and essential rite for the bridal couple. Reciting frivolous or voluptuous epithalamic verses before the couple retired to their nuptial chamber would therefore

have been considered utterly inappropriate due to their filthy language and slyly lewd allusions.

The paintings of couples throughout the Dutch seventeenth century convey another message, that of lifelong commitment and faithful companionship of the spouses. The Swedish theologian Anders Nygren (1890-1978) discussed the difference between *agape* (the unconditional love of God) and *eros* (the more self-centered love, especially sexual)[45]. Just like Martin Luther, he tended to dismiss the idea that caritas could mediate between the lofty *agape* and the earthly *eros*.

Unificationism would rather talk about *philia* to describe the interplay between God's absolute love and human love, including sexual love. The Unificationist theology of the family insists that God's love is absolute, eternal, unchanging and unique. But it is expressed divisionally and relatively throughout the human life as we experience the Four Realms of Heart, namely children's love, sibling's love, conjugal love and parental love. In Unificationism, the spiritual life is essentially the family life, and the family life is the spiritual life. Salvation is not achieved individually, but as a family unit. Each form of love is reciprocal and combines the whole purpose and the individual purpose. It is within this structure that the sexual love between husband and wife reveals all its meaning and value. Somehow, these notions already surfaced in the Dutch paintings of family life of the seventeenth century.

More than the blissful day of the wedding, what made marriage truly happy, blessed and Christian was the daily presence of God in the couple. In early seventeenth century paintings, symbols of good luck and fortune still surround newlywed couples, as if marriage needed to involve magic talismans. Later paintings represent the couple at home, several years after marriage, in all simplicity, with no symbols. Their complicity, their bond of love, is what creates the magic. The enchantment comes from within.

Friedrich Nietzsche saw marriage as a long conversation,[46] and said, "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 seems to be the central topic in many painting of married couples throughout the Dutch Golden Age. Initially, Dutch painters would rather represent the nascent love in the young couple at the outset of the married life. But gradually another motif surfaced, that of lasting companionship, illustrating André Maurois' observation that "a happy marriage is a long conversation which always seems too short."

Why did all these values suddenly become central in the art and culture? Indeed, there is an economic reason. Many wealthy Patrician households valued their successful lives. They were living in nice interiors and could afford being portrayed by the best artists of their time, who were often also well married and part of this bourgeois class. But more deeply, the new class of merchants believed that the value of human beings is not determined by their birth and lineage (aristocracy), or by their belonging to the clergy or the army. The core of Patrician values was that human beings become great through character education and by living a good and successful life, the center of which is the family. Eriko Taira, commenting a painting of Frans Hals, suggests that it "expresses the affectionate pleasure of married companionship, which has never been celebrated or cherished by any other European country at the time."[47]

The same holds true for many other artworks of the time. The triumph of Patrician values was connected to urban life. In 1650, 31.7 percent of the population of the Dutch Republic lived in cities, compared to 20.8 percent in Spanish Netherlands, 16.6 percent in Portugal and 14 percent in Italy. In 1675, the urban population density of Holland alone was 61 percent, and that of the rest of the Dutch Republic was 27 percent. This brought a major change in the family system. The number of extended families decreased, while the nuclear family became the norm in cities. A typical Dutch family became smaller and more private. This is exactly what the painters liked to represent the most, the value of family life. Eriko Taira comments,

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 ideal of the good family was understood as a miniature of the ideal commonwealth.[48]

Regarding the portrait of Abraham Casteleyn and Margaretha van Bancken, by Jan de Bray, she notices:

> The couple who are soberly dressed are shown sitting in relaxed poses on a terrace in a domestic environment. 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.[49]

Some may object that these family scenes remain typical of a patriarchal order, where women are mostly portrayed at home and in domestic tasks. Yet we should acknowledge that an amazing progress had been achieved in the female condition.

Jan de Bray, Abraham Casteleyn and his wife Margarieta van Bancken (1663)

First, the desacralization of marriage meant that motherhood stopped being monopolized by Virgin Mary as a Madonna. This meant that motherhood was no longer a theological and mystical motif but concerned all common women. Dutch culture highly valued and represented in its paintings the dignified role of the mother in child-rearing. Whereas the hiring of wet-nurses had become widespread among the European elites and artisans since the Middle Ages, there was common discourse among pastors and physicians saying that breast-feeding was both holy and healthy. It was good for the body of the child but also for the building of its character. It was believed that mother's milk was safer and also contributed to a stronger attachment between mother and child, which conveyed the mother's morals to the child. This is confirmed by modern theories on attachment.

Second, women were often portrayed working diligently in their home. Painting women at work showed a greater respect for them than the abundant production of nudes elsewhere in Europe, which reduced women to their seductive and somehow frivolous role, albeit with much glamorous mythology around them.

Third, many portraits show Dutch couples working together, running the business as real companions. It conveys the message that true prosperity is achieved through the cooperation of spouses.

Fourth, we have asserted that the home was often seen as a small church and also as the miniature of the commonwealth. In other words, the house became the center of the life in Canaan, where God was attended mostly at home and through raising good children. Implicit was the view that the priesthood was no longer a male affair but the common duty of the couple. Wayne Franits, a leading American scholar on Dutch studies, observes:

> It is imagined that seventeenth century Dutch households at meal times were like little churches. At the table parents taught children how to pray in the most appropriate language and manner, and this practice also would contain scripture readings,

theological instruction and edifying discussion.

> One issue which is constantly addressed in family literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the need to educate children, both spiritually and morally. All the authors… believed that the purpose of child-bearing was to create pious and virtuous adults. Those adults would then serve God and society, preserving the stability of the latter by establishing their own families.[50]

By considering their family as a small church, as well as a school of civic virtue, the Dutch showed a profound sense of ownership for the management of Canaan and the transition from the sad time of emancipation to the happy days of living free in their homeland. Their strong family values would protect them from the surrounding Pharaohs.

Reverend and Mrs. Moon kept teaching their followers that the purpose of Unificationism is not to establish a new religion, with its distinct beliefs, rituals, and organizations. Unificationism, they repeated, is not an end in itself, but a means to build Cheon Il Guk, the nation of universal peace and unity, or one human family under God. The purpose of Unificationism is to build heavenly nations which attend the Creator. Unificationists are to see themselves as the Holy Community of Heavenly Parent, working jointly with all sectors of society. The cornerstone of Cheon Il Guk is the ideal family where the four realms of heart and the three great kingships[51] are established. In the late seventies, Reverend Moon launched the worldwide movement of "home-church,"[52] where every young Unificationist couple was to reach out to 360 homes in the vicinity. The goal was not to convert people to a new religion, but to transform modern urban life, which has become so secularized, so that people may feel God at home and in their daily surroundings, and when meeting the neighbors in a safe environment. In later stages, the term home-church was changed to "tribal messiahship," seen as the grassroots activity to establish Cheon Il Guk. Moreover, Rev. and Mrs. Moon kept teaching that the family should be a "school of love," preparing people to become citizens and patriots who "live for the sake of others." They stressed that everyone should train to become a good teacher or guide, a good parent with the ability to love unconditionally, and a good owner or master, cultivating professional and financial abilities to create a prosper environment.

In many ways, the vision which guided the Dutch Republic is worth studying and remains a model for this global task. As we have seen, the Dutch saw both their homeland and the world as a stage of their culture, a culture which embraced spirituality, politics and economy in one undertaking.

Lessons from the Golden Age: Sketching a Happy Eschatology

The Dutch Golden Age remains fascinating. The Dutch dream was in full bloom in the 1620s, four hundred years ago. It can be revived without any nostalgia. We want to conclude this essay by stressing that many promises of this era are more actual than ever. Today, we should revive the message of hope of the Dutch Republic, about the possibility of building gradually a society of happiness. Living with good proverbs, guided by the right vision and the right desires, people may create a commonwealth through concord and small steps. It will be based on common values, common governance, and common prosperity.

Modern Netherlands still ranks among the happiest nations. The Dutch population is only 17 million people, but Rotterdam remains the biggest harbor of the whole Western world. Amsterdam Schipol is the third airport in Europe, behind London's Heathrow and Paris's Charles de Gaulle, but ahead Frankfurt, Madrid and Rome. The Netherlands remains number one for building dikes and selling flowers. What a beautiful symbol! The Dutch Canaan is a land of canals and flowers, a hostile land transformed in a garden, importing and selling flowers from throughout the world[53]. Amsterdam remains the best place to buy the spices that make our meals tastier. The quality of life in Netherlands, the splendor of its museums, and the energy of its multinational companies make it an attractive nation. Netherlands occupies the North of the "Blue Banana"[54] that runs from London to Milan, going through Amsterdam, Brussels, Cologne, Strasbourg, Basel, Geneva and the North of Italy. Along the Rhine river, Patrician values have built a steady model of good education, balanced governance, lasting prosperity. If this is the backbone of Europe, then Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg are the cervical vertebrae of this area. In a world of perpetual change and uncertainty, of chaos and confusion,

this privileged region has a message of stability, of human development and human security, and of hope.

The predispositions of geography, history, and culture partly explain the Dutch Golden Age. We may think that Heaven could use Netherlands for a few decades to create a model that transcended the Rhenian culture and had a much more universal value. For this most brilliant part of its national history, Netherlands was inspired by what we shall call a happy eschatology. It told the rest of Europe that the old world of lamenting is behind us, and that God will "wipe away all tears. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

In the seventeenth century, when there was little hope for a better world, the Puritans decided to leave the Old World forever. Yet, there was one nation brimming with hope, and we have explored some of its secrets. Today, the world has so many opportunities that did not exist 400 years ago. But negative proverbs rule our minds, we see danger all around, and we lack the bold vision to build an ideal world for our descendants. The arguments against hope are many. They convey the sad passions mentioned by Spinoza. All around the globe, many camps are shouting that their mistrust, ranting, resentment, anger, mockery are justified and must be heard, otherwise disaster is coming. This discourse is a smokescreen of cowardice. In fact, we should have more hope for the twenty-first century than during the Dutch Golden Age, and build dikes over new seas.

A few hours before his death, Martin Luther King said that we now live in a world of great trouble. Yet, this is the best time ever, and he thanked God for being able to live in this blessed period. A few hours later, he was assassinated, just before he could reach the age of 40.[55] Like William the Silent, he could not see the Promised Land, but was already living in it.

The example of the Dutch Golden Age gives us the courage to spread the good news. Unificationism has a happy eschatology, which must be made actual. It contains two powerful statements:

> The sinful world brings humankind sorrow and causes God to grieve. Would God abandon this world in its present misery? God intended to create a world of goodness and experience from it the utmost joy; yet due to the human Fall, the world came to be filled with sin and sorrow. If this sinful world were to continue forever in its present state, then God would be an impotent and ineffectual God who failed in His creation… God will save this sinful world, by all means.[56]

> The Last Days is this time, when the evil world under satanic sovereignty is transformed into the ideal world under God's sovereignty. Hell on earth will be transformed into the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Therefore, it will not be a day of fear when the world will be destroyed by global catastrophes, as many Christians have believed. In fact, it will be a day of joy, when the cherished hope of humankind, the desire of the ages, will be realized.[57]

One key element of the happy days of Netherlands was the ability to play. The "joyful families" or "merry companies" of Jan Steen, Judith Leyster and other painters always involve playing cards, playing an instrument, playing with toys or animals. Life is a play. The Dutch Canaan was a praying nation and a playing nation at the same time. Hans Luyckx comments, "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."

Sketching a Theology and Philosophy of Play

Is playing important for God? It is at the core of His ideal of Creation. Of course, words like *play* or *game* in English, *jeu* in French, *spiel* in German, are often synonymous of entertainment, amusement, distraction, and worse, puerility. Yet, tracing back to Thomas Aquinas, many Christian authors have guessed that human recreations can also be divine. This divine element has its source in the very act of Creation.

As Brendan McInerny suggested, "creation as a whole is because of divine playing – and this playing is one of love. Our own playing, our own refusal to reduce our acts to strict biological or utilitarian purpose, to waste time and energy in superfluity, is a sign of being made in the image and likeness of God."[58] Similar ideas prompted the great theologian Jürgen Moltmann to write his *Theology of Play*.[59]

Throughout their tragic life, Reverend and Mrs. Moon tasted suffering and sorrow. Rev. Moon was imprisoned, tortured, rejected, betrayed. The couple endured many early losses, and several children died at a young age. Rev. Moon's first congregation was nicknamed the church of tears. Busan's rock of tears remains a place of pilgrimage for Unificationists worldwide. Rev. Moon kept talking about the God of Lamentation[60], often with heartbreaking tears. Yet, he also said that in any situation, he will always be the first to celebrate, to rejoice, and make others rejoice, whether through *yut* games[61] or entertainment. He showed a passionate interest in the leisure and hobby industry, speaking many times of his desire to redeem the culture of Las Vegas. He created or managed several football teams, invested in ballet companies and music bands. Moreover, he explained a whole way of thinking about play, always connected to education. In Reverend Moon's philosophy, human beings need constant stimulation to be truly happy. This stimulation comes through the joyful interaction will all kinds of object partners. Any interaction needs role playing, and we learn how to play our roles throughout our life.

Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) is probably a major forerunner of this philosophy of play. This leading intellectual figure of modern Netherlands was an anthropologist, historian and cultural theorist. As we said in the introduction, he saw in *agon* the driving force of culture. His last book before his death was a prophetic book about the happy days to come. It is called *Homo Ludens* ("acting man" would be a better translation than "playing man") and contains his deep philosophy on human playfulness.

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 an arena or a podium, a pool table or a temple. We have already said that words for "play" are ambiguous in most languages. This is not the case for the Latin word *ludere*. It conveys the ideas of learning with stimulation, being creative, being free and spontaneous. In this sense, play is a core element of original human nature.

And here, we may arrive at the secret of the Dutch Golden Age. A whole population was on stage, improvising a play and painting it at the same time. The play may be entitled *God created the world and the Dutch created Netherlands*, or something like that. The scenery consisted of many interiors, which were also studios for painters. Interpreted by the most playful people of Europe, the play was mostly focused on marriage and lasting love. It was, and is still, a major *representation* of a possible happy end of human history.

Their happy eschatology prompted the Dutch people to give paramount importance to marriage and family in building Canaan on the earth. On this foundation, they became the forerunner of the world of common values, common governance and common prosperity.

Notes

[1] Exposition of the Divine Principle (HSA-UWC, 1996), p. 1. [EDP]

[2]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).

[3] 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 then there was a period of ascension, and the Rampjaar was followed by a relative stagnation and decline.

[4] "Happiness is a new idea in Europe" is a quote of Saint-Just, a leading contributor to the French Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen of 1793.

[5] Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815 (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[6] The idea of human capital traces back to Adam Smith ("the acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society") and the term appears with Irving Fisher. It was popularized by the Chicago School, especially Gary Becker. The human capital is further distributed into three kinds (1) Knowledge Capital (2) Social Capital (3) Emotional capital.

[7] Alain Peyrefitte, La Société de Confiance (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995).

[8] Gary Becker, https://www.acton.org/pub/religion-liberty/volume-8-number-1/human-capital-and-poverty

[9] Koenraad Wolter Swart, “The miracle of the Dutch Republic as seen in the seventeenth century,” Inaugural Lecture delivered at University College London, November 6, 1967.

[10] de Gulden Eeuw in Old Dutch, de Gouden Eeuw in modern Dutch, is translated as Golden Age

[11] Both 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.

[12] Alexis de Tocqueville, De la Démocratie en Amérique, (Pagnerre, 1848), tome 2, p. 198.

[13] 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 Dutch Republic was certainly a forerunner of the Abel-type view of life.

[14] EDP, Parallels 7.2.2.

[15] Emile Durkheim, Elementary Forms of Religious Life, translation of Karen Fields (The Free Press, 1995).

[16] Demons (Бесы, sometimes also called The Possessed) is a novel by Fyodor Dostoevsky, first published in 1871–72

[17] Ethics III, p. 11s.

[18] EDP, p. 351.

[19] Epicurus’ concept of ataraxy is tranquility, the absence of trouble. The quest for a safe society was perceived as important in the Dutch Golden Age, but was surely not the main concern.

[20] Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1095a15–22.

[21] Borrowed from the Latin poet Sallustus

[22] Willem Frijhoff, “The Relevance of Dutch History, or: Much in Little? Reflections on the Practice of History in the Netherlands,” in Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden, January 2010, p. 21.

[23] Simon Schama, The Embarrassment of Riches (1991), p. 396.

[24] Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, abridged (Oxford, 1987), vol. 1, p. 570.

[25] We are aware that this might appear as some historical anachronism, as if we were projecting notions of the twentieth century on a totally different model of society. We would say the opposite. The aspirations to the four freedoms are age old, but few populations had dared implementing them until they started to finally become triumphant and mainstream in our age.

[26] Frank D. Roosevelt spoke of the Four Freedoms in his State of Union address on January 6, 1941.

[27] 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.” In 1994, Mahbub ul Haq first drew global attention to the concept of human security in the United Nations Development Program’s 1994 Human Development Report. Human security is now central in peace studies.

[28] Willem Frijhoff, op.cit, p. 7

[29] According to the 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) Hong Kong, (9) Melbourne, and (10) Stockholm.

[30] Spinoza, Theological-Political Treatise, p. 252

[31] EDP, p. 350.

[32] Theodor Dunkelgrün, 'Neerlands Israel': Political Theology, Christian Hebraism, Biblical Antiquarianism, and Historical Myth.

[33] Simon Schama, op. cit., p. 91.

[34] Willem Frijhoff speaks of "the Batavian Athens: the very center of the European Republic of Letters, where philology, philosophy, science, medicine, anatomy, jurisprudence and even engineering worked together for the future of the West, constituting an almost explosive mix of learning and innovations that exercised an irresistible power of attraction to whoever wanted novelty or change." op.cit. p. 37

[35] Willem Frijhoff, op.cit. p. 35

[36] The polder model has been described as "a pragmatic recognition of pluriformity" and "cooperation despite differences". It is thought that the Dutch politician Ina Brouwer was the first to use the term poldermodel, in her 1990 article "Het socialisme als poldermodel?"

[37] Willem Frijhoff, op.cit. p. 35

[38] Also called the Blue Cloak or The Topsy Turvy World, the painting can be seen at the Gemäldealerie in Berlin.

[39] EDP, p. 72.

[40] Charles Baudelaire, Mon cœur mis à nu.

[41] Eriko Taira, Family Life in Dutch art of the Seventeenth Century, Christie's Education London Master's Program, September 2000, p. 6

[42] John Witte, John Calvin on Marriage and Family Life, Published in Herman J. Selderhuis, ed., The Calvin Handbook (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 455-465.

[43] Jungyoon Yang, "Prayers at the Nuptial Bed: Spiritual Guidance on Consummation in Seventeenth Century Dutch Epithalamia," in: Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin, eds., Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World, series: Intersections, Vol. 59 (2018).

[44] Tobit 8: 4-6

[45] Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros (1930, English translation 1956).

[46] Friedrich Nietzsche, All Too Human.

[47] Eriko Taira, op. cit, p. 17.

[48] Ibid, pp. 2-3

[49] Ibid, p. 16

[50] Wayne Franits, "The Family Saying Grace: a Theme in Dutch Art of the Seventeenth Century," Simiolus Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art 16 (1986): 36.

[51] The four realms of heart are the four kinds of love experienced in the family, namely children's love, brotherly love, conjugal love and parental love. The three great kingships basically means three generations united by love and lineage.

[52] For many years, the yearly motto given by Reverend Moon was about home church. "Home Church and the Completion of the Kingdom of Heaven" (1979), "Home Church Is the Base of the Kingdom of Heaven" (1980), "Home Church Is My Kingdom of Heaven" (1981), etc. For more information, go to tparents.org

[53] Aalsmeer, in North Holland, is called the world capital of flowers. Its flower market is the biggest in the world.

[54] The concept of the Blue Banana or European backbone was proposed by geographer Roger Brunet in 1989.

[55] Martin Luther King, "I've Been to the Mountaintop," April 3, 1968.

[56] EDP, p. 82.

[57] EDP, p. 89.

[58] Brendan McInerny, https://collegevilleinstitute.org/bearings/a-theology-of-play/

[59] Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Play (Harper and Row, 1972).

[60] Sun Myung Moon, “God of Lamentation,” sermon given on October 21, 1979 www.tparents.org/Moon-Talks/SunMyungMoon79/791021.htm

[61] *Yut* is a popular traditional Korean game.